

ACROSS
THE ANDES
Charles Johnson Post

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A tale of wandering days among the mountains of Bolivia and the jungles of the upper Amazon

Author: Charles Johnson Post

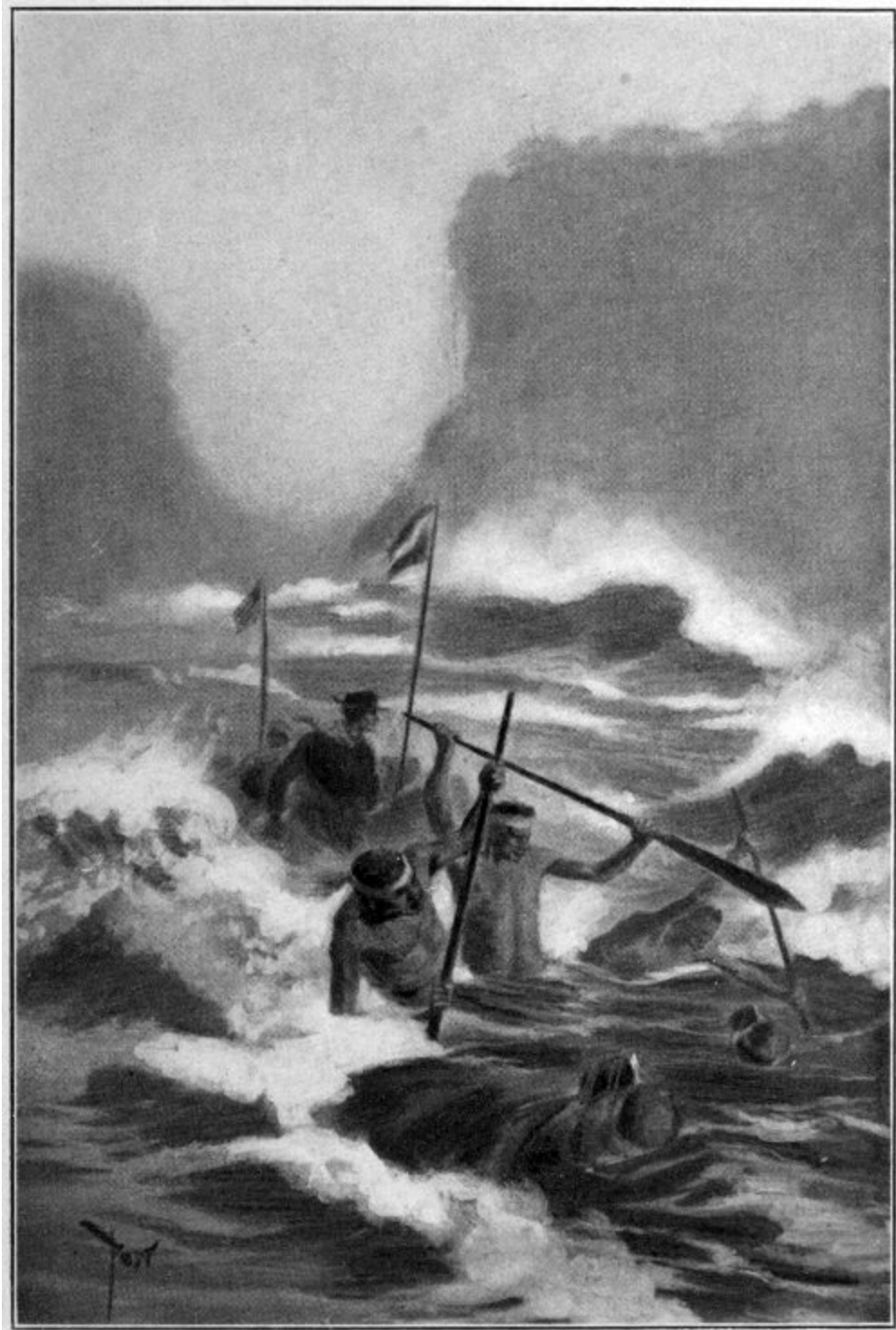
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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK ACROSS THE
ANDES ***



Running the Rapids of the Ratama

ACROSS THE ANDES

BY
CHARLES JOHNSON POST

A Tale of Wandering Days Among the Mountains of Bolivia and the
Jungles of the Upper Amazon

Illustrated by the Author



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THE TROPICS

“The legion that never was listed,”
The soft-lilting rhythm and song,
The starlight, and shadowy tropics,
The palms—and all that belong;
The unknown that ever persisted
In dreams that were epics of bliss,
Of glory and gain without effort—
And the visions have faded, like this.

From dusk to dawn, when the heat is gone,
The home thoughts nestle and throb,
And the drifting breeze through the dim, gray trees
Stirs up the fancies wan
Of the old, cool life and a white man’s wife
With a white man’s babes on a lawn,
Where the soft greens please—yet each morrow sees
The flame that follows the dawn.

From dawn till eve the hot hours leave
Their mark like a slow-burned scar;
And a dull, red hate ’gainst the grilling fate,
Impulse and fevers weave;
While the days to come—in years their sum—
The helpless thoughts perceive
As an endless state, sans time or date,
That only gods relieve.

Rubber or gold—the game is old,
The lust and lure and venture;

And the trails gleam white in the tropic night
Where the restless spirits mould;
A vine-tied cross 'neath the festooned moss,
Bones in a matting rolled;
No wrong or right, the loss is slight,
The world-old fooled of gold.

“The legion that never was listed”—
The glamor of words in a song,
The lure of the strange and exotic,
The drift of the few from the throng;
The past that was never resisted
In the ebb or the flow of desire,
The foolish, the sordid, ambitious,
Now pay what the gods require.

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ACROSS THE ANDES

CHAPTER I

OLD PANAMA, AGAMEMNON, AND THE GENIAL PICAROON



ANNOUNCED THAT A PERSON, A SOMEBODY, WAS AWAITING ME BELOW.

It was in Panama—the old Panama—and in front of the faded and blistered hotel that I met him again. A bare-footed, soft-voiced mozo had announced that a person, a somebody, was awaiting me below. Down in the broken-tiled lobby a soured, saffron clerk pointed scornfully to the outside. Silhouetted against the hot shimmer that boiled up from the street was

a jaunty figure in a native, flapping muslin jacket, native rope-soled shoes, and dungaree breeches, carefully rolling a cigarette from a little bag of army Durham. It turned and, from beneath the frayed brim of a native hat, there beamed upon me the genial assurance of Bert, one time of the Fifth Army Corps, Santiago de Cuba, and occasionally of New York; and within my heart I rejoiced. Without, I made a signal that secured a bottle of green, bilious, luke-warm native beer and settled myself placidly for entertainment.

A panicky quarantine stretched up and down some few thousand miles of the West Coast that left the steamer schedules a straggling chaos. For fifteen dull, broiling days I had swapped hopes and rumors with the polyglot steamship clerk or hung idly over the balcony of the Hotel Marina watching the buzzards hopping about the mud flats or grouped hopefully under the quarter of a slimy smack. Once I had inspected the Colombian navy that happened to be lying off the Boca and observed a bran-new pair of 15 white flannels go to their ruin as a drunken Scotch engineer teetered down an iron ladder with a lidless coal-oil lamp waving in discursive gestures; once I had met a mild, dull, person who had just come up Magdalena River way with a chunk of gold that he assured me—without detail—had been hacked off by a machete, but here his feeble imagination flickered out and he wrapped the rest in a poorly wrought mystery until finally he fluttered over to Colon for the next steamer of innocent possibilities.



POINTED SCORNFULLY TO THE OUTSIDE

With these the respectable amusements were exhausted and I therefore rejoiced as I confronted that cheerful, raconteuring adventurer under the battered Panama. A ship's purser, a drummer of smoked hams, a 16 Coney Island barker, a soldier, a drifter, and always a teller of tales, he had lain in the trenches on Misery Hill before Santiago in support of Capron's Battery with a gaunt group around him as he wove the drifting

thread of adventure from the Bowery to the Barbary Coast in a series of robust anecdotes. And they bore the earmarks of truth.

Now, in the genial silhouette framed against the tropic glare, I realized that whatever days of waiting might be in store they would no longer be dull. A true rumor had put him in a lone commercial venture somewhere down these coasts and here at my elbow was to be placed all the shift and coil of petty adventure, whimsical romance, and the ultimate results of two years of adroit piracy in and out of the Spanish Main that had ended, as I observed, in dungaree breeches, rope-soled *alpargatas*, and a battered Panama hat.

Therefore through the ministrations of an occasional bottle of the native bilious beer and other transactions that shall remain private, the days sped themselves swiftly and unheeded guided by the adept hand of Romance. Again, as in the trenches, I viewed the world under Asmodean 17 influences, but what I heard has no place in these pages; it is worth an endeavor all its own. Then, one morning, the news spread that at last the *Mapocho* lay at the Boca and the hour of departure for the first stage to the interior of South America was at hand; the night before was the last I saw of my genial friend. In the morning he did not appear, and it was strange, for I had expected to do the proper thing, as I saw it, realizing that dungarees and *alpargatas* are poor armor and that our consulates offer but a desperate and prickly hospitality.

In the afternoon I went aboard, crawling down a gangway that dropped to the deck like a ladder where, in the morning, it had reared itself with equal steepness against the *Mapocho's* sides. Such are the Pacific tides at the Boca. Agamemnon, the shriveled little Barbadoes darky, scuttled about importantly, stowing our baggage and giving an occasional haughty order to some steward in a nondescript patois that passed mainly as Spanish and that often served, as I learned, better than the purest Ollendorfian Castilian. Later it appeared that Agamemnon had left one of these same 18 steamers under a cloud—a trifling matter of a few sheets and pillow cases—and now to return clothed with trust and authority over “de fixin’s an de baggage of gent’mens” swelled him with an inarticulate triumph.



AGAMEMNON

In the long months that followed none could have given more faithful service or loyalty than this skimpy Barbadoes ducky. That is within his limitations, for he could no more resist liquor than a bear can honey, but nevertheless when he had transgressed, his uncertain legs would bring him back to his duties, speechless perhaps, but with arms wavering in gestures of extenuation.

Also to Agamemnon wages meant nothing; a shilling now and again 19—sometimes even the equivalent of a whole dollar—advanced him with the specific understanding that it was for gambling and not for liquor. Once, in La Paz, he won a hundred and fifty dollars, Mex, and became an impossible animal until it had been frittered away. In the same city he went to the bull fight and joined in the play against the final bull that is “dedicated to the people” and fought so cleverly that we became prominent by reflection and gave a party at the *corrida* the following Sunday to see Agamemnon’s promised performance.

By this time Agamemnon had become a character and a score of little boys scrambled over the barrier eager to hold his hat, his coat, and his cuffs. With a flourish he handed each to its eager guardian and then, with a coat held as a *capa*, gave a flourish and advanced toward the bull. The crowd applauded. Agamemnon made a bow and a flourish and waggled the coat. The bull snuffed briskly and charged. Alas! The hand had lost its cunning, for Agamemnon shot ten feet skyward, turned an involuntary somersault at the apex of his flight, and then sprawled back to earth. A half dozen of the 20 *toreros* drew off the bull; the small boy custodians flung his garments at him scornfully, while the Bolivian audience laughed itself hoarse as the dusty, dishevelled figure hobbled out of the ring and away from the crowd.

For himself Agamemnon asked but little although where he felt that the dignity of his position was involved he became a tower of strength. It was in the same city that he felt the hotel people were not treating him fairly, as they were not, and his remonstrance was met by a Cholo mozo who hurled a sugar bowl at his head and followed it up with a knife. Agamemnon dodged and beat down the Indian with a chair; on the instant a half dozen

Cholos poured at him and the kitchen was in a riot. Backing away, he denuded the dining tables of service and used it as a light artillery fire. By the aid of an earthenware jar, some handy crockery, and a chair he was able to retreat safely across the patio and up the stairway that led to our rooms. A water pitcher laid open a skull and a wash-bowl stopped the rush long enough for him to grab a gun from the pillow when we arrived, together with some stubby Bolivian police and the bony Russian proprietor; 21 order was restored, fortunately, for it might have been serious.

Agamemnon explained satisfactorily and incidentally showed only a minor bump or so, but his Cholo and Aymara antagonists bore most proper marks of the conflict. That night in the midst of his shoe-polishing and packing he remarked briefly: “If you gent’mens hadn’t er-come jes’ den I cer’nly would have licked dem fellers, bahs!” Apparently no victory was complete to his mind until he had accomplished a massacre.

At another time he waded into a crowd of Cholos in the interior and took from them their machetes and shot-guns, acting on his own initiative, because he knew that in that far interior laborers were too precious to waste by their own fighting. From our tent we heard two shots and the rising yells of a small riot and then, before there was time to grab a gun or gather the few white men, the figure of Agamemnon staggered up the crest of the river bank with his arms full of the commandeered machetes and trade-guns.

There was the time when a balsa upset in a boiling eddy and Agamemnon jumped in as a faithful rescuer only to still further complicate matters; 22 also when—but it is useless, Agamemnon is a story in himself. Tireless, uncomplaining, honest, loyal, yet of the aimless tribe of bandar-log, apparently only merely the mouse of a man in a wrinkled black skin and yet the paragon of retainers. Peace be to him wherever he has drifted.

At the table that evening on the *Mapocho* the few passengers looked each other over in the customary, stand-offish way,—a couple of fresh faced young Englishmen adventuring to clerkships, a German commercial traveler—an expert in those Latin countries who makes one blush for the self-complacent, brusque, greaser-hating jingoes that are only too typical of our export efforts—three mining engineers, a returning Peruvian diplomat for whose presence we later blessed him and a couple of native Ecuadorean

families, wealthy *cacao haciendados*, who flocked by themselves in a slatternly, noisy group.

But by the next evening, drawn together by the prospect of a tedious, uncertain voyage through erratic quarantines, we were one large family. We lay back in our canvas chairs under the galvanized iron roof of the upper deck—so generally peaceful are those seas that the awning is permanent—and watched the Southern Cross flickering dimly above the southern horizon. The cigars glowed in silence for, though it was the hour for yarning, each bashfully hung back. Then an engineer started. The Philippines, Alaska, the boom camps, Mexico rose in successive backgrounds and then the talk shifted round to our respective objectives down this long coast. One was for the nitrate fields, one for the Peruvian silver mines, and one for the rich placer banks of the far interior. The one who was bound for an examination of Peruvian silver mines—a mountain of a man—finally made a confidence:

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“Gold,” he remarked as an obvious preliminary, “gold—or silver, I’m a Bryan man—is generally good enough for anyone, but if I had my choice I don’t mind saying that I’d rather have a coal mine down here in South America than either or anything!”

The others sighed enviously. A coal mine in South America where there is no coal except that from Australia and Wales and where a couple of hundred miles from the coast it is worth twenty dollars, gold, a ton! A coal mine—well—it is the stuff of which dreams are made in South America.

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“Yessir,” he went on raptly, “coal is the thing. And I don’t mind admitting that I’ve got it.”

He hauled a black object from his pocket and held it out. Eagerly it was snatched from his hand. There it was, hard, shiny, black, varying in no way from those in the kitchen scuttle at home—a splendid sample of anthracite coal! It was too good. They laughed.

“Bring it from home?” they asked pleasantly.

The mountainous engineer chuckled contentedly. “That’s anthracite and as fine a specimen as I ever saw. I don’t mind talking a little freely since I’ve got it covered in an iron-clad contract.

“You see,” he went on good-naturedly, “I’m always wide awake and the morning we left the Boca a young chap came aboard—American, too, and right pleasant spoken—where I was sort of loafing and we got acquainted. To make a long story short, he’d been wandering around up in the back country of Colombia and had located this coal. He didn’t have any 25 special idea of what coal meant down these ways—he was from Pennsylvania, son of a pit boss or something and coal was as common to him as water to a duck—but when he pulled out a couple of these samples you bet I froze fast. He tried to be mighty quiet and mysterious when he saw I was interested—you know how such a chap is when he thinks he’s got a good thing, and he was sort of on the beach, down on his luck you know—but I pumped him all right.

“He had a fool idea of going home as best he could and then taking the family sock and combining it with other family socks and coming back and opening up his coal mine.” The big engineer chuckled again. “Why there’s a king’s fortune in that mine, so your Uncle Jim stepped right in and tied him up close. I cabled my principals and I’ll get a cable when we reach Callao. This coal makes their silver look like thirty cents. Of course, I wasn’t going to take any chances at this stage—it might be phony—but that fellow is on the level. Said he wouldn’t take any money down—not that I’d have given it by a long shot—but after I got back he’d join me and come back 26 into Colombia. He gave me a map of the location in case of accident.”

“Gave him no money—poor fellow, art for art’s sake?” asked one.

“Well, yes,” the big man nodded good-humoredly, “thirty dollars—enough to take him back to the States steerage—I felt almost ashamed. Said he didn’t need any more to get home with—that sounded on the level, didn’t it? He’d had a tough time all right—fever, grub and etcetery back in the country—and was down to dungaree breeches, rope-soled shoes, and one of these slimpsey native calico jackets.”

“And he could roll a cigarette with one hand better than most can with two?” I asked.

The big engineer paused for an instant’s thought and then suddenly sat up. No wonder my friend of the Fifth Army Corps and the dungaree breeches, alpargatas, and battered Panama and muslin jacket had suddenly disappeared. Thirty large, golden dollars of real money, good at par in the States or for three pecks of local paper collateral anywhere on the Mosquito Coast! And all that for one paltry little yarn.

CHAPTER II

THE FIGHTING WHALE AND CHINAMEN IN THE CHICKEN COOP

The hot days drifted by in easy sociability, dividing themselves into a pliant routine. The morning was devoted to golf on the canvas covered deck over a nine-hole course chalked around ventilators, chicken-coops and deck-houses. Crook-handled canes furnished the clubs and three sets of checkers were lost overboard before we reached the Guayas River, the little round men skidding flatly over the deck with a pleasing accuracy only at the end to rise up maliciously on one ear and roll, plop, into the sea. In the white-hot afternoon, when the scant breeze would quite as likely drift with us, the hours were sacred to the siesta, and the evenings were devoted to standardizing an international, polyglot poker.

A rope stretched across the after-deck marked off the steerage. There 28 was no second class as a thrifty French tailor, a fine young man, and his soft-voiced Mediterranean bride found out. They had bought second class through to Lima and at the Boca were flung in aft among the half-breeds, a squabbling lot of steerage scum, together with a gang of Chinamen. A line of piled baggage ran lengthwise, on one side of which were supposed to be the bachelors' quarters, though somewhere between decks were hutches where, if one really insisted on privacy, the tropical night could be passed in a fetid broil.

Through a surreptitious connivance this couple were allowed quarters forward and evening after evening the little bride would bring her guitar out and play—and such playing! She had been on the stage, it seemed, and from opera to opera she drifted and then off into odd, unheard folk songs, or the vibrant German or Russian songs. Never before or since have I heard

such playing of a guitar or felt its possibilities. For us the guitar is an instrument lazily plunked by the end man against two mandolins. Yet there was a time when Paganini deemed it worthy of mastery.

She was playing late one afternoon and we were all gathered around 29 in the dining hall. There came a rush of feet overhead and a shrill, excited chattering. We broke for the deck, expecting a mutiny among the Chinamen at the very least, and there in full view, not five hundred yards away, was a battle between a whale and three thrasher sharks. In a great circle the sea was churned to a foam, boiling with the stroke of fin and fluke as the sharks outflanked and harried the whale.

In a steady succession the sharks would shoot high out of the water in a graceful, deadly curve and, as they fell back, suddenly stiffen in a whip-lash bend that instantly straightened at the moment of impact, sending a flying mass of spray like that when a solid shot ricochets in gun practice. A few such blows and even a bulky, blubber-coated whale would feel it. Sometimes a shark would strike fair, though more often he would waste his energy on the empty water as the whale dove.

But the steadiness of the battering attack, sometimes all three sharks in the air as though by a signal, sometimes a steady procession pouring up from the sea in a wicked arc as regular as a clock's ticking, and sometimes 30 the frantic whirling of the whale showed the submarine strategists at work, while only a single shark shot up in a well-aimed, whip-lash stroke. In desperation the whale would stand on its head and beat the air in terrific blows with its flukes while the sharks would merely wait till the flurry was over and then renew their steady, wearing, pounding battle.

Off at one side of the circle of beaten foam was a little dark patch that paddled nervously about and that we had overlooked—a whale-calf. And now it was apparent why the fight was fought in the diameter of a ship's length; always the bulk of the grim old mother was between the attack and her clumsy baby; there was the reason why she did not make a running fight of it that would have given her a more even break—for the speed of a squadron is that of its slowest ship. All the advantage lay with the sharks; it was easy to see they were wearing the whale down. Less often she stood on

her head to batter the foam hopefully with her ponderous flukes; the sharks redoubled their efforts until they curved in a steady, leaping line.

Along the rail of the *Mapocho* the passengers, deck and cabin, 31 cheered the battle as their tense sympathies dictated or drew whistling breaths as some crashing whip-lash went home. The deep sapphire of the sea rippling under the brisk evening breeze, the turquoise heaven that swept down to the horizon softly shifting against the sapphire contrast to a mystery of fragile green, the field of battle boiling and eddying in the mellow orange glow of the long rays of the setting sun and bursting into masses of iridescent spray made a noble setting worthy of the cause, and in it eighty tons of mother-love and devotion measuring itself in horse-power and foot-tons was slowly drooping under the hail from a slim, glittering, iridescent arc.

Smaller grew the fight in the distance—a mile—a mile and a half—then two-thirds of the whale's bulk shot clear of the surface and she fell back heavily. Once more the head went down and the flukes raised themselves, lashing the air in frantic desperation. The curving, confident line of sharks shot upward in a graceful curve, but this time, overconfident, they had miscalculated. The great tail caught one shark and he hurtled through the flying spray with a broken back; the flukes crashed down on a second 32 as he struck the water. Once only the surviving shark leaped and missed. Alone he could do no more; the whale in one lucky stroke had won. Through the glasses we could make out its low mass slowly swimming off, every now and then spouting a feather of spray from her blow-hole as though saluting her own victorious progress with a steam-whistle.

Five days out from Panama and we awoke to find the *Mapocho* swinging to her anchor in the Guayas River and awaiting the pleasure of the port-doctor. On one side a distant shore loomed through the heated, humid haze, on the other a sluggish tide-water creek disappeared in the jungle of the bank an easy rifle-shot away. A ramshackle church with a huge crucifix showed at one side of the port-doctor's house and here and there a few houses and thatched roofs appeared above a stretch of white beach. A few black pigs wandered about, showing the only signs of life. Somewhere beyond this dismal outpost was Guayaquil. Already in the captain's quarters was a

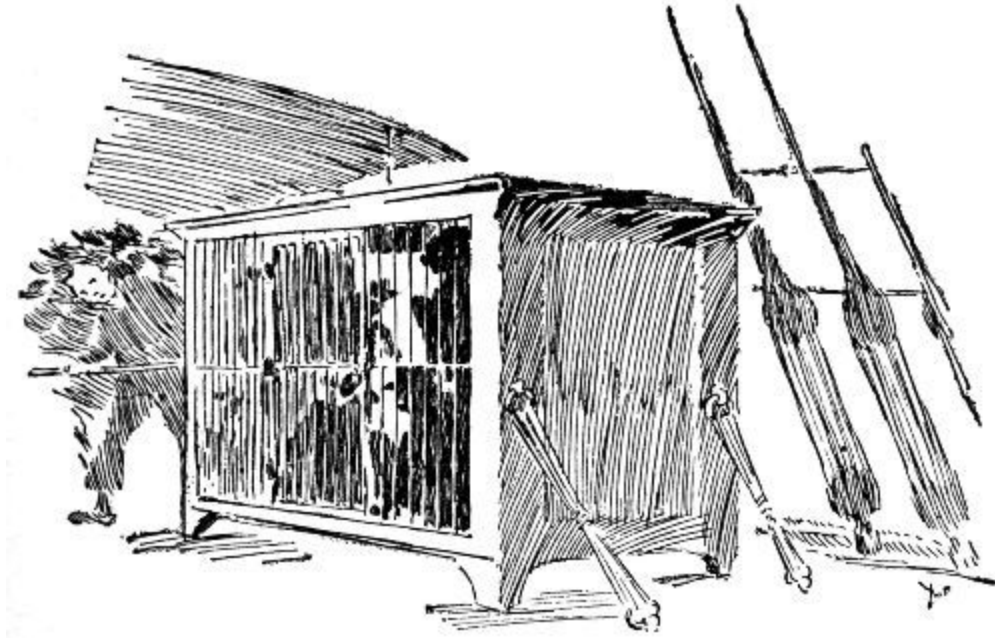
conference of the skipper, the young Chilean ship's doctor fresh from school and on his first trip, and the port doctor.

Presently they emerged, the captain feebly expostulating. We were to be held “under observation” for forty-eight hours as yellow fever and bubonic suspects. That Guayaquil should quarantine against anything is—at the least to an ordinary sense of humor—funny, for Guayaquil has never seen the time that it was likely to catch anything it did not already have, except a clean bill of health. 33

We learned for the first time that there were three Chileans abroad who were being returned to Chile by their consul. They were anemic, destitute and sick with malarial fever; although the whole coast was in a panic over yellow fever and the bubonic, yet this time had been chosen to ship them home some two thousand miles to a Chilean hospital! They had been stowed between decks and the young ship's doctor had made the mistake of attempting to gloss over their existence, or at any rate to split the difference between truth and expediency, and had succeeded only in exciting a peevish suspicion in a marooned gentleman who had some power. He did not even look at the cases—quarantine forty-eight hours, and then he would return with advices from the government.

A few of us went down to take a look at the *Chilenos* whose appearance had held us up. There was no formal hospital on board so a little compartment had been hastily thrown up between decks. It was built of the loose planks on which the cattle stand during the voyage; it was closed on all four sides, windowless, and with but a single opening for a doorway curtained by a filthy piece of canvas. This black hole, reeking with filth, was the hospital; a couple of figures lay on the floor and looked up dully at the sudden flare of a match while, from an open cargo port, the third was tottering, a shrunken wreck with the ghastly teeth of a skull and socketed eyes. 34

At noon the purser presented each first cabin passenger with a little bill for half a sovereign—two dollars and a half, gold—which amount we were charged for as demurrage every day in any quarantine. The deck steerage paid a shilling, gold, each day.

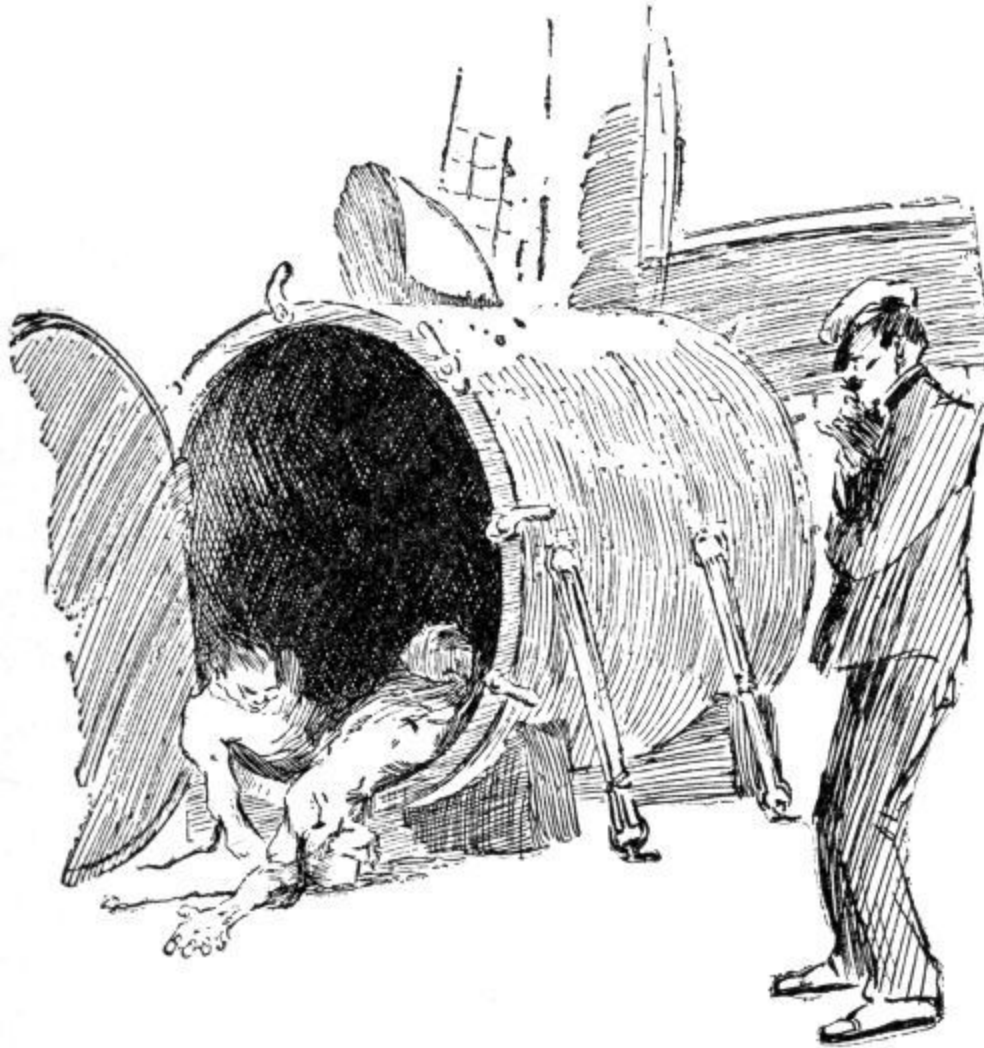


THOSE WHO REFUSED TO PAY WERE THROWN INTO THE CHICKEN COOP.

The purser, a pleasant young Chilean with an Irish name, yet who spoke no word of English, was the one busy man on the idle ship. In expectation of quarantine the occupants of the port chicken coop had been transferred and now the purser appeared with the first officer, the boatswain, and a few of the crew. They climbed the rope and the purser jangled a chain and padlock suggestively. One by one the shillings came out. He reached the Chinamen; some were dragged from below or hauled out from the partition of baggage in which they had tried to hide, all protesting sullenly. Those who refused to pay were thrown into the chicken coop until about a dozen were jammed into its close quarters. It was too low for even a small man to stand upright, while its condition made it impossible to lie down so that the Chinamen squatted on the floor or huddled up on the perches. Then as they 36 decided to pay, if the purser had nothing on hand more pressing he would come up and let them out.

Of those who witnessed this wretched steamship extortion the German really enjoyed it; he clucked and mimicked before the coop with great gusto and then scuttled below for his camera. He had scarcely focussed before the free Chinamen who knew a camera were chattering shrilly in hostile

groups, the caged Chinamen clacking angrily back, and the first officer pounced upon the photographic outfit. This collecting of shillings from the Chinamen and the method of enforcement is no light-hearted morning's pleasure and is likely at any time to end seriously. Also it could be noted that in the immediate background were others of the officers and crew following operations, and the arms rack aft of the chart-room was unlocked.



WHEN THE END-LID WAS TAKEN OFF, THE BODIES OF EIGHT DEAD CHINAMEN WERE TAKEN OUT.

Much may be said in favor of the chicken coop method for there was one time, the purser related, that another purser in collecting the shillings used

the fumigating boiler of the upper deck. Eight obstinate Chinamen were shoved in and the end-lid clamped on. An hour of a dark dungeon would be better than the airy chicken coop, argued the astute collector—for the chicken coop has been known to prove so alluring that Chinamen have begun serving on their second day's shilling before they had paid the first—and he was pleased at the frantic scrabbling that sounded through the iron sides. Then it died down—ah, the sullen apathy of the race—and when the end-lid was taken off the bodies of eight dead Chinamen were taken 38 out, suffocated. It was no end of trouble to that purser for he had to juggle with his passenger sheet and the various port officials so that the ship wouldn't be held in quarantine and make the captain and owners peevish and thereby lose his job. *Caramba*, it was lucky they were Chinamen!

Slowly the forty-eight hours on the broiling river passed away. In the morning of its close we looked anxiously to the nearer shore for the sign of official life. Except for the straggling black pigs, all was lifeless beach and jungle. The hours passed. It was noon. We breakfasted at that late Latin hour irritably. Presently the placid captain sent a string of signals up the foremast. Still the creek, the strip of beach, and the jungle gave forth no signs of life other than the black pigs. More time passed and the captain had the whistle blown at intervals. No result. As a desperate measure he had the capstan turned—a bluff for it was free of the cable—but as the dismal clank of the pawls carried to shore, half a dozen figures scuttled down to the creek and tumbled into the official boat. A few minutes later it was at the 39 companion ladder and the port doctor was mounting haughtily.

Why this uproar? The sanitary junta had been notified of our arrival—what could one more? A reply had been received this morning—or was it the day before?—that the sanitary junta was very busy, but would consider the quarantine of the *Mapocho* at a meeting this very night. In the meantime——! He spoke with a patient, restrained peevishness as to an unreasonable child.

The august sanitary junta sat augustly at Guayaquil. From this port doctor's station to Guayaquil was some distance. To telegraph one made one's report, then it was paddled across the muddy tide-water creek in a dugout; then it was carried on foot across the island—for this strip of beach and

home of the straggling black pigs was but a portion of an island of some size—and then across more water in a dugout and *there* was a telegraph station! Naturally all this took time. The port boat put back and the captain returned to his quarters. From the stern again came the sickening pop of firecrackers where the Chilean crew resumed their fishing, hauling in a slender, stupid variety of catfish and then tossing it back with a well-40 timed firecracker thrust in its gaping throat.

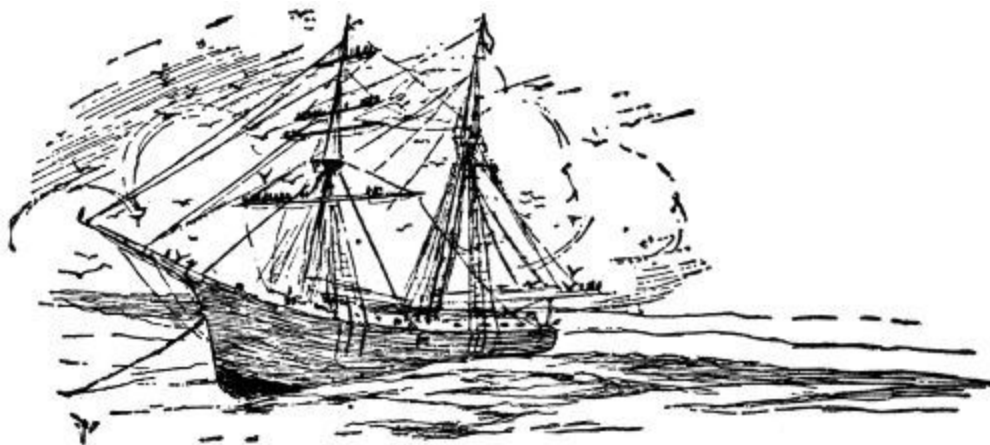
We watched the shabby boat run on the beach and the port doctor disappear in the jungle path. The crew gathered up the oars when suddenly the doctor darted back, the crew tumbled into the boat, and in a flurry of ragged rowing they came splashing toward us. Hope revived—a release from the august sanitary junta! A biscuit toss off they stopped. The doctor rose in the sternsheets and grandly ordered us out of Ecuadorean waters; if we did not leave at once we would be fired upon—by what there was no intimation, it might have been a black pig from a bamboo catapult for there was nothing else in the way of artillery—but it sounded formal and terrible. So we left. And with us went five thousand packages of freight and ninety sacks of mail intended for Guayaquil, and the furious Ecuadorean passengers.

The Peruvians were complacent. “It is better for us,” they said, “than to have to put into that wretched Guayaquil. Had we touched that fever-infected port we would have had much trouble in the Peruvian ports. Now we have our clean bill of health from Panama.”

It was beautiful optimism. I took another look at the reeking hospital 41 between decks and wondered if we could ever get into any port and, as I turned away, two wretched, tottering skeletons passed on their way to the open cargo port. They were convalescing. I hoped for the third.

Some time during the night we passed over to the Peruvian coast and anchored off Payta early the next morning. Two miles away a white thread of slow surf broke on a thin line of blazing yellow beach; beyond rose a low range of brown-and-yellow bluffs, the hot and arid fringe of the long desert that edges the west coast of South America. Back from the edge of surf spraddled a shabby, sand-blown, flea-bitten town with only here and there a patch of gay red-tiled roof; nowhere a strip of green or frond of palm to relieve the arid deadliness of the brown-and-yellow hills.

Off shore—there was neither bay nor bight in the even line of surf—a deserted brigantine at anchor dipped slowly with the long Pacific swells, its yards and decks whited like a leper from the unmolested frigate-birds and sea fowl that made it home. Beyond, here and there, a patched sail of no particular size or shape was barely filled by the lightest of breezes; 42 occasionally, as one crept past, the outfit developed into a raft on the after part of which was a rough platform of palm on which were housed the Indian fisherman and his crew or family. A few abandoned square tins—the well known export tins of Rockefeller—held the drinking water, an earthen pot their food, and on this flimsy contraption they would put out miles to sea. In beating to windward a loose board or piece from a packing case is poked through the crevices to act as centerboard.



A DESERTED BRIGANTINE AT ANCHOR DIPPED SLOWLY WITH THE LONG PACIFIC SWELLS.

Slowly creeping over the ground swells was the port officer's boat; it had a uniformed crew and rowed well. The Peruvians watched it contentedly; *por Dios*, no such stupid work here as in that Guayas River—*buenos dias*, 43 *Señor Comandante*, *buenos dias*, *Señor Doctor*—and they stood aside as the captain led the way into his quarters, the procession closing with the nervous ship's surgeon and a steward with a bottle of warm champagne—for there was no more ice.

Presently they emerged amiably and the port officers put back to shore. We would be *incomunicado* until that very afternoon and then we would hear. The little boats that had clustered around the *Mapocho* with Panama hats, fruits, and suspicious looking native candy were waved ashore in a cloud of disappointment. In the afternoon back came the boat and the young surgeon prepared to meet them ceremoniously at the foot of the companion ladder. He could have spared himself the trouble; the little boat stopped fifty feet off while the port doctor handed out a judgment of five days' quarantine. Twelve dollars and a half a head for the first cabin and a dollar and a quarter, gold, for the steerage, and all additional! Going into quarantine was not, from a purely business standpoint, without its profits. And also the Ecuadorans and the Peruvians once more met with a common bond of sympathy.

A barefooted Chileno sailor who had been already to haul down the 44
big yellow pest flag at the foremast belayed the halliards permanently
to the bridge pin rail and trotted off to help in putting over a small boat.
This boat flying a small yellow flag, was anchored a half-mile away and
during the days of quarantine was the only means of communication with
the shore. Each morning through the medium of this anchored boat we did
the ship's business with the shore and from it the steward would return with
watermelons, eggs, turkeys, ducks, and vegetables and quinine for the
doctor. Occasionally from day to day the port doctor, the port captain, or a
member of the sanitary junta would be rowed out in the official boat to look
us over and the tottering wrecks between the decks would be mustered at an
open cargo port for a distant and sceptical inspection. The local steamship
agents, through the daily messages in the anchored boat, kept us interested
with the daily rumors—we were a plague ship, a floating charnel house
plying our way shamelessly from port to port, a leper of the high seas
shunned even by Guayaquil—and one vague and indefinite that seemed to
suggest that a port official contemplated a sea trip in a week or so and 45
was engineering this means of giving us the pleasure of his company
when he was ready. It was interesting.

CHAPTER III

THROUGH A TROPICAL QUARANTINE

One morning when the official sanitary junta—the port doctor, the town druggist, and three shopkeepers, all of whom except the first, were contentedly selling us supplies—were making their inspection within easy hailing distance the returning Peruvian diplomat dealt himself a hand in the game. In a few pointed remarks he demanded that they send a doctor on board to make an examination. The port captain returned an indignant oration in which, after paying tribute to the ancestral deeds of the diplomat's forebears, he hurled shame at the diplomat for his selfish lack of patriotism in so distrusting the conclusions and acts of his countrymen, obviously he had been so enervated by effete foreign associations that—that—well, it sounded like good oratory anyway. There was no doubt in their minds that we were concealing yellow fever.

Slowly the five days of quarantine passed with this solemn official 47 mockery. The Chinamen ceased from troubling and yielded the daily shilling, the chicken coop was returned to the authority of the steward—although once, for variety, a Chinaman shared it with a couple of turkeys for some hours—and then the final day arrived.

Leisurely the official boat rowed out. The passengers for Ecuador, it announced, were to be transferred to the leprous-looking brigantine where they would remain in quarantine until they could be transferred to a northbound steamer. Incidentally they were privileged to pay twelve sols a day, each, for board. Then the official boat was rowed back; and that was all.

Indignantly the passengers met and decided to pay no more daily quarantine charges—it seemed as if the company needed a little stimulating, perhaps;

the purser chuckled sympathetically and then a self-appointed committee looked over the chicken coop with a speculative eye. It was heartening, for at least the monotony would be broken. That night an unofficial boat stole out of the darkness alongside; confirmed the rumor that the port captain was holding us for a week longer to suit his convenience; then the messenger disappeared in the night. This was interesting as pure news matter and that was all. 48

Came the morning of the sixth day without change. And then the diplomat's cables to Lima had effect. A doctor had been appointed on a cabled order from Lima to make a real examination; he came out accompanied by a sanitary junta of very sour officials, climbed on board, and began his work. They pulled away and returned in the afternoon.

The young ship's surgeon and the new doctor shouted the report across the water. Barring the three cases of malarial fever between decks we had a clean bill of health. The official boat drew a trifle nearer; in the stern sheets the port doctor scanned a formidable looking medical volume that lay open on his knees and the druggist bent his head over the same pages. Solemnly they accepted little test tubes that the ship's surgeon passed across to them and examined them gravely. They turned a few pages of the book and asked a question. The new doctor answered it promptly. Again they shuffled the pages and came back with another; another answer, and then more hasty poring. 49

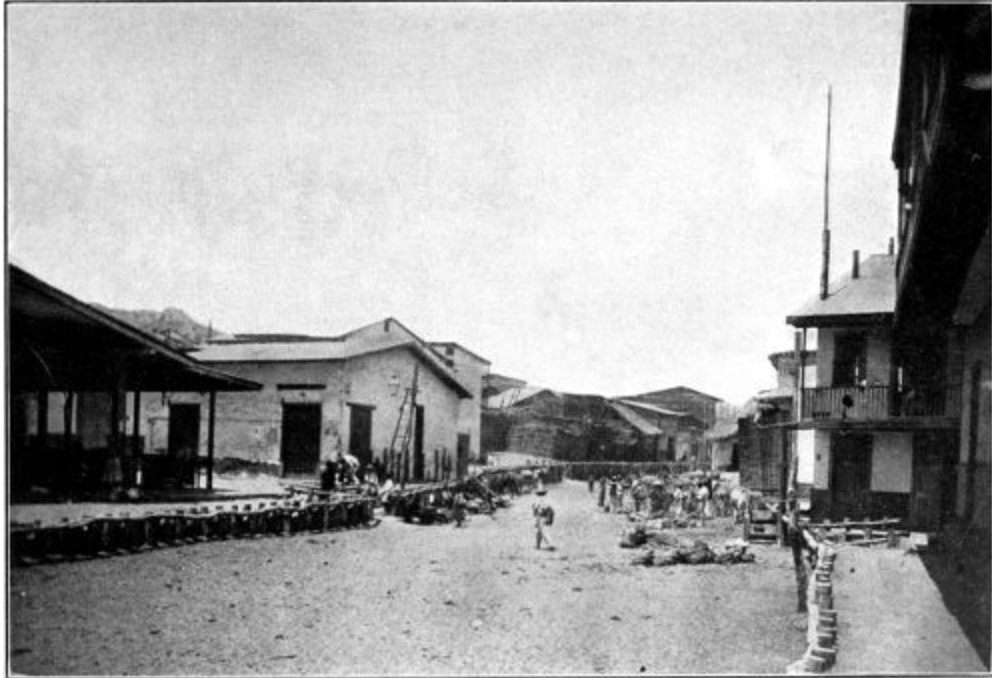


WHAT THE DIPLOMAT SAID WAS DIRECT AND VOLUBLE.

At length came their decision: it was true that the excellent doctors had described no such symptoms as were standardized for either yellow fever or the *peste bubonica*, but there was nothing to prevent those doctors from stating and confirming that which was not true; therefore be it resolved that we had yellow fever, but were concealing it! They were the incorruptible guardians of a nation's health.

What the diplomat said was direct and voluble and carried perfectly across the calm evening sea: Heaven was a sad witness of his unpatriotic perfidy for he threatened them with a touch of patriotism direct from Lima upon the hour of his arrival—however distant or uncertain that might be. A 50 little conference and they voted on our admission, two and two—could anything be fairer! Their honest hearts thanked Heaven for the thought of this simple and adroit deadlock that preserved their official activities and at the same time kept us in a profitable quarantine. Tersely it was pointed out by the diplomat that by virtue of the cabled commission the new doctor was a member of the board—vote again!

That evening we wandered through the dust and sand of Payta and rode grandly, and briefly, to the out-skirts of the town in the single mule-and-rope tram that skirted the beach. It is well in the troubled times of quarantine on the West Coast always to travel with an accredited diplomat on board.

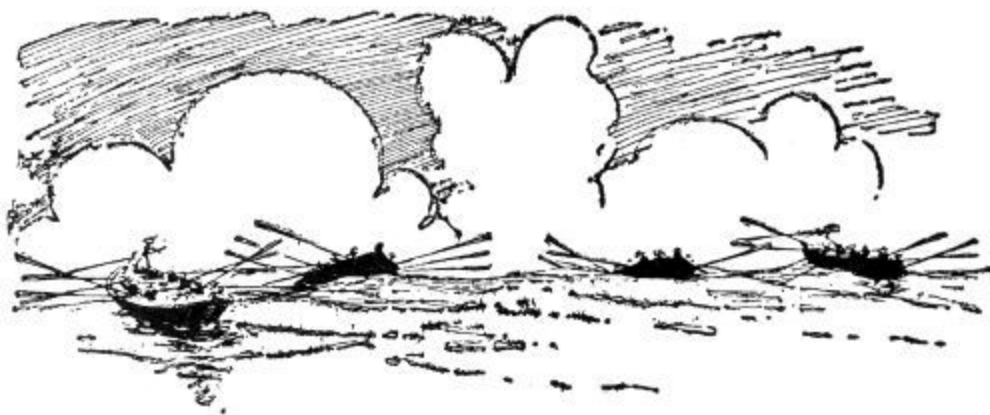


A Wide, Dusty Canal Which in the Intervals Between Showers Serves as a Market

All next day the whirr and clatter of the steam-winchs and the bang 51 of cargo kept up and again we visited the dusty port, wading through the lines of Panama hat sellers that lined up to greet the landing of our small boat. Of hotel runners there were none, this being due to the fact that there was but one hotel to which the stray custom is bound to drift. At the hotel we saw a few palms and tropical blooms in tubs and in a carefully irrigated patio, for Payta is—like all that West Coast—rainless. As a cold matter of meteorological fact it *does* rain sometimes; I accidentally started an acrimonious discussion by a merely polite remark on the weather as to whether it had been nine, eleven, or fourteen years since the last rain. In apparent proof of this there is a wide, dusty canal bulkheaded with piling on either side which in these intervals between showers serves as a native market. Little red flags flutter from the *chicherias* where the opaque, yellow, Indian corn beer is sold, ranging in flavor and potency from warm buttermilk to the wicked “stone-fence” of New Jersey.

Back of the town a trail wades through the sand to the crest of the long bluffs; the feet of countless pack trains have worn a driveway through the

ridge until, stepping through, there are suddenly spread before the view the endless stretches of a dried and dusty desert that has been an ocean's prehistoric bed. The hot airs quiver and boil from the twisting valleys or ridges of blistering sand and rock and through the pulsing heat the occasional pack train in the distance turns to a wavering, shimmering thread. To the imagination a desert rises as a dull, gray expanse 52 endless in its colorless monotony; here there was a riot of color, every hue, raw and gorgeous—except green—from the soft purples and cool sapphire of the shadows to the blazing yellows and reds and white of the open spaces. And in the garish stretch of a dead ocean there slowly rises like a parching thirst a longing for a sweep of tender green.



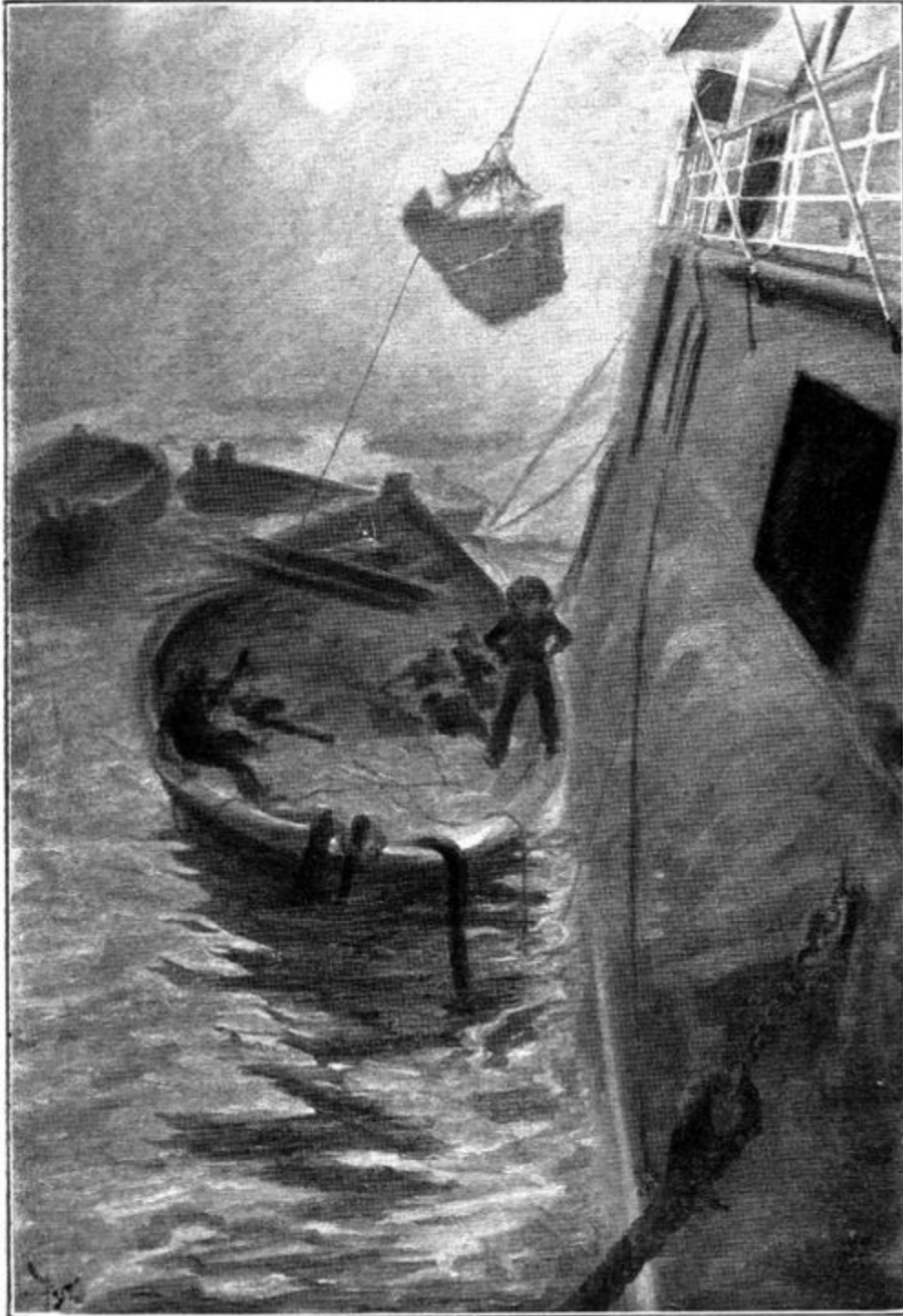
CLOSE RESEMBLANCE TO AN ARMY OF DRUNKEN BUGS.

The little governmental touch from Lima had cleared the path of quarantine and we began a dot-and-carry-one course down the coast from Payta; every day our winches whirred and clattered off some dusty, sand-blown port. Before our anchor had touched bottom in the open road-stead a fleet of *lanchas*, heavy, double-ended, open lighters of from ten to twenty-five tons capacity were crawling over the water; the dozen long oars that were their means of locomotion—and that were manipulated on an independent 53 competitive basis—spraddled on each side gave the fleet a close resemblance to an army of drunken bugs struggling forward on uncertain legs. There was always a race to the *Mapocho's* side and the first to get there caught the heaving line.

Once a lancha defeated in a close finish came on and cut the heaving line so that its rival was left with the useless section while it hurriedly hauled in on the hawser. Instantly a fine naval engagement was in progress as the lanchas locked like a couple of old Carthaginian galleys. By the aid of force peace was established and the rightful and original award of the hawser sustained; had it not been, as the first officer explained, they would need a new heaving line at every port.

The bluffs of the coast gave way to hills and these in turn to higher ones; the Andes were closing in on the Pacific. At times the great mountain chain towered from the very water's edge in a succession of steep cliffs, each receding tier softening in the distance and rising through the slowly shifting strata of clouds until only the gashes of white snow picked out the towering peaks. Here and there steep, rocky islets fringed the coast line and we stood far out to save the chances, and yet there was no appreciable change 54 in the proportions of the tremendous mountain range. The sense of proportion and distance was lost in the comparison of these vast reaches. A rocky islet, a steep sugar-loaf affair, rose from the ocean perhaps five feet—not much as an island or a mountain peak. Through the binoculars a tiny unknown speck at the base developed into a full-rigged bark with tapering masts above which the sugar-loaf rock rose for thousands of feet in the clear air, and on it was a wretched colony of guano workers.

Then the coast opened out into level reaches again with occasional lines of irrigation ditches showing a thread of green. Occasionally—twice I think—there was actually a landlocked harbor. It was one of these, Chimbote, that James G. Blaine proposed to use or secure as a naval base and coaling station. It is perfectly sheltered with a narrow, bottle-neck entrance guarded by a rocky island in the middle which is covered with a wriggling film of seals that are perfectly indifferent to the close passage of ships or men.



Every Day our Winches Whirred and Clattered off some Dusty, Sand-blown Port

In this harbor rode the queerest of sea-going craft. In Mexico I had once seen a Chinaman fit himself up a home from about eight feet of

one end of a hopelessly wrecked dugout, take in a partner, and then the two of them paddle off up the river in the fishing business, sleeping and eating aboard the flat-iron shaped thing. Here in this case was a bow and stern bolted together without a midship section. And both the bow and stern were those of a fairly full size tramp freighter. The bow was the ram bow of a war ship and back of it there was barely room to squeeze in a capstan and a tiny hatch; the foremast shared the bridge, a funnel and whistle jammed themselves up against the bridge, while the short distance to the stern rail gave room for a squat cabin out of which rose the mainmast. A score of Chimbote lanchas were as big—bigger—and where this telescoped liner would find room for cargo or coal after providing for engines and a galley is a mystery. Yet it does carry cargo and ambles along from port to port a tragic marvel of compression.

The day before, off Huanchazo, where a storm far out had piled up a heavy, oily groundswell, that even put the racks on the tables, a wealthy old Peruvian lady had been hoisted abroad in a cask clinging to her son. She was a garrulous old soul, powdered like a marshmallow, with three 56 chins and a little moustache, and her son was the very apple of her eye. Therefore, son was what one might expect. His adolescent and mature ambition was to be the amorous cut-up of the coast and so far he had succeeded generously in making a smug, self-satisfied nuisance of himself. He counted doting mother's allowance publicly, drank warm champagne noisily when thrifty mother was not around, and dressed in the Huanchazo idea of French fashions for men. In the morning he did not appear. Mother explained fondly—but not the truth. She did not know it.

Passengers are warned not to go between decks after dark, the steerage hutches and the crew have the freedom of that deck. Son prowled down on some shifty little romantic project of his own. In the darkness he suddenly felt two sharp little pricks in the skin of his back and one sharp little prod in front; they felt very, very much like the points of knives. Up went son's hands promptly and in the blackness he felt heavy hands pulling out his maternal allowance—the beautiful money with which he was to flaunt his fascinations in Lima. Hence no Limanean gay life—mother it seemed was a thrifty Spartan in money matters—and son was in his berth, weeping. 57
A steward told us the latter, confidentially of course.

Samancho, Chimbote, Salivari, Suppe, and then at last, in the daybreak of the morning after the last named and in the midst of a soft, clouded day, Callao. There was the usual customs search of the baggage—a maddening process to an Englishman, mildly irritating to a Frenchman, and accepted meekly and placidly by Americans as a matter of course from a thorough training in our own home ports. I have never passed through any country that could give as close an imitation of our own thorough methods of dock robbery and tariff brigandage as Peru. A quarter of an hour by train through a rich soil that can be worked only by irrigation and Lima, the first halt on the continent, has been attained.

For two weeks there was nothing to do but to idle in Lima. A delightful city full of the old contrasts of highly civilized, sybaritic pleasures alongside of the squalid, aimless poverty of the survivors of a devastated empire. There is the Bois where fashionable equipages with cockaded, copper-colored lackeys—possibly in bare or sandaled feet—on the box, silver-mounted harness and heavy, Chilean bred coach horses jingle past in procession on Sunday afternoons while some gallant Peruanos lopes alongside with huge silver stirrups and a saddle almost solid with bullion; the sodden side streets where the buzzard and the scavenger pig are man's best friend; the cathedral where lies the dessicated body of Pizarro in a marble casket like an aquarium, the one open side covered with glass through which may be seen the remains of that treacherous old buccaneer, with his head re-fastened by a silver wire to guard against a repetition of the theft; the cathedral itself with its murky interior smoked by the votive candles of millions of conscript converts; its queer carvings where the ecclesiastical memories of architecture have been freely rendered by the Indian stone-cutters; the clubs, the cafés—and the ambrosial coffee—chapels with the bullion covered walls, the wretched tobacco at high tariff—extorted prices—all these and then the Hotel Maury.



Lima, a Delightful City of Contrasts

Peace be to Savarin, to Delmonico, and to Chamberlain. They did well in their way. But they never served a squid, or cuttlefish, floating like a small hot-water bottle, tender and delicious in an inky sauce of their own founding; nor a starfish sprawled in a five-pointed dream of savory, lobster-like succulence; nor “*señoritas*”—a delicate species of scallop—each with its tiny scarlet tongue draped across the pearl-white bivalve bosom and that, steamed or not, melted in one supreme ecstatic flavor; nor five inch *langostin* fresh from the cold waters of the Andean hills, nor compounded or invented a strawberry gin cocktail of surpassing allurements—cooled by a

piece of ice kept in a flannel-lined drawer and returned thereto after stirring. None of these things had they and so by just that much they fell short.

In the Hotel Maury there was a written bill of fare for those who could merely read. But for the expert, the fastidious—or the adventurous—there was a redoubt in the main room whose flanking bastions and crest were a solid array of great joints and little joints, steaks, chops, unnamed fish in platoons and señoritas in brigades, fruits, vegetables and all of the foregoing—and more—laid out in tiers and terraces whose foundations were of cool, inviting seaweeds and mosses, and still further seductively embellished with a variety of paper ribbons and crests and cockades until one 60 almost lost sight of the pagodas of gaudy, many-storied cakes and confections that rose like watch towers at judicious intervals along the battlements. It was a salon.

To the shuffling, woolen-capped, sandaled, or bare-footed Indian at one's heels the directions were given, you chose what you would as they thus reposed in the altogether and then repaired to await in a sawdust-floored cavern at one side and in a state of serene and expectant bliss the certain pleasures of the very immediate future. You waited, it is true, at a warped table with a stained cloth on which a bent cruet supplied the only note of elegance. And, lest any of the precious viands be lost in transit or breakage, you knew that you would be served with a substantial, hard-shell crockery only slightly more vulnerable than reinforced concrete. Presently your Indian reappeared in a shuffling trot scattering sawdust from the prow of each sandal like a harbor pile-driver under full speed—the hard-shell crockery is white hot, but he has the hands of a salamander—and then with a flourish he drops an assorted collection of tableware somewhere within reach—you are served. And what a repast! Peace be to Savarin, Delmonico and—enough. Comparisons are invidious and the Maury can stand 61 alone in the continent of his choosing.

Very shortly the sailing day came for, since it was not possible to land in Mollendo owing to that port being afflicted with a quarantine, it had been necessary to catch a steamer that would put us through the surf at Quilca, a hole in a cliff that has its only function in these times of quarantine. A farewell inspection of the redoubt and bastions, a recharging of the bottle of

salicylic acid and alcohol, which while it had in no way abated the fleas of the Hotel Maury, yet had mitigated their consequences, and Lima and Callao drifted into the background with the closing day. From Quilca in some way we would connect by muleback and packtrain across the desert to the desert station of La Joya with the railroad to Arequipa and thence to Lake Titicaca and across to La Paz.

CHAPTER IV

A FORCED MARCH ACROSS THE DESERT OF ATACAMA

The stand-by bell of the *Limari* tinkled from her engine-room, our baggage and freight were safely stowed in the wallowing Peruvian lanchas alongside, and the Bolivian mail followed. The Captain of the Port and the Inspector of Customs balanced down the swaying gangway and dropped into the gig alongside. We followed.

Before us stretched the long, barren line of rocky coast, fading away in the soft mist of a Peruvian winter. For it is winter here, damp and chill, in September. Directly ahead is a narrow, ragged break in the cliffs. Inside is Quilca, the side door to La Paz in days of quarantine.

We cross the barrier of half-concealed rock before us, and soon we are in the smooth waters of the cañon beyond. On either side the red volcanic bluffs rise for perhaps two hundred feet, their faces scarred and 63 seamed or beaten into grotesque forms by the Pacific of ages past. Up this defile we rowed for several hundred yards, then we rounded a ragged promontory, and the full glories of the metropolis of Quilca burst upon us. A broken flight of steps led from the water, and, back of it all, two thin straggling lines of woven-cane huts bounded the solitary street. Two houses, more dismally pretentious than the rest, with mud walls and corrugated-iron roofs, marked the local seat of government. In the distance rose the red volcanic hills, dull, flat, and shadowless under the clouded sky of the tropical winter. This was all of Quilca.

We had cabled from Lima for horses and a pack-train to meet us and bring us over the desert of San José, where we could get the train to the interior.

The morning after our arrival we were awakened by the clatter of the pack-mules as they passed our quarters, and the “*Hola, hola! Huish, huish!*” of their *arrieros*. It was our train.

In the middle of the lone street the *arrieros* were busy lashing our smaller packages in rawhide nets. Scattered about in the sand were the larger 64 cases of freight—prospecting machinery and mining hardware—amounting to a little over a ton in weight; and still under the guard of Agamemnon in our quarters of the night was the personal equipment—trunks, instruments, rifles, shotguns, cartridges and powder and shot—making nineteen hundred pounds more. And blocking the only thoroughfare of Quilca were the twelve pack-mules—long-haired, disconsolate animals, with pepper-and-salt complexions, save where patches of bare hide showed the chafing of the pack-ropes. They looked as though our own regulation army load of two hundred pounds per mule would be far too great. And they were to divide four thousand pounds among them.

It was eleven o’clock in the forenoon when the last diamond-hitch was thrown and the last pack lashed in place. The *arrieros* swung their long, knotted rawhide thongs, the saddle-galled bell-mare clanged as she led the way, and we climbed into our saddles and fell in behind the straggling mules as they led the way up the dismal street and out into the desert.

The trail rose sharply as it left Quilca, and then wound around to the right, where it joined the old desert road used by the Spaniards after 65 their conquest, and for centuries before that by the Incas in their barter with the coast. On each side rose white walls of rotten rock, higher than our heads as we rode by, the path between them worn down by plodding hoofs for untold ages. Upon this path the rock was ground to a fine white powder that rose in clouds and covered us until we looked ahead as through the mists of a fog. Vaguely, over the walls, the ragged volcanic hills silhouetted against the sky.

We kept on ascending between these winding walls, at length emerging on a narrow table-land—the top of the cliffs we had seen from the decks of the *Limari*. A short distance over the level ground, and then from the farther edge we looked down on the flat, stony bottom of the Vitor Valley—a ragged gorge that wound a tortuous course through the desert. A narrow

trail with short, sharp angles zigzagged down a steep gully to the bottom. The mules carefully picked their way down among the loose stones, halting inquiringly at times to choose perhaps a shorter cut. If it seemed to their instinct feasible, they gathered their hind legs under them, their front hoofs sticking stiffly out in front, and slid down on their bellies, in a cloud of dust, carrying with them a small avalanche of loose shale as they landed in a section of the trail below. 66

You sit back in your saddle—all saddles in these parts have cruppers and breastplates to prevent your sliding over the animal's ears as you go down or slipping off behind as you go up a mountain path—and as you watch the tossing line of packs below, the speculation forces itself as to the consequences of a mule's misstep. That it is not all idle speculation is shown by the scattered skeletons below in the valley, bleached to varying degrees of dull white.

We do not descend to the pavement of river-washed stones on the bed of the valley. Twenty yards above, the trail leads abruptly off to the left into a narrow ditch worn in the face of the cliff, which in places has been scooped out to allow for the width of the packs, leaving an insecure overhang of rock above.

For miles we followed the contour of the valley, clinging to the steep slopes and the sides of the cliffs that hedged it in. Then down a clayey bank the trail started diagonally across the bottom of the valley to the farther side. Occasionally we would come suddenly on a little clearing where two or three Indians, grisly through the ashen grime, were burning charcoal—little twigs scarcely bigger than one's finger. We came out at the farther side of the valley against the cliffs of the mesa beyond. On the little stony flat before them, three straggling huts of woven cane with thatched roofs of barley straw marked a lonely hacienda. A few dirty Indians and their slatternly wives lounged about. A short distance beyond, the trail led over the steep talus at the base of the cliffs; then on up through a narrow, wedge-shaped crevice that wound back and forth in short ascending turns, till it disappeared over the edge of the mesa a thousand feet above. For miles on either side it was the only break in the cliff; and as we looked at 67

the stiff prospect ahead of us, the rocky descent of a few hours before seemed like gentle morning exercise in the park.

For a short distance the trail ran straight up over the loose shale; then the real ascent began. Ten yards to the right, then ten to the left, and steeper with each change. The mules humped their backs and scratched along on the toe of the hoof, choosing their foothold with the nice precision of 68 a cat crossing a sprinkled street. Two turns to the right, then two to the left; then a rest of half a minute, when without urging they would recommence the ascent. Slowly and tediously we climbed, and finally rode out on a broad, level plateau that stretched away and merged with the desert hills of the distance. Below us toiled our pack-train, tediously weaving back and forth on the zigzag trail. As each section reached the level ground, the arriero dismounted and went among his animals, talking mule-talk and easing loads to a better balance or tightening the stretched cinches. All the unkempt, hairy sides were heaving with heavy breaths. A few lay down—a bad sign in a pack-animal. But in twenty minutes every mule was apparently as fresh as ever, wandering about and foraging on the stiff, wiry bunch-grass of the arid soil. And when we started they stepped off easily under their loads, with their long ears briskly flapping. The two small arrieros left us here and returned to Quilca, for the chief difficulties were passed, and the rest was but persistent plodding over the desert to San José.

The trail over the plateau had been worn in parallel furrows like the thin strip of a newly ploughed field. Each mule chose his furrow and 69 insistently walked there, resenting the effort of any of the others to get in ahead of him. When a collision occurred you could hear the rattle of nail-kegs and the clatter of shovels, picks, and hardware a half-mile off as they butted and shoved for the right of way. Our two remaining arrieros rode in the rear, muffled in their gaudy woolen ponchos. Occasionally a lean arm would shoot out from under its folds and the knotted thong bite the flank of some lagging mule. These mule-drivers' thongs are long, braided strips of rawhide spliced into the curb-rein—they use no snaffle—ending in a heavy knot. Its twelve or fourteen feet lie coiled in the bridle-hand until called into service. Then with a twist of the wrist, it feeds rapidly out through the right hand, humming like a sawmill as it circles round his head, and landing with a thwack that generally corrects the indisposition for which it is intended.

Often the arrieros imitate its vicious hum, and it will frequently prove sufficient.

The trail was distinct enough—there was no fear of wandering away from it—a slender ditch worn in the bed of the arroyo. Here and there a 70 ragged little hole dug in the soft walls of white rock marked the lonely home of some desert badger; and again we would ride past whole colonies of them. In these badger villages the holes fairly honeycombed the sides of the trail and the bluff walls of the arroyos, and the shuffling claw-marks of the badger trails scarred the dust in all directions. There were no other signs of life; not even the scaly windings of a lizard were to be seen, and the sparse patches of bunch-grass had long since disappeared.

Mile after mile we pushed up these narrow valleys. The badger-holes disappeared, and strange desert growths began to appear from time to time. As we had ascended, the clouds had seemed to lower, and now we could see on either hand the light mists floating about us.

One more steep loomed ahead. We pushed through the damp strata of mists clinging to its sides, and came out on the flat land above in the long level rays of the setting sun. Below us, over the clouds, it cast its cold, blue shadows and sparkling high lights, transforming those shifting, unstable vapors into rippling waves of golden foam. To the east the whole desert glowed with color. The long furrows of the trail wove themselves in 71 patterns of orange and purple. Rolling shadows, rich in their changing violets, faded slowly and softly away to the left. Gorgeous reds and scarlets, madders, oranges, crimsons—every brilliant color of the palette—spread in glowing masses, changing with each minute of the dying day. The saddle-stiffness, cracked lips, and parched throat, dry with the alkaline dust, were forgotten—even the dismal clank of the bell-mare slowly toiling in the lead mellowed to a far-off chime—and in those few brief moments of the vanishing day we felt the subtle desert spell.

The shadows grew colder and merged one into another; the desert dimmed, a few stars glistened, and, as though a door had closed behind us, we passed into the night. Twilight is short in the tropics. Down by the horizon on our right the Southern Cross slowly lighted up—four straggling points of light that feebly struggled with the blazing stars about them. We closed in behind

the swaying shadow of the mules, from which came the subdued rattle of packs and creaking cinches, that were the only sounds to disturb the dark stillness. It was but a little way now; in another hour we would be in camp.

Out of the shadow ahead came the clash of picks and shovels, the 72 rattle of a load as it struck the sand, and the swaying shades of the mules divided around a black mass stretched on the trail. It was the first note of exhaustion. For twelve hours the mules had plodded at the same steady gait, rested only by the halt on the cliff, miles back, and the wonder of it was that, with their loads, none had dropped before. As we rode up we could see against the faint starlit ground the sprawling silhouette of the beast, lying as he fell, the long, expressive ears limp on the desert sand. The arrieros dismounted and pried him on his feet again, and patiently he hit the trail. In the next half-hour four more went down. At one time half our mules were down, and we strung out over the desert for two miles picking them up.

A few minutes later we swung off to the right, stumbling through a series of broken ditches—the remains of the old Inca irrigation systems that ran for miles back into the Andes. Then we dropped down steep winding paths, our shoulders scraping against walls of sand as we turned to the right or left around the corners. The mules apparently understood that a camp was 73 not far ahead, and seemed fresher. Soon we rode out on a flat, sitting straight in our saddles once more, with the hard rattle of stones underfoot and the cool wet sound of running water just ahead. Then the noiseless, padded ground of a corral, and the mules lay down and we climbed out of our saddles. It was the camp at last.

A dried old Indian appeared from somewhere, and by the light of his tallow dip I made out the time—half past three in the morning. We had come seventy-six miles without water or rest.

At a little after six we were awake. The sun was rising above the cliffs that lined the valley, though the chill of the night air still lingered. Coffee awaited us in the openwork cane hut of the Indian proprietor of this hacienda, and as soon as we finished it we would start. In the daylight we could see that we were in a broad level valley. Through the center of the valley ran a brook—a portion of the same Vitor River of the day before, but

now dwindled to a tiny thread. About us clustered a few buildings with low walls of broken stone from some Inca ruin. A short distance off was the mission church of the desert, announced by a cross of two twigs tied with a strip of rawhide and surmounting an excrescence of broken stones evidently intended as a steeple. We drank the thick, black coffee, for which the Indian refused both money and presents, and at seven o'clock we started. 74

It was all white sand now, and everywhere the same hot, white glare hedged us in. There was not a breath of air, and as the sun rose higher it beat down with a constantly growing heat. Then once more out on the flat desert above. For endless miles it stretched, quivering in the heated air of the morning. Away down in the east the long line of the ragged, snow-covered Andes loomed up, their summits thrust through the low banks of clouds along the horizon. All signs of a trail had disappeared. The little furrows left by the passing pack-trains were filled in by the hot desert winds that blow always from the west. It is the unvarying steadiness of these winds that causes the curious crescent-shaped dunes of sand found on this desert. There were thousands of these shimmering in the long distances of the heated glare, from little ones just blown into existence and not six inches from tip to tip up to great banks forty feet high and with two hundred feet between the horns. Superheated puffs of air blew from them that struck like a breath from the first run of molten slag. The heat crept between your closed teeth and dried your tongue. When you spoke it was from the throat, and the words seemed to shrivel in your mouth. 75

For twenty miles we plodded over the scorching glare, and then, far ahead, a small dark patch appeared. Slowly it developed and became a dull, dusty green—scraggly palms and a few peach-trees; then a railroad station with a hot galvanized-iron roof. It was San José.

In the half-hour to train-time our saddles were off and stored, the baggage and freight separated and shipped, and we ourselves stretched comfortably in the shade of the agent's thatched porch. The Arequipa train backed in, and the agent and conductor loaded the one box car, and we followed our outfit in.

CHAPTER V

AREQUIPA THE CITY OF CHURCHES

The baking heat of the desert boiled in through the open doors of the freight car, the blazing sun beat down upon the roof, and, inside, a thousand essences from its variegated life simmered and blended. Together with some half dozen of assorted native passengers we had jammed ourselves in among a jumble of food-stuffs and mining hardware in transit. The box car banged and groaned and occasionally halted on the desert at the hail of some wayfarer whom we helped cordially up and stirred into the odoriferous oven. Sociably we rode in this freight car up from the desert oasis of San José because this freight car constituted the whole of the train. Farther on at Vitor there was hope of a real train.

In the scant space left by the cargo I had wedged myself against a stack of dried fish while my feet reposed easily on the body of a newly dead 77 pig on his way to the market in Arequipa joggling in time to the uncertain swaying of the car; Agamemnon fitted his saddle-stiff joints into a niche in the freight and went peacefully to sleep, indifferent to the broken barrel of lime that sifted its contents over him. And so it was that we pulled in to Vitor, a town that hung on the edge of the desert from which rose the foothills of the first Andean range to the eastward. Stiffly we climbed down and out into the heated, but untainted air and idled in the station shadow until the train should signify its readiness to receive us.

I was passing through the patio of the station when I was briefly conscious of a rush, a choked snarl, and in the same instant my whole right leg seemed to have stepped into a vise clamped to a jig-saw; the impact spun me half around and I found myself helpless in the grip of a huge, flea-bitten mongrel that just lacked, by what appeared to be a mere shadow of a margin, sufficient power to shake me rat fashion. I judged that it was about

eight years afterward when an Indian leisurely appeared and clattered at the brute. Adroitly it let go and disappeared before I could get a sufficiently able-bodied rock out of the pavement for I was unarmed, having packed my gun when preparing to leave San José.



Post

But it turned out to have been purely illusion after all, as was apparent on the assurances of the lean buccaneer who had the restaurant privilege and acted as station master. There was not a dog about the place no, señor! I pointed to the dorsal facade of my battle-scarred person. *Caramba*—investigation, *prontissimo!* The lean buccaneer called and an Indian responded. It was the same Indian who had driven off the dog. He 79 listened to the buccaneer. Then he replied at length and with gestures. I listened, but it was in Quechua they spoke, a dialect that sounds not unlike German interspersed with an occasional vocal imitation of a brass band. The buccaneer again turned to me:

“Señor, it is as I said. There is no dog,—there has been no dog,—I have no dog—it is a very great pity,—I sympathize!”

It revealed to me a power of imagination I had not suspected myself of possessing, though Agamemnon who was pinning up the rents and counting the punctures still regarded it as an actual occurrence.

The blistering hours on the trail across the desert had left us as parched as a dried sponge, crackly and dusty and with brittle, peeling skins ravenous for moisture. Outside the newly made-up train on either side straggled a collection of grimy, sand-blown Indians—mainly women—peddling queer, uncertain foods from earthen pots or battered tin cans that were in great demand among the sophisticated natives while, on a higher plane of dignity, a fat, placid Cholo sent the first native urchin on whom his eye fell 80 into the station presently to deliver to you a bottle of unripe, bilious beer as warm as the hot shadow in which it had been kept. Its color, foam, and the characteristic shape of the bottles were means of identification, but, with the eyes closed, it did not differ materially from catnip tea or any of the old home remedy stand-bys. And never did an orange look more nobly luscious, for the round, unripe, green skin of the native product enfolds a heart of nectar.

From Vitor on we wound through twisting gorges or steep valleys, barren of all save cactus and the desert shale and boulders. Steadily the train climbed.

Always on one side or the other were the traces of the old Inca empire and its industrious dominion; here a fragmentary stretch of road and a ruined gateway, now and again the almost obliterated ruins of some old town or village, but always, running along the sides of the steep hills or through the valleys, the dusty remains of a tremendous system of irrigation ditches. Where once has been a busy land, soft with the green of growing things, there are the cactus and the badger and the occasional baked-mud hut of an Indian wringing a dull living from the desert, Heaven knows how, where his ancestors once farmed and thrived in multitudes.



In Arequipa the City of Churches

The contrast stirs the dullest fancy. And on the side of the spoilers for their gains? Only the dessicated remains of a treacherous old pirate that may be viewed—for a very moderate tip—through the side of a marble aquarium back in Lima as a cathedral curio and, in Europe, an asthmatic and toothless Spain drained to decrepitude by her own remorseless greed and predaceous piety. 81

In the long rays of the sunset the train rolled across the level stretches of the high valley in which lies the city of Arequipa. The low, flat houses—more or less earthquake proof—and the red tile roofs were radiant in the mellow glow. Beyond rose the dull, volcanic slopes of Misti in an immense cone, while best of all, in the one story hotel of rambling patios in that city of earthquakes we were once more able to collect sufficient water at one time to accomplish a bath. In Arequipa the first train stops exhausted; *mañana*, or at the worst only a few days later, a second train leaves to climb the first high pass and leave its passengers on the shores of Lake Titicaca.

Throughout the city there is scarcely a building that cannot show patched cracks or gaping cornices that are the scars of earthquakes; here and there a heap of rock and plaster or fragmentary walls abandoned to the Indian beggars mark the years of great *temblors*. Rarely does a private house attempt a second story and the marvel is how the churches or the cathedral, with their high walls and towers, have been able to survive at all! Though often cracked and battered, yet in some way they have weathered the subterranean gales. 82

And what a city for churches! On every street, on all but every turn, there rises an ecclesiastical edifice with its grim walls of faded, peeling kalsomine and its porticos, perhaps ornamented with odd stone carvings that preserve a strong Indian flavor in spite of the old monkish guidance. Whole blocks in the heart of the city are bounded by enormous walls enclosing the sacred precincts of a convent or monastery. I was informed that out of every twelve inhabitants, men, women, and children, one was in some of the many orders behind the high walls. Each day in some part of the city is a fiesta in honor of some particular saint who is heralded and honored by a vast popping of firecrackers, squibs, and rockets and a grand procession through the neighborhood. Often several saints' 83

fiestas fall on the same day and from all directions come the rattle of firecrackers and the plop of the daylight bombs or rockets and any casual stroll will bring one against a procession heavy with the smoke of incense or uncanny with the thin, wailing chanting of the celebrants.



HARDLY A DAY WITHOUT ITS SAINT'S FIESTA.

The whole city centers around an extraordinarily large central plaza on one side of which is the ancient cathedral with its tiers of bells in the bell tower still lashed to the massive beams by rawhide thongs. The remaining 84 three sides are business arcades of small shops, the pastries, and cafés; the bullet chipped arches still confirming the earnestness with which many a civil election has been contested between the liberal and the clerical elements after the returns were counted—or, quite as often, during that process.

The chief industry is in a few machine shops and central supply houses for the mines of the interior. Outside of this there is nothing. A few small shops with the cheapest and shabbiest of stocks cluster around the plaza; on

Sunday that same plaza is scantily filled with the select of Arequipa while the stocky police keep it cleared of the tattered urchins and Indians of the weekdays. There is the dull, oppressive sense of wretched poverty or genteel destitution. It is in the sharpest contrast with the general run of other and typical Latin cities; the whole city seems to have become encysted in a hopeless poverty in which any form of local energy is permitted to find expression only in ecclesiastical fireworks or mystical parades of wailing and incense.

The start from Arequipa up to Lake Titicaca is made in the early morning. The huge cone of Misti—looking for all the world like a vast slag 85 dump—stands forth with telescopic detail in the high, rare air mellowed in the cool morning sun. Prickling and glistening on the even slopes or in the purple shadows, the frost still clings like a lichen to the barren rocks and there is a thin touch of briskness in the air like the taste of fall on a September morning back home.



AN ANDEAN TOURING CAR

Down at the station the departure of the train is in the nature of an event like the sailing of a steamer. Already the train—one first-class and two 86 second-class coaches—is filled, aisles and seats, with a shuffling crowd already in the ecstasy of a noisy and mournful, but interminable leave taking. Their view of the hazards of a journey by rail may not be so far out of the way for on the steep grades of these Andean roads a train has been known to break in half and go scuttling back down hill until the hand-brakes take effect; also, and later, on the ancient engine I observed with interest the native engineer screw down his throttle and then, in starting, bang it open with a monkey wrench.

Presently, as the hour of departure drew near, the conductor appeared and began sorting out the passengers. *Rebozo*-muffled ladies and Peruvian gentlemen who failed to show tickets and who had been picnicking in the seats burst into one final explosion of embracings and goodbyes before descending to the tracks where they took up a position alongside the car windows. The second-class were not admitted to their hard benches except on proof of actually possessing a ticket, but the stubby trainmen had their hands full in keeping the car door clear for they were continually choked with Cholo or Indian groups committing last messages to memory. Their windows were jammed with heads and clawing arms exchanging or 87 accepting dripping foods wrapped in *platano* leaves, bottles of *checha*, or earthen pots containing Heaven knows what.

At last the whistle screamed from the engine, a bell tinkled, and the train moved out in state to the demonstrations of the populace. The car was but moderately filled; a couple of *padres* from Ecuador—one a political refugee—a tonsured monk, a couple of black-robed nuns, and three engineers, together with an assortment of Peruvians—the women in the shrouding, tightly drawn *rebozo* of funeral black against which the heavy face-powdering showed in ghastly contrast—and a couple of small children who turned up at intervals from under the seats, grimed with train cinders and ecstatically sticky with *chancaca*, a raw sugar sort of candy. And in every vacant seat was baggage, native, hairy rawhide boxes shapeless from the many pack-mule lashings, paper bags, and pasteboard hat boxes and bandanna bundles and somewhere in the collection each Peruvian seemed

to be able to draw on an inexhaustible supply of the Arequipa brewed, bilious, green beer.

CHAPTER VI

THROUGH THE INCA COUNTRY

Slowly at first we rose, skirting the great foothills or gently ascending valleys and always crossing some dismantled relic of the dead Inca empire. Then we plunged boldly into the mountain chain teetering over spidery bridges across gorges whose bottom was a ribbon of foam or where the rails followed a winding shelf cut in the face of the mountain, where an empty beer bottle flung from the car window broke on the tracks below over which the train had been crawling a quarter of an hour before. With the increasing altitude—the summit of the pass was still ahead and something over fifteen thousand feet above sea level—the soroche, mountain sickness, began to be manifest in the car in deathly, nauseating dizziness until it closely resembled the woebegone cabin of a sightseeing steamer at a yacht race. The engineers had been discussing the traces of the old Inca works 89 with special reference to their irrigation systems, of which there was generally a ruin visible out of one window or the other. Special emphasis had been laid on the total lack of survival of any instruments or methods by which this hydraulic engineering had been calculated or performed. There is a trace of one irrigation ditch something like one hundred and twenty-five miles in length—a set of levels for such a project even to-day would be a matter for nice calculation. The Incas simply went ahead and did it, some way. Their engineering had been turned over and over and compared with the great engineering works of antiquity.

“Cut and try,” said one engineer in conclusion; “that was the way these old Inca people made their irrigation systems. Put a gang of Indians to digging a ditch from where the water supply was to come; then let in the water as they dug—in a little ditch—and dig deeper or dike it up to the water level as it showed in the trench. When they had that little ditch finished there was

their level; all they had to do was to dig it as big and deep and wide as they wanted.”

It looked reasonable; there was no dissent. We swung around a curve and a vista opened out of a ragged valley, broken by gorges and cañons with sheer walls of soft rock. 90

One of the other engineers chuckled. “Look at that!” He pointed up the valley and his finger followed one of the cañons. “How did they cut and try on that proposition?”

There, for as far as the eye could follow the turnings of the cañon way was the line of a ditch, an aqueduct, that hung some twenty to fifty feet below the edge of the cliff. It had been cut into the wall of rock, leaving a lip along the outer edge to hold in the current. Here and there, where the ragged trace of the cañon made projecting, buttressing angles, the aqueduct had been driven as a short-cut tunnel straight through. Here and there great sections of the cañon walls had fallen, while occasionally it appeared as though the outer lip had been destroyed by man-made efforts—one of the old Spanish methods of hurrying up a little ready tribute—but never had there been a possibility of using any “cut and try” method of its construction.

“Well,” remarked the first, “there goes *that* theory—and it isn’t original with me either—for I reckon they had to run that level first and chalk it up on the rock to cut by in some kind of a way.” 91

It is a trifle staggering, when you think of it, that a nation that was able to solve engineering difficulties like these, to turn an arid desert into a teeming farm and to organize and administer a vast empire, should have been wantonly destroyed all for the lack of a little knowledge of the combination of saltpetre, sulphur, and charcoal. And the wretched waste! Think of that church-benisoned riffraff of the medieval slums, recognizing only the greed for raw gold, wasting a whole people in torture to satisfy the rapacious gluttony of a Spanish court.

Sometimes the train crawled along no faster than a bare walk, so steep were the grades and sharp the turns. There was nothing of the scenic splendor such as one may get in the railroads among the Alps of Switzerland and

where, as one climbs, one may look down and back into the green landscape of a panorama. The scale was too great, the sense of proportion and distance was subdued; a stretch great enough for a Swiss panorama was one vast gorge twisting its way among the vaster masses of the Andes. The crest of the pass itself was higher than Mount Rainier. 92

Sometimes the train passed over high plateaus where occasionally in the distance could be seen the low house of some hacienda or the grouped huts of Indians while beyond in the great distance the plain was rimmed with a jagged line of snow-capped peaks. The winds swept across the level stretches, raising an assortment of sand-spouts and dusty cyclones. They were of all sizes, from tiny *remolinos* that died in a few puffs to towering whirlwinds that spiraled fifteen hundred feet in the air with a base of fifty feet that juggled boulders in its vortex like so many cork chips. They would move leisurely for a short space and then dart like a flash in an erratic path. Sometimes fifteen or twenty of these would be in sight at the same time. Herds of llamas grazed over the plain, sometimes a flock of sheep or an occasional horse, each with a wary eye on the whirlwinds; if one approached too near they galloped off. Not infrequently a herd of guanacos would gallop off at the approach of the train or could be seen grazing in the distance.

From beyond the high plain the grades lessened and the train rolled 93 along at a fine speed—for South America. At rare intervals there was a station and a short stop, usually the lonely outpost of some mining company. Then the grades began to slope our way and in place of the dry bunch grass there were rolling hills and gentle valleys of soft green grass. Little lakes nestled in the hills, their cold waters black with wildfowl that scarcely fluttered up as the train shot by. We were making the slight drop down to that vast inter-Andean plateau that stretches from Bolivia on up into Ecuador.

A cold winter sunset sank beyond the cold purple of the western peaks; a couple of feeble, smoking and smelling oil lamps irritated the darkness and added their fragrance to the close atmosphere—for in the bitter winds and biting cold of the high altitude the windows had long since been closed.

Juliaca was reached, a junction by which one may connect for Cuzco, the old Inca capital. It showed in the blackness as a few dingy lights. Here the car emptied itself of all but half a dozen bound for Bolivia across the lake. Once again we wheezed under way and presently with a grand celebration from the engine's whistle the train pulled slowly into the train yards of the terminal at Puno and as we climbed out there came the light, musical splash of freshwater surf and the unmistakable smell of water. Dimly under the starlight there loomed the form of a boat and the dim reflecting surface of the water was picked out by the dark patches of the native Indian craft. It was the great Lake Titicaca. 94

Down at the end of the stone dock lay the *Yavari* a slim, patched boat, twice lengthened, whose hull and engines had been packed piecemeal on the backs of burros, llamas, and mules over the Andes to the Titicaca shores over fifty years ago. It had taken a year to do it. It was the first steamer on the lake and wonderful was the amazement of the native population as they beheld this veritable monster of the seas—some sixty feet in length—shoot mysteriously through the water at the prodigious speed of some seven miles an hour.

Forward, on either side, was an array of tiny staterooms, each about the size of a wardrobe into which penetrated a most grateful warmth from the boilers. A scrap of tallow candle threw the suspicious looking bunks into shadow and it was not long before I was in one under my own blankets. From the little cabin aft came the clatter of the native travelers over a late lunch served by a bare-legged Quechua sailor; it was in the main some kind of a hash preparation loaded with *aji*, a venomous pepper that will penetrate the stoutest stomach. I had tried it and having been both warned and punished in the same mouthful, I was glad to seek the wardrobe bunk to weep it out of my system in cramped solitude. 95

In the first streaks of dawn the *Yavari* backed out from the long dock and swung out upon the crystal-clear, blue waters of Lake Titicaca. On the other side of the dock at a disabled angle and under repairs lay the more pretentious steamer *Coya*—literally the *Inca Queen*—with diminutive bridge and chart-house and all the trappings of a deep sea liner shrunk and crowded into small compass. Varieties of water fowl dotted the water's edge

in large flocks busily at breakfast and almost indifferent to the occasional straw or rather reed canoe of the Indians.

All day the *Yavari* skirted a coast that rolled back in long hills or at times came down to the lake in a steep bluff. Very slowly the lake is receding. Old Inca towns once evidently on the shore line are back from the water; 96 since Pizarro's time the distance is a matter of miles. In the little party on the boat the old tales of the Inca gold and Atahualpa's tribute became naturally a leading topic. The country from the highlands of Colombia down to Chile are filled with legends of secreted treasure and lost mines or caches, for Pizarro did not wait for Atahualpa to pay his ransom—he burned him at the stake when he realized that the Inca emperor could actually get together a council chamber packed to the ceiling with raw gold.

There were scores of llama trains coming down the Andes from the uttermost parts of the empire, a veritable flood of gold was on its way to secure the release of the sacred Inca chief. It never arrived and somewhere up and down some three thousand miles of Andes there are legends galore of Inca tribute treasure concealed by the Indians on the burning of their king. There are legends of monkish parchment maps left by early missionaries that locate rediscoveries with apparent exactness up to certain points, of mines relocated by accident; in one case, a drunken Scotch donkey-engine driver took up and finally married a wretched Aymará 97 mine-woman, a half-human creature; she finally revealed to him the location of one of the old concealed mines and the two worked it together. As the story runs, they acquired fabulous wealth, he longed for Scotland and went back taking her with him and importing for her use the *chuno* and *chalonga* that was her only food. He played fair. Finally he died there and his widow managed to get back to her own mountains where she was finally poisoned for her money or her secret.

Legend also has it that around the city of Cuzco—the seat of the Incas—there was a great golden chain and that this, upon the approach of Pizarro, was dropped into Titicaca. It is always a steamer discussion as to how soon the lake will have receded enough to make its discovery a matter of possibility. At the possible place where it was dropped in the engineer of the *Coya* holds that the lake has receded some six miles since the conquest.

There is also the legend of the immense treasure train coming down in sections from what is now Colombia and Ecuador which was on the mountain trails at the time of Atahualpa's death; evidence is said to exist of the despatch of this gold which would have more than completed the ransom. It never arrived, it was never heard of again after the burning at the stake, but it is a common belief to-day that there are many Indians to whom these matters are tribal secrets. There are common tales of odd Indians, neither Quechua nor Aymar a, those being the two great Indian divisions, suddenly appearing from time to time and taking part in some Indian fiesta of peculiar importance, although evidently all the fiestas now have been given an ecclesiastical significance—and then as completely disappearing. There are rumors of tribes and even cities buried in the eastern slopes of the Andes from which these irregular excursions come. 98

Skirting the shore until the late afternoon, the *Yavari* struck out into the ocean horizon that stretched away in the blue distance, until we raised the Island of the Sun and the Island of the Moon. The former is reputed to have been the summer residence of the Incas and there still remain the ruins of palaces together with a great basin or reservoir hewn from the solid rock and traditionally known as the Inca's bath tub. To the other island is ascribed the home of the wives and concubines of the Incas, or perhaps a training school where they were domiciled until, like an army reserve, they were called to the colors. 99

From each of them the *Yavari* took on a little freight, a few sacks of *cebada*, barley, and *chu o*, the little, dried up, original, native American potato, not much larger than a nutmeg. The cargo was on board a heavy, sluggish reed boat, a big affair in which burros and even bullocks are carried to or from these lake islands—of which there are many scattered here and there—and the mainland.

All the western slopes of the Andes are treeless, the high plains are treeless, and the few poles that are used in the thatched roofs of the Indian huts are dragged out from the *monta a*, as the interior over the final Andean passes is called. These skinny little poles are regular articles of trade. Therefore, the Lake Titicaca Indian has evolved his reed canoe and boat.

The reed, which grows along the shores of the lake, is bound in round bundles tapering at both ends; these bundles in turn are lashed together to form the canoes, from the little bundles to the larger boats that can carry freight. Sometimes a mat sail, also from these same reeds, is hoisted 100 on a couple of poles lashed together at the apex and at the base braced against the inside of the clumsy craft. The steering is done with an oar made from a pole and a board, while similar oars are used by the crew who drive a wooden pin for an oarlock at any convenient spot along the reed-bundle gunwale. In this kind of an outfit they put out on the lake fishing for the little fish that alone seem to have survived in the cold waters, or shuffling across the waves from the coast to one little sugar-loaf island after another in their native trade. In Pizarro's day it was probably the same—costume, craft, and barter.



In Pizarro's Day It Was Probably the Same—Costume, Craft, and Barter

One more night in the cramped wardrobe of the *Yavari*—during 101 which my solution of alcohol and salicylic acid procured in flea-bitten Lima—against other similar emergencies—did valiant service, and in the morning we awoke to the clatter of the Indian mate and his Quechua crew as they made the little steamer fast to the dock at Guaqui. From here a railroad runs over a continuation of the level high plain and past the ruins of

Tiajuanaca to the edge of the plateau above La Paz. The valley of La Paz is a vast crack torn in the level plain as by some primeval cataclysmic blast; on the farther side there is the tremendous peak of Illomani with a cape of perpetual snow far down its grim flanks; far off in the ragged valley and some two thousand feet below the railroad terminal is the capital of Bolivia, La Paz. Once no trolley wound its way down the steep sides, and in those days there still gathered at the station every Deadwood and express coach that had ever existed at the north. A crew of runners would meet the train, pile all the freight and passengers that were possible inside, lash the rest on the roof, and then with their four or six horse teams—never an animal free from a collar gall—on a dead run race for a place at the edge of the mesa in order to be the first on the winding trail that led downward to the city. Whips cracking, horses on the jump, coaches swinging and banging, here a hairy rawhide trunk goes off, and there an Indian hotel mozo is snapped straight out in the rush as he tries to crawl up on the baggage rack behind; and then the dropping trail in a whirl of dust over a road scarcely better than a dry creek bottom until, at last, over the rough cobbles of La Paz itself, to pull up at the door of the hotel with the rough horses in a lather and with white eyes and heaving sides. That was the way it was once. Now it is different; you can ride down sedately in a trolley car and walk into the hotel with never a hair turned.

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CHAPTER VII

OUT OF LA PAZ BY PACK TRAIN

Here in La Paz were completed the final arrangements for reaching the interior; this was the last of the easy traveling, from now on it would be by pack train and saddle, raft and canoe, and to gather them we advanced from one interior town to another as best we might. It was the third and last of the Andean series that was to be crossed, and it was also the highest and hardest. Daily we haggled with arrieros over pack mules or rode to their corrals in the precipitous suburbs of the city and between times there were the odds and ends of a big outfit to be filled in and the commissary to be stocked. It was the last place where the little things of civilization could be procured, for there was but one more real settlement, Sorata over the first pass, that could be counted upon for anything that had been overlooked. And then one day it appeared as though we were complete.



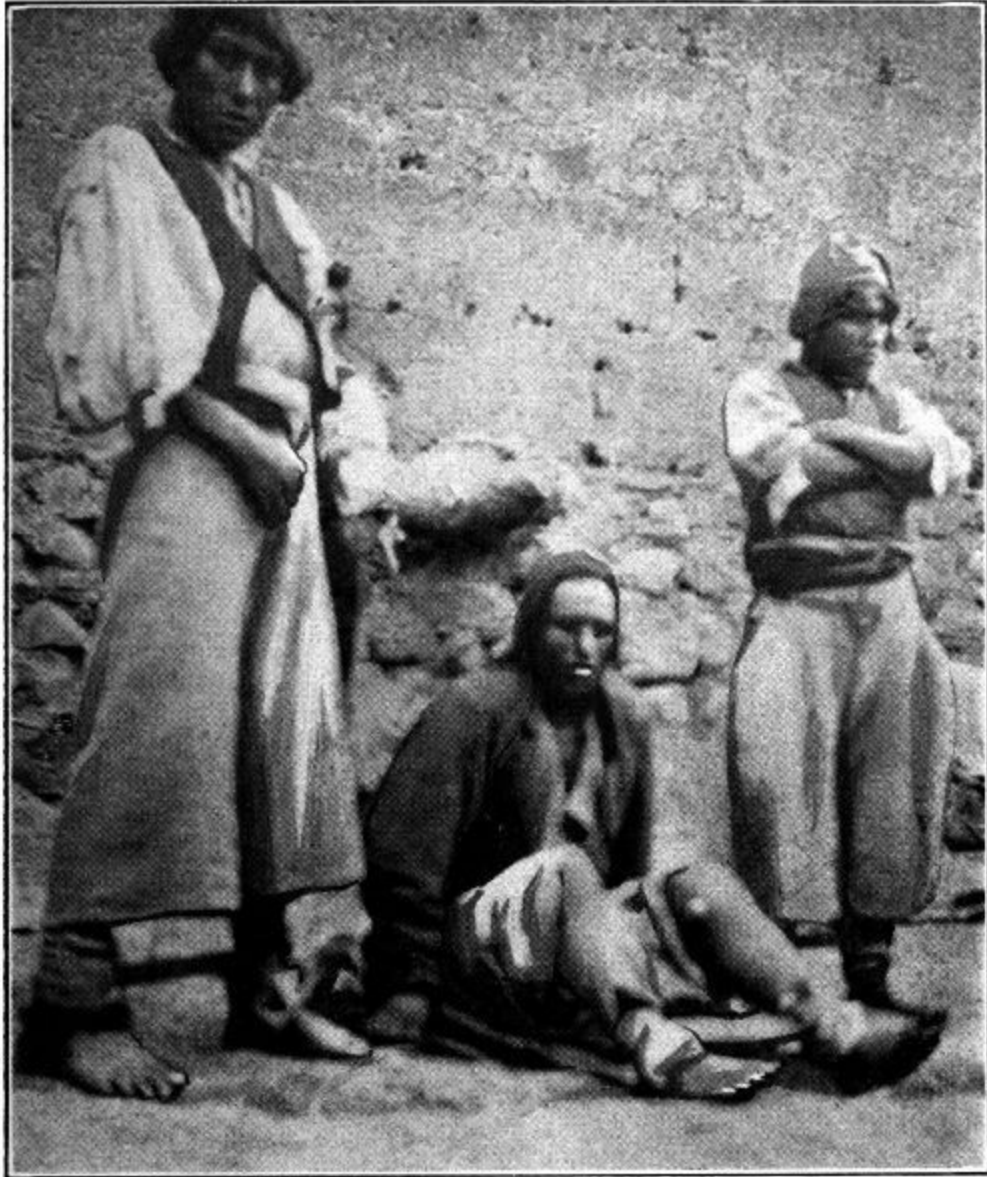
HAGGLED WITH ARRIEROS OVER PACK MULES.

The arriero came around and weighed the cargo and divided it in rawhide nets, equally balanced, according to each individual mule's capacity and then even before daybreak on the following morning we were off.

It seemed like midnight. The dead, still blackness of the night, with the lighter crevice of gloom that marked the dividing-line between the curtains at the window gave no indication of dawn, and only the echo of the little tin alarm-clock, with its hands irritatingly pointing to the hour of necessity, indicated that at last the time was at hand for the actual entry into the 105 vague interior of South America. A thin tallow candle glimmered in the high-ceilinged room and illumed flickering patches between the areas of cold, uncertain darkness, and by its light I scrambled into breeches, puttees, and spurs, and buckled my gun under my heavy, wool-lined jacket. Down in the patio I could hear an Aymará scuffling about in his rawhide sandals, and as I stepped out on the balcony above the patio, a thin drift of acrid smoke floated up from where he was cooking our tin of coffee over a clay fire-pot with llama dung for fuel.

Below my window, up from the narrow street there came the shuffling noises of the pack-train—the creak of rawhide cinches, the thud and strain of the packs as they came in restless collision and now and again the “Hola! hola!” or “Huish!” of an arriero or more often the long-drawn hiss of a rawhide thong. Then the pack-train lengthened in file, and the noise died away up the crooked, narrow street. The few final necessities of the trail I jammed in my saddle-bag as the last mule was packed; then had a cup of coffee, steaming hot, although only comfortably warm to the taste 106 from the low-boiling point of the high altitude, and we climbed into the saddle and were off.

The city of La Paz was still in darkness, but above the rim of the great crack in the depths of which it rests there was a suggestion of a silver haze that dimmed the stars. The streets were deserted except for an occasional scavenger pig grunting restlessly on its way. Sometimes a little Bolivian policeman, in heavy coat and cape, and muffled to the eyes in a woolen tippet, would peer sleepily from the shelter of a great Spanish doorway, and then, observing our solemn respectability, sink back into the comfortable shadow. By the time we had rejoined the main body of the pack-train we were in the shabbier outskirts of La Paz, where the Aymarás and the Cholos—the latter the half-breed relatives of the former—live in their squalid mud-brick hovels.



Prisoners Along the Trail up from La Paz

The streets were wider now, in fact they were nothing but a series of ragged gullies, along whose dry banks straggled the grimy dwellings. Always, in some of them, there is a *fiesta* of some kind, a birth, a wedding, a death, a special church celebration, or perhaps some pantheistic festival that still lingers in their dulled history and has prudently merged itself with the piously ordained occasions. The orgy of the night is past, yet from here and there come the feeble tootings of a drunken flute, an instrument that

every Aymará seems to be able to play as a birthright, whose mournful and monotonous strains drift through the thin air from some less stupefied celebrant.

The Aymará love of their primitive music is very strong; it is universal among them and, while their primitive flute, pandean pipe and crude drum interpret the joy ordinarily, yet they take cheerfully to any new form of musical instrument, and in some miraculous way learn, in time, to produce the same series of ragged, droning sounds. The accordion, concertina and mouth organ are much beloved and once I even heard a self-taught Aymará band of brass horns, cornet, tenor horn, bass, and a slide and key trombone, playing the Aymará airs with their own home-made orchestration. The government bandmaster had drilled a large military band that used to give concerts twice a week in the plaza and there was not an approach to a white man in the outfit, it was composed wholly of Cholos and Aymarás from the little boy drummers to the great horns that curled like a blanket-roll over the shoulder. 108

Rapidly the first silver of the morning deepened to richer tints and glowed above the purple silhouette of the rim of the great gorge, while Illimani, the perpetually snow-capped mountain that overshadowed La Paz, burst into splendid prismatic bloom as the first direct rays of the sun shimmered over its slopes and ice peaks; below, the gorge and the city slowly lightened and glimmered in detail through the frosty, early morning mists. The thin bitter air of the night was gone; it was cold still, but the thin high air held in some indefinable way the promise of a seductive warmth.

The long line of pack mules climbed steadily upward; the rambling, hovel-lined streets were gone and only now and then we passed a little mud hut with its one door as the sole aperture, the headquarters of the tiny Aymará truck farm. The acrid smoke from their cooking-fire leaked through the blackened roof and rose in little spirals straight up through the still air, while the members of the household squatted in the chill sun, muffled to the eyes in ponchos and with woolen cap and superimposed hat drawn down to meet the mufflings, squatted in the chilly sunlight. They muffle themselves in this way at the slightest suggestion of chill in the air; but from the thighs down they are indifferent to cold or storm. It makes no 109

difference if they are in a blizzard blowing over one of the high Andean passes, they will trudge along with legs bare to above the knees, but with heads and throats muffled deep in woolens. I have seen them make a camp in a driving snow-storm and go peacefully to sleep with their heads carefully enshrouded, and awake at daybreak none the worse for the experience, though their bare legs were drifted over with snow and their sandals stiffened with ice.

Along the road that climbed up the side of the great crack in the high plateau that formed the valley of La Paz, little groups of Aymarás who had camped there during the night were packing their trains of llamas and burros for the last short distance in to the La Paz markets. Often, without taking the trouble to cook, they would gnaw on a piece of raw chalonga—the split carcass of a sheep dried in the sun and cold of the high plateaus—which has about as much flavor as an old buggy whip. Sometimes 110 they ate parched corn or *chuño*—the latter the native potato, shrunk and small after the drying in the high air in the same treatment as the chalonga receives—and tasting very much like a cork bottle stopper. But always they chewed *coca*, the leaf that furnishes cocaine. Leaf by leaf they would stow it away, and add a little ashes and oil scraped out of a pouch with a needle of bone. Among the older Aymarás, the cheek frequently has developed a sagging pouch from the years of distention with *coca*. Aside from that, it seems to have no effect upon them.

The Aymará pack-trains of burros would pass us with indifference, half hidden in great sheaves of *cebada*—barley—or with chickens slung in ponchos on either side and with only their heads visible and swaying in time to the gait of the burro. But the llamas would go mincing past, crowding as far as possible against the other side of the road with an obvious assumption of fright. Their slitted nostrils would twitch and their slender ears wiggle in an agony of nervousness, while their eyes, the most beautiful, pleading, liquid eyes in the animal world would be humid 111 with hysterical fear. Yet from their infancy they have seen men and horses, pack-trains, and all the travel of the mountains and plateaus. But the apparent gentleness of the llama is purely superficial; for it can spit with unpleasant accuracy to repel a frontal approach, while its rear and flanks are guarded by padded feet that are vicious in their power and uncertainty. To

the Aymará the llama is transportation, food, wool, and fuel. An Aymará child can do anything with a llama, and with nothing more than her shrill little voice; but in the presence of a white man it is a creature of hysterical and timid peevishness.



AYMARÁ DRIVER OF PACK LLAMAS.



MEMBERS OF A GANG OF PRISONERS.

As we filed by these pack-trains, the Aymará driver would remove his native hat of coarse felt, leaving the head still covered by his gay, woolen nightcap with its flapping ear-tabs, and murmur a respectful "*Tata!*" to which we would politely return a "*Buenos dias, tata,*" unless the driver happened to be a woman, in which case we would substitute the

corresponding “*Mama*” for the “*Tata*.” The women would plod along barefooted while they spun yarn from a bundle of dirty, raw wool held under one arm. As the yarn was spun, it was gathered on a top-like distaff dangling at the end of the woolen thread. In some miraculous way it was never permitted to lose its spinning twirl, and at the right moment always absorbed the additional thread, so that it never was permitted to drag along the trail. At her little home somewhere on the inter-Andean plateau, she will afterwards dye the wool and knit one of those night-caps or weave a poncho, according to some rough tribal pattern, so tight that it will shed water as well as a London raincoat. Her loom will be two logs laid on the ground, on which the warp is stretched; the shuttle will be carved from the bone of a sheep, and the threads will be beaten into place with the sharpened shin-bone of a sheep. Weeks may be spent in the patient weaving. Whether she is on the trail or is weaving, she has usually a pudgy, expressionless baby of a tarnished copper color held in the fold of the poncho that is knotted across her shoulders. Sometimes a prosperous Aymará gentleman, with his pack animals, passed us and then he was apt to be accompanied by several Aymará women and their assortment of tarnished copper babies, the women being his wives, who assist in the heavier work of driving and packing with complaisant domestic affection. 113

This road up from the great, raw gulch of La Paz was full of life; pack-train after pack-train passed, loaded with the daily supplies for that city. All of the trails of the high plateau above converge to feed it and it broadens out into a real road, no longer a trail, under the needs of the heavier traffic. A group of sandaled soldiers was apparently detailed to act as road-masters; and they would stop the Aymarás and enforce a bit of labor in aid of the gang of prisoners under their guard. The instant dull and sullen submission of the Indians at once indicated their position in the Bolivian scale. 114



THE GUARD FOR THE ROAD MENDERS.

Steadily during the early morning hours we climbed, until the rim of the high plateau itself was only a short distance ahead. Worn through the rim by generations of plodding hoofs was a crooked trail, so narrow that the mules bumped and scrabbled along, and we emerged, as through a trap-door, out on the endless distances of the vast inter-Andean plateau. Below, losing itself in the distant haze, stretched the ragged crack that made the valley of La Paz and miles away, quivering in the slowly warming air, was the city itself, a tiny clutter of gaudy houses and red-tiled roofs, with the brilliant green of the little park making a sharp contrast in color. Elsewhere the slopes of the valley were as destitute of verdure as when they were blown into existence by the terrific forces of primeval nature. Yet in this desert barrenness there was no lack of color; in the cool of the morning the shadows were soft in every delicate variation of purple and amethyst; the bare soil and the jagged slopes blended and shifted in ochers and vermilions, in golden tints and copper hues and, scattered here and there, were little patches of greens where some little, irrigated Aymará truck-farm was breaking into the world against the moist chocolate-colored soil. Beyond—and in their immensity there was no suggestion of their great

distance—rose the jagged fangs of the last and most interior range of the Andes, with their black cliffs and scarred flanks disappearing under the everlasting mantles of snow; over all, was the clear, shimmering turquoise heaven of the high altitudes.



WHILE RODRIGUEZ AND HIS CHOLO HELPERS TIGHTENED THE RAWHIDE CINCHES
AND REPLACED THE PACKS.

Down in that valley were the little cafés, the little shops with imported trinkets, the plaza Sunday afternoons with the band and the parading élite and all the little functions of civilization, yet this city is fairly balanced on the edge of the frontier, while beyond were the high passes and the vague interior of South America, the last of the great primitive domains, where men still exist by means of bow and arrow or stone club, and where the ethical right and the physical ability to survive are yet indistinguishable. 117

From this edge of the plateau the narrow trails run in all directions like the sticks of a fan. Trained from many previous trips, the pack-animals halted or wandered aside, nibbling at the tufts of dry bunch-grass, while Rodriguez and his two Cholo helpers tightened the rawhide cinches and replaced the packs that had shifted in the long climb and scramble through the narrow gully. Then, with the bell on the leading pack-animal tinkling monotonously, began the steady plodding in single file along one of the furrowed trails.

CHAPTER VIII

THE BACK TRAIL AMONG THE AYMARAS

At first the plateau was dotted with the lines of converging burro- and llama-trains, but, as the morning passed, there was nothing but the lonely distance of the plateau, with here and there a tiny speck of a solitary pack-train. The air had warmed rapidly under the sun; the light breeze had the touch of a northern spring, and I yielded to the seductive suggestion and strapped my heavy woolen coat to the saddle. Five minutes later I halted and gladly put it on once more, for the thin air was treacherous in its allurements.

Somewhere about the middle of the day we halted for breakfast at Cocuta, a native *tambo* or wayside inn, though the pack-train pushed on slowly, nibbling the bunch-grass as it went. The *tambo* was surrounded by a high, thick mud-brick wall that inclosed something over an acre of ground, and inside this fortress were the little mud buildings, granaries, and 119 corrals. An old Aymar a woman cooked our breakfast over a llama-dung fire in one corner of the room, and it was served on a rough table over by a dried mud bench that was built against two of the walls. The filthy room was lighted only by the small, low doors, the high, mud sills of which still further shut out light and ventilation, and the fetid atmosphere was rich in its ethnological and entomological suggestion. A chicken soup, reeking with the mutton tallow of *chadona* and with the head and feet of the fowl floating in the grease, made the first course; then came *lomita* (the tenderloin of a steak), and eggs fried in mutton tallow. We produced some coffee from the saddle-bags and the old woman fluttered about and brewed a pretty fair article. It was at this same Cocuta, on another occasion, that, in riding to La Paz, I ran into a band of drunken *ladrones* and, as some of the

band took the trail after me, it gave a most unwelcome and interesting zest to the rest of that night ride.

That night we slept in a second tambo, smaller, but also with a thick mud wall inclosing the collection of mud huts. The mules were turned loose on the plateau to graze till morning, their hobbled feet a 120 guarantee of their not straying. At sunset came the piercing cold, when even the barricaded door of the mud room and the steaming human warmth inside proved grateful. A wide platform of mud-bricks was the bed—it was the sole furniture—and on it we piled the sheepskins from the pack-saddles, and over an alcohol lamp we made a thin tea and warmed up some tinned things. An old Aymará woman was apparently the sole caretaker of this tambo, but she viewed us with unlovely eyes and would furnish nothing. Sullen and surly that night, she was all ingratiating smiles the next morning when she saw my camera. She scuttled inside her hut and then reappeared in some hasty finery, in which she trotted anxiously about with conciliatory grimaces and pleadings in guttural Aymará that her picture be taken. How she knew what a camera was for and, further, why she was not afraid of it were mysteries, for invariably I found all other Aymarás hostile against the evil witchcraft of the little black box. As it was yet only early dawn, there was not sufficient light, but I satisfied her by clicking the shutter.

After the heated air in the dark hut, the first moment outside in the pure, still cold was like breathing needles; the long stretch of plateau was soft with white frost, every grimy straw in the thatched roofs glistened like silver with its coating of ice, and the morning ablutions were performed through a hole broken in the crust of ice in a near-by brook. A cup of tea boiled over the alcohol lamp was the only breakfast, and then we started. As we climbed into the saddles the old Aymará woman hovered in the gateway clucking pleased Aymará benedictions for her photograph. 121

For some reason of his own Rodriguez elected to leave the main trail beyond this tambo and take one of the little-used back trails to Sorata. It was very much shorter but, as we afterward learned, is little used on account of the surly, hostile attitude of the Aymarás of that district and, except for a large outfit, is not considered safe. Here the Aymarás are more secluded and view intrusion with aggressive suspicion; three months before they had attacked an outfit and killed the trader. Those who passed no longer greeted us with the "Tata!" Instead, they would turn sullenly out of the trail to avoid us as we passed, or stop and view us with unmistakable hostility. When we halted for a hasty bite by the side of a cold brook, Rodriguez held the whole pack-train and the arrieros close by, and did not allow them to go ahead, as on the day before. 122

Just before branching off into this unused trail we came upon a large party of Aymarás carrying, in relays, a stretcher on their shoulders that was inclosed with cloth, so that it resembled a sort of palanquin; six of them were carrying it at a time in a ground-eating dog-trot and about each half-mile they would be relieved by six others, the transfer of the stretcher being effected without jolt or jar. It proved to be a wealthy Bolivian *haciendado* who was ill, and was being carried in this simple ambulance to the doctors in La Paz by his own Indians. The trot and the burden were nothing to them; I have seen an Aymará boy carry forty pounds on his back and trot hour after hour without apparent difficulty and come into camp at night but little behind the mounted man he was accompanying. Yet at this altitude, unless one has become gradually accustomed, even walking is a heavy effort.



AYMARA HERDERS PLAYED THEIR WEIRD FLUTES.

On the new trail the dead level of the plateau gave way to more rolling country, the ragged, snow-capped line of mountains at the horizon came closer; Huayna-Potosi loomed on our right, and, growing more impressive every hour, was the great, white mass of Mount Sorata, dead ahead. Then the rolling country closed in, and narrower valleys succeeded, with the rugged foot-hills on each side. In this part was an enormous breeding-ground for llamas; for miles the hills were dotted with them. Baby llamas, very new, and still blinking at the strange world, huddled timidly in behind a tuft of bunch-grass or behind some small boulder, while the queer, goose-necked mother stood near with apparent indifference; little llamas in all stages of adolescence and awkwardness gamboled on the hillsides, and herds dotting the slopes looked for all the world like big, stiff-necked, grotesque sheep. Among them were the Aymar^á herders who, like traditional shepherds, played their weird and mournful flutes or pipes. Over and over again came the same strain, which carried for miles in the thin, still air. 124

One of its little phrases curiously reminded me of that chanted taunt of my boyhood, "Over the fence is ou-oot!"

Rarely does the Aymar^á make his own flute or pipe, simple though it is; their manufacture is a native industry by itself. Like a true musician, the Aymar^á must have his instrument just so, and up in the higher altitudes the flutes are made and brought down to be sold in the market on the days of fiesta. His single weapon, a sling of the pattern made famous by David and

Goliath, is of twisted llama-wool, and will throw a stone the size of a lemon. They develop a wonderful skill in its use.

On this lonely trail we came upon a castle, a veritable castle of the story books! Alone, grim and battlemented, it stood boldly outlined against the landscape. It was not large, but it was, or had been, perfect in every medieval detail, and was constructed of mud bricks from outer walls 125 to keep. There was a moat, dry and unkept and now fallen upon evil days; the high surrounding wall was loopholed, and the fringe of battlements had been eaten away in places by the driving storms. The keep was visible rising above the wall, while galleries and overhanging balconies showed the purposes and possibilities of protection, even should the outer wall be successfully stormed by some ancient foe; the single, heavy outer gate in the wall was barred, and not a sign of life or of a retainer was to be seen. For miles around the country was deserted and bare, and in the desolate mountains remained this substance of the past like a grim, dramatic ghost of ancient days. Back on this unused trail it is but little known; Rodriguez knew of it, but that was all, except that he had a very positive idea that its owner or occupant did not care for visitors—but it was occupied.

Monotonously through the afternoon the pack-train wound through the narrow valleys, and closer came the mountains and more chill the air sweeping downward from their fields of snow. The melting snows flooded the slopes and valleys in innumerable brooks; often the trail itself 126 was lost in wide expanses of icy water. The sun set, and with growing darkness came the increased bitterness of the piercing cold. Along this trail there was no shelter except here and there the little mud huts of the Aymará.

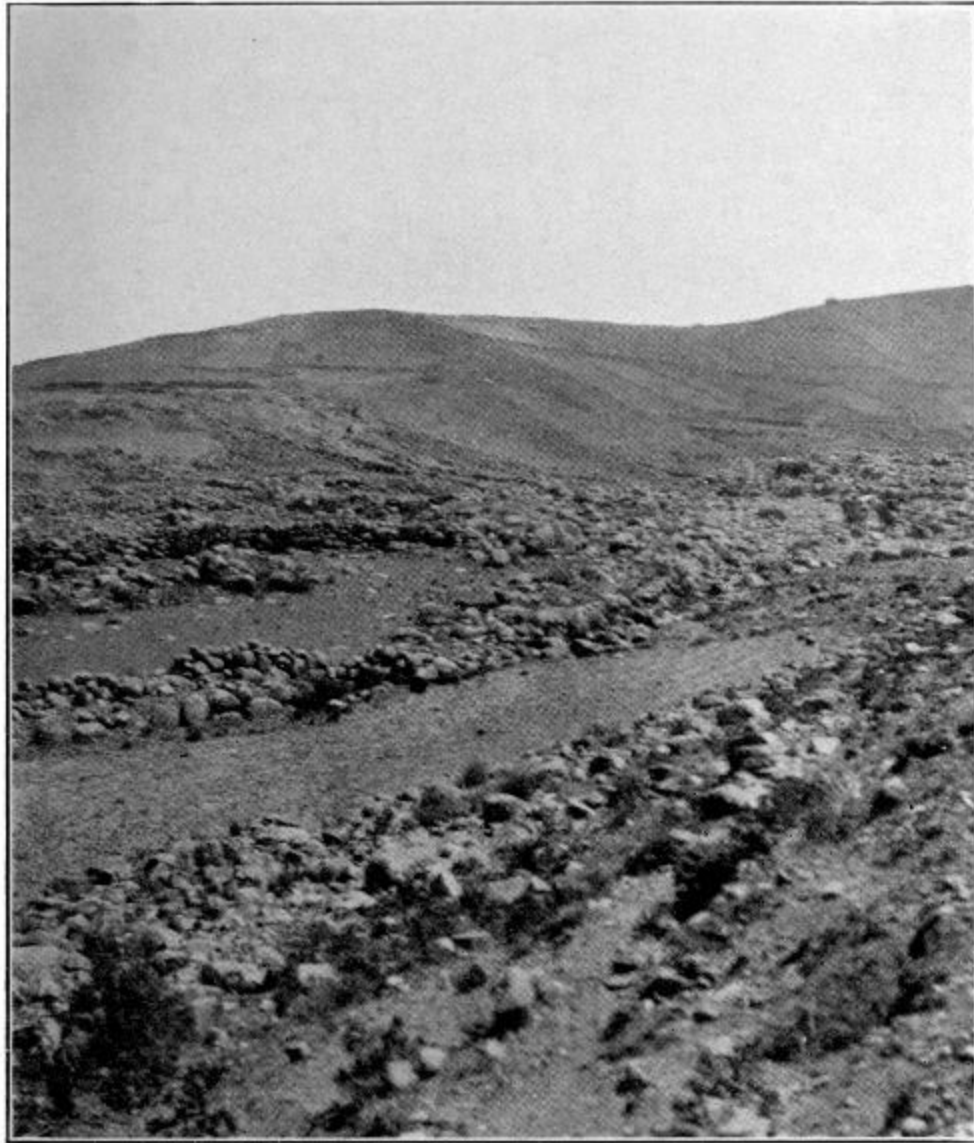
The clouds rolling low overhead left the night pitch-black; a gale of wind sprang up and hurled itself in our teeth, varying its monotony now and again with a squall of snow that stung like a blizzard. Without a stumble the sure-footed mules kept the trail in the darkness up and down through abrupt gullies or fording some icy stream that left their bellies a fringe of icicles, while, during some lull in the blast, the tinkle of the bell on the leading pack-animal would drift back to us.

At last the old, deserted tambo for which we had been aiming was reached. By the aid of a few matches—for the lantern was carefully packed on some mule indistinguishable in the blackness—half a dozen Aymarás were found sleeping in the litter on the floor of the mud room, for here there was not even a mud bench. There was no barricade to close the door, and a score of eddies whirled in from the broken thatch overhead. The arrieros drove the Aymarás out—they were part of a pack-train, and not natives of that district—and threw the sheepskin pads over the muddy ground. The alcohol-lamp, screened from drafts by saddles, sheepskins, and hats, finally furnished a lukewarm tin of soup, some thin, warm tea, and some eggs, which though warm, could hardly be considered cooked. The bitter wind swept through the openings, and no candle could survive, so purely by a sense of touch the frozen spurs and puttees were unbuckled for the instant sleep that came, clothes and all. 127

At the break of day we were again in the saddle. The trail the previous day had been hard and rough, but following a general level; but from now on it began steadily to rise. Early in the morning we had gained upon Mount Sorata; in the deceptive distance it loomed apparently only a few miles ahead, yet its nearest snow-field was thirty miles away. Lake Titicaca is only a few miles distant, and one of its long arms reaches back into the country in a vast, shallow lagoon covered with a water growth through which swim myriads of fearless water-fowls. In some ancient time a causeway was built over this long arm, solid and substantial, and on each side, as we passed over, ducks and snipe and waders eyed us impudently, the length of a fishing rod away, and one, a snipe, flickered along almost under the heels of the pack-mules. Off in the distance was the old Aymará city of Achicachi, still surrounded by the remains of an old mud wall that dates from before Pizarro, where the frosted thatch and tile roofs glittered in the sunlight against the distant cold blue horizon of Lake Titicaca. 128

Beyond the causeway the trail rose steadily to the mountain pass. The cold mists from Sorata swept down and the line of mules disappeared in its chill fog. It thins, slender wraiths of eddying vapor drift past, and we ride through the ruins of an ancient Aymará town where there was nothing left but the rectangular lines of stone débris; the few streets were still plainly

marked, though the village has been dead these many centuries. Its name is lost; it is not even a tradition. From under some ruined rubbish an Aymará head was thrust out, framed in the acrid, thin smoke from the wretched, make-shift hut; a few sheep were herded within the ruined inclosures, and other small flocks were grazing near. The head proved to belong to their shepherd, tending them until the time of their transmutation into chalonga.



The Few Streets Were Still Plainly Marked, Though the Village Has Been Dead These Many Centuries

Now and again an Aymar^á shrine loomed through the mist beside the trail, in its niche an offering of wilted flowers and some cigarette pictures, and above, in a crevice of the stones and dried mud, a crooked twig cross. Sometimes we met an Aymar^á, with a bundle of reeds, sitting in the shelter of a rough stone wind-break making and testing his reed flutes. He whittled the reed and tested each finger-hole as he scraped it larger. He looked up, and again we were saluted with the respectful "Tata!" for in order to reach the last stage of the mountain pass we had swung back on the main trail, where the Indians were more sociable. More stone and mud shrines appeared, each with its offering of propitiation to the gods of these higher places and each with its twig cross above. 129

Higher, rougher, and steeper grew the trail, often in a zigzag up some precipitous gorge. A tiny, scattering Indian village came in sight, Huaylata, perched on a high, rolling part of this Andean pass. Its mud huts were smaller, grimier, and drearier, if possible, than those that we had passed on the great plateau. A few Aymar^{ás} appeared and tried to sell us *cebada*, or barley, for the mules; an old woman, squatting on the ground, weaving a poncho on her log loom, stopped long enough to look over our cavalcade curiously out of her bleared eyes red with smoke. Through the little door of her hut the interior was visible, stacked with chalonga half prepared and waiting for the sun to shine before it was moved out into the open ground for further drying. 130

Indifferently she watched me extract the camera from my saddle-bag, but when the brass lens pointed in her direction, she clattered vigorously in her dialect and scuttled into the house to hide. The other Aymar^{ás} were instantly hostile, and I worked a scheme that had often succeeded. I turned my back to them and reversed the camera, with the lens pointing backward under my arm. This would almost invariably get the picture. If it did not, I would stand behind the broad shoulders of one of the party while I adjusted the camera, and then have him step suddenly to one side as I pressed the button. Otherwise they would scatter like a flock of Chinamen under similar conditions, and with angry mutterings.

CHAPTER IX

OVER THE FIRST GREAT PASS

The intermittent fog and mist turned to a cold rain that drove in stinging gusts square in our faces. Slowly we climbed, and went a few miles beyond the divide. A huge pile of loose stones marked the spot, a tribute to the particular god of this high place that had slowly accumulated with the offerings of Aymarás that had passed the spot. The pile was larger than an Aymará hut, and on the summit was a little cross of twigs from which a few strips of calico fluttered in the gale. At the base were curious little altars made by two flat stones laid edge up, and with a third long, flat stone across them. They symbolized a house and were erected by some prospective Aymará bridegroom or house-builder in propitiation for his enterprise. The cross that surmounted all of these shrines and piles of stone has been readily adopted by the pantheistic Aymará, who is only too fearful lest some 132 unknown god may have escaped his efforts at placation. Around the base of the cairn were the withered and frost-bitten remains of floral offerings and also the scraps of cigarette pictures, the latter, from their invariableness, apparently one of the chief delights of the gods.



BLIZZARDS BLOWING OVER THE ANDEAN PASSES.

At rare intervals some eddying rift would be blown in the mists, and for a brief moment Mount Sorata would stand clear and sharp against the blue patch of sky, with its great white shoulder scarcely more than five miles away across a precipitous gorge. High above our world it seemed to rise, a titanic, bulking, cataclysmic mass, magnificent in its immensity. Enormous cliffs of snow towered above the scarred, black gorges of its flanks, glittering in the flash of momentary sunlight and iridescent in the purple shadows. High against its face clouds were born and were shredded in the blast of an unseen gale; now and again an avalanche of snow broke from some slope and was whirled in a feathery spray into the shadows of a gorge thousands of feet below. It could blanket a dozen villages, yet it was diminished on the tremendous slopes until it seemed no more than the tiny avalanche on a tin roof at home; before it can fall to the depths of the gorge a gale has caught it and it is blown in a stinging blizzard half way across the mountain's face. Vertically, nearly two miles above the trail across the divide, rose the white fang of the summit, that has still defied all efforts at

scaling; there, according to the Aymará belief, is the chief treasure of the god of the mountain, a great golden bull. The generous pantheism of the Aymará has given a similar golden treasure to the summit of Illomani back near La Paz, but in that case, in order that the balance of conflicting religions might be kept, it is a huge cross of gold. 134

The difficulties and inaccessibility of these mountains conveys, to the Aymará mind, the idea that they are inhabited by the most powerful and exclusive of the gods. That hint of exclusiveness is enough for them and only with the greatest difficulty have they been prevailed upon to accompany the few climbing expeditions, while weird stories still circulate among them as to the howling and malignant devils that ride the storms in the great gorges high up. The Aymará is already supplied with enough lesser deities that require continuous and troublesome propitiation so that he does not care to go out of his way up into Sorata and incur another, and possibly hostile and irritated theistic burden.

After the cairn that marks the divide is passed, the trail leads abruptly downward. At first it is a relief to lean back in the saddle and feel the strain come on the crupper while the breast-strap flaps loosely once more, but hour after hour of constant descent and the constant straining back in the saddle become more irksome and monotonous than was the leaning forward on the upward climb. The mists and cold rains blow in lighter patches and with a softer touch; even occasionally the deep valleys below can be seen marked out in irregular surfaces of soft green where the Aymará farms are budding. The descent is rapid; the pack-train coils about among the buttresses of the mountains along a broad shelf that is often cut into the steep slopes, and always plunging downward. We were almost below the line of clouds, and a few moments later they were drifting past just overhead, and there, far below us, stretched the deep, crooked valley of Sorata. 135

It was the very heart of the Andes. In the wedge-shaped channel of the tortuous valley a slender thread of white torrent narrowed and disappeared in the haze of depth and distance; the huge mountains swept upward like the sides of a great bowl, while delicately floating strata of fleecy clouds seemed to mark off and measure and then accent their enormous altitudes.

Beyond and above them rose other peaks and the jagged fangs of interlocking mountain-ranges that formed this colossal Andean maze; there was no sense of distance; even the feeling of space seemed to be for the instant gone, and under the long, mellow rays of the afternoon sun, 136 with this vast, shattered universe spread before us, it was as though we had been suddenly translated and left dizzy and bewildered in an opalescent infinity.

The Aymará huts that clung to the steep slopes with their little patches of corn were shrunk to miniature; the single bull plowing with a crooked tree-trunk was a diminutive bug, prodded along the furrow by a microscopic insect. All the air was filled with the low roar of cascades; every slope and valley was scarred with the slender, white threads of torrents from the melting snows above. Far ahead, where the buttress of a mountain projected like a hilly peninsula into the Sorata valley, a toy village of scarlet tile and thatched roofs was compactly lodged on the flattened crest. It was the village of Sorata, clinging like a lichen to a spur of the huge, overhanging mountain from which it takes its name.

Late in the afternoon, although the gorge had long since been cool in the shadows of the inclosing mountains, we crossed the old Spanish stone bridge that still spans the torrent of melted snows, where an ancient mill remains to testify to the enterprise of the early Spanish adventurers. 137 A short climb up the steep promontory to the village, and we clattered over the paved streets and on into the patio of the sole *posada*, the old bell-mule leader trotting in with the easy familiarity of many previous trips.

The proprietress, a plump Cholo lady, made still plumper by the many skirts of her class, all worn at once, so that she swayed and undulated like an antebellum coquette, fluttered about in welcome. Her pink stockinged legs—the skirts come just below the knees—and fancy slashed satin shoes, with the highest of high French heels, teetered about the patio and over the rough floors, giving orders to a drunken Aymará cook and a small Aymará boy, who proved to be the chambermaid. Gracefully she joined in a bottle of stinging Chilean wine and bawled further orders for our comfort out into the shuffling kitchen. At supper we had soup—chicken soup, with the head

and feet floating with the chalonga and chuño. There followed a kind of melon, scooped out and loaded with raisins and scraps of pork and whatever other scraps and vegetables were at hand, blistered with *aji*, the fiercest and most venomous pepper known to man.

A real lamp and some flowers graced the bare table and, after the filthy mud huts and smoke-impregnated tambos, with their acrid 138 smoke ingrained in the walls and thatch, the tinned food warmed by the futile flame of an alcohol lamp, this posada glowed with a gaiety and cheer that could not be duplicated. Damask and cut glass could have added nothing to the table; even the smelly lamp glowed with a seductive radiance in the balmy atmosphere, and reminded us, by contrast, of the tallow candles on the plateau above, where the icy wind blew them to a thin spark of incandescence.



SOLDERING THE FOOD IN TIN CANS.

Here it was necessary to stop and rest the mules for the second and hardest stage of the journey over this Andean pass. Besides, with the more difficult trail ahead the loads of the mules must be lessened. More mules were needed, and more supplies—the staples—corn, chalonga, chuño, and rice, and those to be soldered in tin cans where the storms of the mountains and the rapids in the cañons of the interior could not spoil them. Rodriguez pastured the outfit somewhere up the valley until it was again ready; then

one day the arrieros were busy weighing the packs, balancing them and lashing them in the nets of rawhide for the easier packing and adjustment.

Again it was in the pitch blackness that precedes the break of day that we climbed into the saddles for the long pull over this highest and hardest pass that leads into the great tropical basin, the heart of South America. Salmon, a huge black who had drifted in from Jamaica and who baked Sorata bread and attracted the Aymará custom in the plaza on fiestas by whirling in a grotesque dance of his own devising, shuffled down the steep street from his oven to see us off. The huge muscles of his half-naked body rippled in massive shadows in the fading darkness; heavy silver rings dangled from his ears against the black, bull neck and matched the brass and silver with which his fingers were loaded.

He spoke no connected language, for his wandering had left him with a scanty and combined vocabulary of English, Spanish, Caribbean French patois, and a sprinkling of Aymará. He was nothing more than a pattering savage, although never for an instant did he forsake the proud dignity of his British citizenship. Once, as a gift, he prepared for us a salad; but as there was no oil to be had in Sorata, with sublime unselfishness he dedicated one of his own bottles of heavily scented hair-oil to the salad dressing! 140

He stuffed a bottle of atrocious brandy into my saddle-bag, and added a pious “Lord bless ye, sar!” for he was a Methodist, and on Sunday afternoons, in support of his orthodoxy, appeared in the plaza loaded down with massive silver ornament, a frock-coat, a battered silk hat balanced on his shaven, bullet-head, a heavy, silver-studded stick, and a black volume under his arm. As there was no chapel, this illusive church stroll was purely a surviving symbolism.

The jam of pack animals in the narrow street straightened out under the stimulus of the arrieros’ rawhide thongs and we clattered by the little plaza and on up a narrow, rain-washed gully flanked with the thatched mud huts of the Aymarás, on past the walled cemetery and into the steep trail that led up the mountains. High above us the peaks were still hidden in soft masses of clouds that were already golden under the first rays of the morning sun. The trail wound in and out, following the trace of the steep 141

foothills that buttress Mount Sorata, but always rising, sometimes abruptly, and then again in a series of steadily ascending dips along a succession of narrow ledges.



SCATTERED IN HYSTERICAL FLIGHT UP AND DOWN THE PRECIPITOUS SLOPES.

On one of these narrow ledges we came around a corner suddenly on a large pack-train of llamas and on the instant they scattered in hysterical fright up and down the precipitous slopes with the sure-footedness of mountain-goats. An hour later we could still see their Aymará drivers, far below us, crawling over the slopes with the slings hurling pebbles at the stupid beasts in their efforts to collect them on the trail.



Rapidly the semi-tropical vegetation that flourished in the lower altitude of the village of Sorata disappeared; more rugged and hardier shrubs succeeded, and these, too, in their turn disappeared and nothing was left but the storm scarred patches of high pasture. Above these the wet, black rocks of the Andes thrust their jagged masses into the air in sullen cliffs surmounted by snow-capped minarets and pinnacles. Only once I saw a condor, for they are not common, sailing lazily a couple of hundred feet below us. It was a distinct disappointment. The white puff of downy feathers about the neck identified it, but amid these impressive surroundings it seemed no more than a sparrow flitting about in a down-town city street. 143

For miles we skirted the base of an unbroken cliff that rose three hundred feet sheer from the trail, and then suddenly came upon a ragged break in the wall that accommodatingly opened a passage where the trail climbed to meet it. The narrow passageway was as dim as the dusk of evening; it zigzagged through the cliff in a series of high steps cut or worn in the rock; the high walls on each side and its tortuous turnings shut out all light except such as fell from the illuminated strip of sky above. Here and there tumbled walls of stones suggested the possibility of ancient barricades, and no more weird a setting could be devised to set a fanciful adventure afloat in fiction.

That night we made camp in the open in a little gorge, and sheltered ourselves in the lee of an enormous boulder. The packs were piled in a wall, and over this the tent was thrown and held down by heavy stones. A blinding snow-squall roared through the narrow gorge as through a pipe; later it changed to a stinging blizzard, where the tiny particles of ice stung like a sand-blast. There was no fuel for a fire, and only by carefully barricading the alcohol lamp could a little thin tea be warmed. That, together with cold tinned things and a nip of Salmon's effective brandy made shift for dinner. 144

The tough little mules, hobbled and turned out to graze among the shale and thin, snow-covered grass, made no effort to seek a lee shelter and wandered about, indifferent to the gale. An Aymará family, driving a few burros packed with rubber, spent the night in the lee of a small, overhanging rock.

There was a baby not two years old in the family, yet, without a fire and with nothing but raw chalone, they made their customary camp. Their heads were heavily muffled as usual, but the dawn found their bare legs drifted over with five inches of snow, and apparently comfortable and indifferent to the fact.

CHAPTER X

THE TOLL GATE AND MAPIRI

Packing the mules in the bitter winter dawn was slow work. The rawhide lashings were frozen stiff; our saddles were covered with sleet, before we could mount and swing into them; two arrieros were drunk together with Agamemnon, but the latter alone was helpless and useless after the tender care he had bestowed on a secreted bottle of alcohol. His usual chocolate grin was lost in the agonies of “de mis’ry in de haid, sar,” and, utterly dejected, he rode along with his wooly skull naked to the sleet and with an ice-coated sock as a bandage to keep it within the normal circumference.



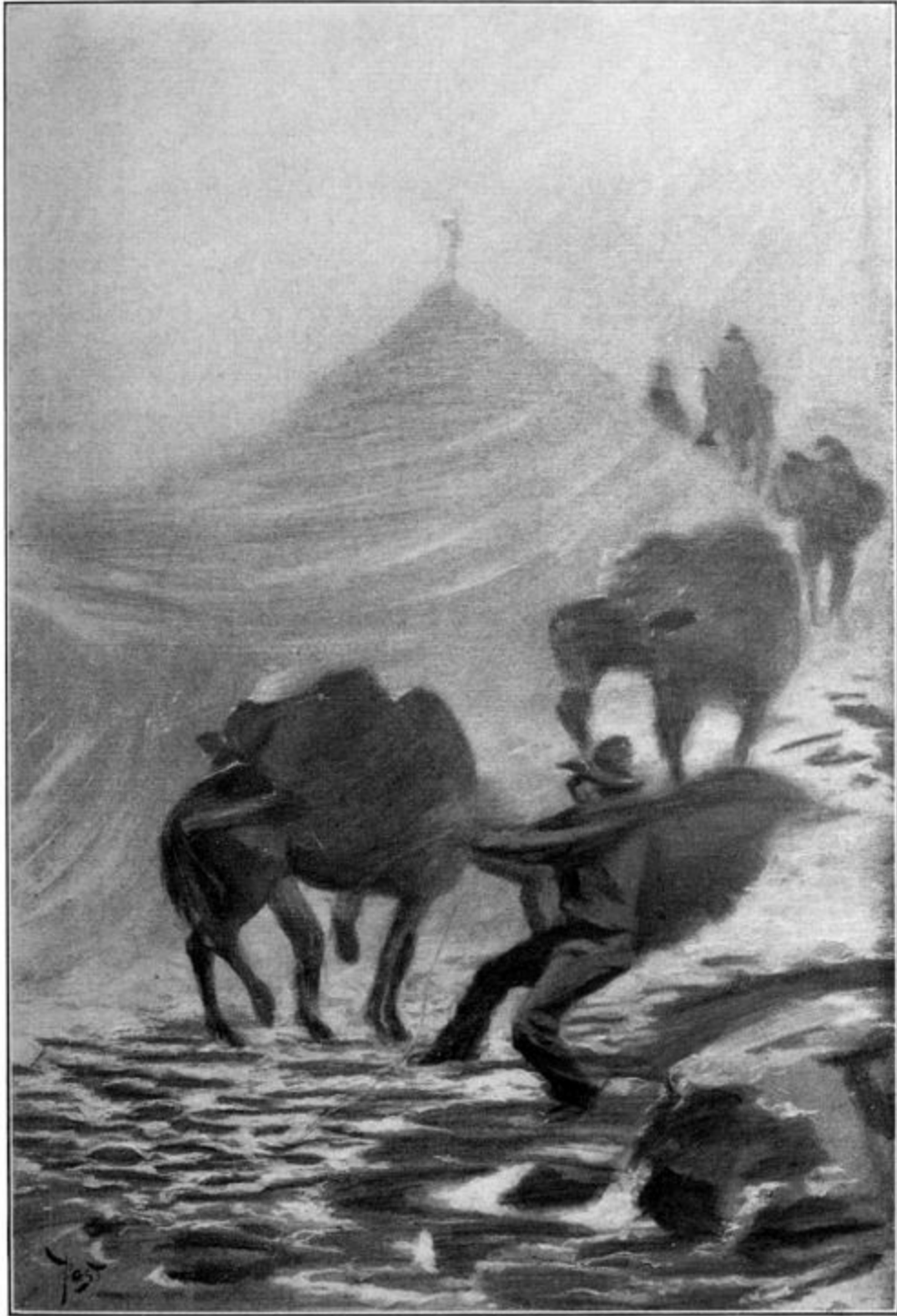
ANDEAN MOUNTAINEER.

Whatever course the trail turned, the blizzard seemed to shift to meet us again square in the teeth. The shale and débris along the narrow ledge of trail was treacherous with an icy glare. The saddle buckles were knots of ice, and every now and then we beat our hats against the mule to 147 break the ice that encrusted them; on my poncho the sleet froze in a thin sheet that would crackle with any movement and rattle off. The particles of ice and snow did not fall as in a self-respecting gale, but were whipped along in the blast in streaks that never seemed to drop. In the high, thin air, the bitter cold of the storm seemed to bite like an acid. Even though the mules were mountain-bred, the rare air of this high pass affected them and as we climbed higher, they began to halt every fifty yards for breath, with their icicled flanks heaving in distress. In a moment they would start on again of their own accord, yet sometimes in the fiercer blasts of the storm only the constant spur would keep them in the trail and headed for the pass above.

At last there was the feel of a level stretch under hoof, and there loomed the big mound of stones, with a twig cross on top and its strips of calico whipped to shreds; the summit of the pass had been reached. The small house-builders' altars at the base were drifted over with snow; a few twig crosses sticking out of the snow marked the Aymará graves of some who had been of mark among their people, for it is a great and desirable 148 honor to be buried high up among the mountain gods. The lesser Aymarás, dying on the trail, are left, or rolled over a convenient steep slope. In the lee of the stone cairn a solitary Aymará was resting; his coarse, woolen trousers rolled above his knees, his feet bare. His eyes grinned at us from out the poncho mufflings, and I recognized him as a little Indian who was picked out to carry for us a long cross-cut saw that was too awkward to be lashed on a mule. He dug the saw out of a drift to show us that it was still safe, and for less than two dollars he delivered the saw after a six-days' journey across the pass and into Mapiri, his only equipment for the trip being a small bag of parched corn, a chalona rib, and the invariable pouch of coca.

Late in the afternoon we rode into the Aymará village of Yngenio. There had been but a slight drop since leaving the summit and the rocky pocket in which the village exists was covered with a light snow. The Aymarás here

are miners and looked with unfavoring eyes on the outfits passing through. There was an empty house of dry-laid stones with a tattered roof of blackened thatch that was used as a public shelter by any passing party, and a walled corral into which the mules were driven.



There Loomed the Big Mound of Stones, with a Twig Cross on Top

In this village the huts were chiefly of stone chinked with mud and grass; some even rose to the dignity of two stories with a rough ladder leading above. Three mountain torrents joined in this gulch to form the Yngenio River. The Aymarás bed these torrents with flat stones in the dry season and after the next high water has passed, wash the fresh gold brought down in their wooden pans. But all about were the ruins of elaborate ancient gold workings that indicated that this was one of the centers from which the Incas drew their enormous golden treasure. All along the gulch as we rode in there were the broken openings of tunnels and drifts high up on the mountain-sides. Some had been concealed by walling up and this had been torn away by some later Spanish prospector or had tumbled in during the course of time.

There were the remains of a great flume and of the stone-laid troughs where the streams were diverted and laid their nuggets in the crude riffles—even as they still do in other Aymará workings. Near the junction of the three torrents there was an immense rectangular pile of carefully laid stones, with carefully constructed ramps leading from one level to the next. Throughout this district there were also many little, low, round stone huts that reminded one forcibly of the Esquimaux *igloo*; they were of great age, their arches had fallen in, and the stones were black with the centuries of aging. 150

The present day Aymarás raise a little corn and potatoes for chuño, some sheep for chalonga, while a few muscular pigs make the razor-back seem fat by comparison. The arrieros foraged among the huts for cebada for the mules and a chicken or some eggs for us, but the Aymarás either had none or else surlily refused to sell, but there was fuel and with that a fine hot tinned dinner was prepared.

The following day the pack-mules filed from one hog-back mountain ridge to another, crawling up the steep ascents or gingerly picking their way downward over an intricate system of connecting mountain series. Hour after hour the bitter winds blew without rest. At times we would be a long column on some ridge that dropped away on either side in a steep declivity; the great depths, whenever they became visible through a rift in the clouds below, gave the valleys beneath the blue haze of distance, while a 151

glass revealed the heavy vegetation, the palms, and the mellow glow of warm sunlight. Farther on the trail would cling, a mere ledge, to the side of cliffs where the melted snow, dripping from the stirrup, would fall a couple of hundred feet sheer.

On the narrow ledges of the trail there were the most abrupt turns and sharp angles and often a rough series of steps up which the mules would clamber in plunging jumps. There was no danger as long as one put faith in the mule and did not attempt to over-balance him by leaning too far to the cliff; those sure-footed animals have no desire to kill themselves or slip carelessly and they may be implicitly depended upon. In one particularly bad descent known as the “Tornillo” no one rode down. It was a zigzag trail apparently cut in the face of an almost perpendicular cliff, and the arrieros took the pack-train down in sections, so that, in the event of one mule stumbling, it would not bump half the others over the edge.

Just beyond the “Tornillo” we passed a llama train. One of the Aymarás came toward us, one arm supporting the other at the wrist and his 152 face drawn with pain and fright, chiefly fright, out of all proportion to the simple sprain. He stopped uncertainly, a short distance off, and repeated, “Tata! Tata!” over and over, plaintively pointing to his injured wrist. It was a simple matter to bind it up and throw in a few impressive and magic gestures, and with a distinctly beneficial effect, for he began to grin cheerfully. The pain was nothing; it was the fact that he had fallen that had worried him. The Aymará, as sure-footed as a goat or one of his own llamas, a mountaineer by birth, is worried when he stumbles and falls; it is one of the very local gods clutching at him, and every one knows the powerlessness of a mere mortal when a god gets after him.

Months later, in a little interior village in the *montaña*, I met this same Aymará. He came forward grinning and beaming and then, about ten feet off, shuffled from one foot to the other in respectful and embarrassed gratitude. Evidently the magic gestures had done their work well and had so far frustrated the peevish god who had been after him. In bandaging him my hand had slipped over the muscles of the arm and, although they lay without tension, they were like bundles of steel cables; in that stubby, 153 squat figure lay the strength of a gorilla. In La Paz I had seen the

Aymar^á *cargadores* walk off with three hundred pounds of flour—sometimes more,—and carry it with ease half a mile in that rarified atmosphere. Another time, at Guaqui, a *cargadore* picked up with his shoulder rope a piano in its case, and carried it across the tracks of the railroad yard.

That night we camped in a tiny stone hut built by the government on a high, mountain promontory where the clearest weather known is a dull, depressing, drizzling rain. An outfit of Aymar^{ás} were already crowded in and Rodriguez hustled them out again, in fact, they were already packing up their scanty outfit preparing to move when they saw the mules coming. Outside in the mud, there were the remnants of a human skeleton, picked clean by the eagles and tramped carelessly in the mud. The skull hung from a stick jammed into the wall of the hut.

“Aymar^{á!}” remarked Rodriguez contemptuously, as he pried it out and tossed it over into the cañon below. That was his delicate tribute to the sensitiveness of the gringos who, he thinks may not fancy a skull as a wall ornament.

With this camp, the last of the high pass was over and in the gray 154 dawn we began the long descent out of the clouds, the sleet, the snow, and the bitter rains. The bare cliffs and slopes gave way, and stunted shrubs appeared now and then even a gaunt tree reared itself, and, perched on a dead branch, an occasional buzzard or eagle looked with a speculative eye at the mules and the steep descents. We dropped through long distances of sunlight that glowed with a grateful and novel warmth, and once in a while a brilliant little bird flashed past, while gorgeous butterflies began to flutter about the mud-holes. The eastern side of the Andes drop in a succession of forest-clad cliffs; looking up and back, it seemed at times hardly possible that a trail could cling to the steep face. Many of the hardest have names—Amargarani, the “hill of bitterness”—Cayatana-y-huata, the “place where Cayatana fell” are directly suggestive.

There is no more telling strain than leaning back hour upon hour as the mule picks his way downward, but it is forgotten in the relief of basking in the mellow rays of the long afternoon sun, and it was grateful that night to be able to undress in place of turning in “all standing,” except for spurs, and

in place of the howling gale and the snow that sifted through the crevices, to hear the soft rustling of the night-blown palms. An open-work hut of split palm and cane was kept here by a Bolivian who was under some kind of vague government subsidy, and under his palm roof we slung our hammocks. 155

His Aymará wife was stolidly indifferent to our presence, but a little daughter—a mere baby she would be considered back in the States—had an unbounded curiosity in the white men—white men especially who wore queer, transparent stones set in glittering frames before their natural eyes. A watch was even more mysterious, “Ah,” she announced, “there is a bug inside!” Following the matter up, she decided that the watch was a bug itself and marveled greatly that a full-grown man should bother to carry a bug about on the end of a little string, unless—aha! it was a magic, and she dropped the watch, nor would she touch it again. Thereat she showed me a scapular and offered to take me up the trail a bit where there were some graves and I could see some ghosts, and perhaps talk with them, as she did. Not among any of the Aymarás was I ever able to notice any particular interest or fear in regard to their dead. Their trails are scattered with 156 graves and mountain tragedies, they believe in spirits, but the almost universal fear of ghosts, dead spirits, or cemeteries after dark is apparently lacking. In fact, in Sorata, it was no common thing to hear them drinking and celebrating under the cemetery walls far into the late hours.

Pleasantly from here the rest of the trail ran on down into Mapiri. The giant foothills of the Andes surrounded us, but they were covered with forest and jungle, and for miles we would ride in the cool shade where the trees were matted overhead by the interlocking jungle-vines. Little trails opened off now and again from the main road, and often would be seen the cane hut of some pioneer. Down the valleys were patches of sugar-cane, with the smoke of a *falca*, alcohol-still, rising close by, and as we rode closer, the smell of burned sugar where *chancaca*, something like maple-sugar in appearance, was being poured into molds gouged out of a dry log.

Occasionally, in the forest, a thin column of blue smoke showed where some rubber-picker was smoking his morning's collection of rubber milk. On all this the sun beat with its full, tropical strength, and the 157

raw fogs and blizzards of the high pass seemed to be months behind us. Coffee, tea, and tinned things, but now comfortably warmed or gratefully cool, were served alongside the trail at the brief noon-day halt and what was left of a bunch of bananas cut from the patch in the camp of the previous night added the final touch. In the cool of the early evening we rode into the village of Mapiri, and the saddles were taken off and oiled and packed for the last time. From here on the journey would be by raft and *batalon* on the rivers. The mountain trail was ended.

The village has a long, grass-grown plaza on two sides; toward the muddy Mapiri River the plaza is open, and the entering end is blocked by a mud church with a mud-walled yard, loopholed and battlemented. Once a year a priest makes the trip to Mapiri and down the river, performing his offices as they are needed. He blesses the graves of the dead, christens the living, and performs canonical marriages for those who desire, and can afford, the luxury.

A squat Cholo welcomed us; he was the head man of the settlement and gave us one of his houses for our headquarters. While he talked with us, a monkey climbed up his leg and coiled its tail affectionately about his neck. A pink-faced little marmoset, with a black-tipped tail, overcame his first nervousness and chattered at us from the refuge of the eaves, while a thin, waving spider-monkey cooed with weird, sprawling gestures at the end of his tether, and from the high, peaked roof a dozen parrots shrieked their evening songs to the sunset. The Cholo's wife, a thin, shrewish Aymar^á, viewed us with disfavor; for days she refused to sell us eggs while we were waiting for the rafts to arrive, and then she threw away five dozen that had spoiled on her hands. When her Cholo husband saw this lost profit he said nothing, but that night sounds that suggested a primitive family discipline arose in his household and pierced the little village.

CHAPTER XI

WAITING FOR THE LECCOS

FOR a month we waited in this tiny straggling rectangle of thatched huts before the *balsas* or *callapos* could get up to us to move our outfit down the river. Somewhere below us on the turbulent river Lecco crews were toiling up against the current, dragging and clawing their way through narrow cañons, hanging fast in places to the bare rock, and again helped by the long, tropical vines that drooped to the swift water. Twice they had been beaten back by sudden rises in the river; the third time they got through, although two balsas had been wrecked and for the past two days they had lived mainly on the berries and leaves along the jungle banks.

A splendid lot of half-civilized people, tremendous of muscle and capable of prodigious feats of strength and endurance on their rivers; ashore sober and diffident, afloat on their rafts, by right of an immemorial custom they are always drunk and serenely confident in their intuitive skill.

160

For twenty-four hours after they arrived on the hot stone beach below the bluff on which Mapiri lived they drank and feasted and slept and then their head man, a Bolivian refugee, announced that all was in readiness. The gang of workmen we had chartered were collected and counted and then assigned to the three callapos, a queer lot, but in the main fairly promising for our purposes.

One was a negro who had been a rubber picker down the river before. During his absence his wife had left him preferring a gentleman of lighter color, but who had only one eye; some frontier mechanic had hammered a patch out of a silver coin and then engraved with a nail the ragged outlines of an eye, which the owner proudly wore as a most elegant makeshift. Both of these gentlemen were in the outfit and ordinarily both would boast in the

utmost good nature of their fascinations with the ladies—except when they were in process of getting drunk. And on the Bolivian frontier getting drunk is recognized as a perfectly legitimate pastime. There are no games, 161 no concerted forms of amusement, the montaña offers nothing except these little gatherings with some childish hopping as a dance and then the tin cans of cañassa and the ensuing drunkenness.

There was another man in the gang, a stocky, loose-jointed fellow, Segorrondo, who was never sober, except during his working hours, but during that time he was worth any two of the other men—and he never failed to turn up sober for that allotted period. His capacity was nothing; three times in one afternoon in Mapiri he was sober and drunk, with the lines of demarcation startlingly distinct. He rarely joined in the little hoppings to the reed whistle with his face daubed with clay or charcoal and decorated with bits of twigs or leaves, yet he was perfectly sociable and never dangerous. Later, in the established camp down the river, there came a three day fiesta for which he prepared in advance. There was a *falca*—a still for making the cañassa from a half-wild sugar-cane—up the river, and he drove his bargain before the fiesta began. He was, for the sum of one Boliviano—about half a dollar, gold—to be allowed to drink all he 162 chose during the three days, but was to carry none away.

Long before dawn on the first day he was at the falca; for three days he never moved from the litter of crushed sugar-cane, lying in a stupor from which he only roused himself to reach out shakily for a tin cup of warm alcohol as it dripped from the still-worm. We expected a wreck to show up, but on the morning of the fourth day he returned, grinning cheerfully, and worked as though nothing had occurred.

Also there was Nosario, a stocky boy of about twelve or fourteen, who had been added as general utility around the cook or camp. He was worthless and it later developed that his wife, a Cholo lady of some thirty or forty years, had prodded him into the effort in order to add to her matrimonial support.

Agamemnon viewed the whole collection with great scorn. “These yer pipples ain’t no ways fitten, ba’s,” he would remark. The other darky was included in his disfavor.

Agamemnon always swelled with pride at the thought that he was a Britisher by birth—born in Barbadoes—and he counted Americans as being too subtly differentiated to be separated; humbly accepting his place as assigned in their eyes, he looked down with scorn on these shambling, good natured animals. 163

During the four weeks of delay in Mapiri we had seen much of a neighboring rubber baron, old man Violand, whose barraca was a half day's ride over the steep trails. The old man was as typically Teutonic as though he had but just pushed his mild, blue-eyed way into the jungle. His headquarters—a square of palm-thatched and palm-walled buildings—was self-sustaining from the coarse flour that a row of Indian women were grinding between heavy stones in one corner of the patio to his coffee and also a superior brand of cañassa distilled in a wooden worm, cooled in a hollow palm log, which really had the flavor of a fine liqueur. He had been the chief figure in a couple of rubber wars over disputed territory with his nearest neighbor some thirty miles away and he showed a spattering of bullet holes in every room of his house with delighted pride. The dispute was a trifle complicated, but as the result, his opponent was a fugitive from Bolivia while Violand himself tiptoed into Sorata or occasionally La Paz with some caution.

Often during the month we rode down to see him—he would have had us stay there for life. No sooner did our mules round the shoulder of the hill than we could see some small Indian boy darting off with the news. The familiar figure of the old man would bulk in the doorway to confirm the news and then his voice would begin booming out orders; chickens squawked, sheep blatted, and at once the place was a turmoil of pursuit. From an outbuilding would come the blue smoke of fresh fires and the shrill clacking of the well-grimed Aymará cook summoning her family help. Always were we greeted thus and always there was a ready crowd of Indians at our heels on the crest of the boom to take the mules when we arrived and feed and water or put them up for the night. 164

The formalities over or properly supervised, Violand would seat himself at a huge table with the top a single plank of solid mahogany three inches thick and before the ingredients for a gin cocktail. At his elbow a tiny little girl,

one of the daughters of the Aymará cook, took her position to trot out for anything lacking in the first array. A gin cocktail is sugar, Angostura bitters, and gin—and I have seen it served in full goblets. All the rest of the forenoon the host would busy himself compounding this. It made not the slightest difference whether anyone else in the party joined him or not, genially he would attend to it himself in little sips whose cumulative effect was prodigious. As the midday breakfast hour approached he would roar for pisco, a species of Peruvian brandy, and then, as the little Aymará maiden announced the final hour of nutrition, champagne. 165

And then the dinner, half a sheep, or a whole pig and once the head of a young bullock to whose cooking the old man had given personal attention, waddling back and forth from the mahogany table to the cook house accompanied by the little Aymará girl fluttering in a state of ecstatic excitement. For the rest there were the chickens and the native foods, the chalona slowly simmered for a day to make it taste like food, with the chuña floating in it like so many old medicine corks, the chickens, the platanos, boiled green and pith-like or better in their black, melting over-ripeness and to be eaten with a spoon, baked and delicious, native bread from home made flour, and imported preserves for dessert. Also there was champagne and whiskey and pisco and cañassa and gin cocktails again until in final triumph a little beer—everything lukewarm or tepid from the shallows of the tropical brook. 166

By and by the old man would venture on a German song or two and then beckon to the little beady-eyed Aymará girl; off she would dart to return with a couple of heavy footed Indian women. The host would rise—with assistance—and trolling some uncertain song march off to his bedroom to doze. And the rest of the time would be spent with his son and manager, both fine, pink cheeked young Germans who looked after affairs. It sounds like a wassail, though as a matter of fact, it was old Violand who was the chief performer—he was an old man, civilization was far away, eight days to La Paz over pass and plateaus and blizzard and after that to Germany—six months for a letter and an answer!

Later he would reappear suddenly, generally clad in a shrimp pink bath gown, a patent, German Emperor-moustache-shaper over his moustache,

and groping for his spectacles. When they were found he once more settled himself for a pleasant time, generally having to go through a second search for a key so that another bottle of bitters could be produced. 167

The morning after, he would appear, fresh and blue-eyed and solicitous.

“You hef a goot time—yes?” then he would chuckle until he shook in ponderous ripples and go on in Spanish, “I do not remember much—after dinner—yesterday—a good dinner—yes? A good dinner is much in this country of the black gold—the rubber—yes—we drink a little for the digestion, la, la—yes. Hoi, mozo—” the little Indian girl clattered inside for the bottles—“just one little cocktail before the saddle—yes?” His face would beam in its frame of thin whiskers with the proudly upstanding German-emperor-moustaches the center of their radiations.

In the jungles across the river from Mapiri was another rubber barraca in which a Bolivian owner held court. Every morning we could see a dozen thin threads of blue smoke trickling above the forest where his pickers were smoking their morning collection of rubber milk. Over there the cañassa was always on draft for all at all times, while half the week was a fiesta and Sunday a brawling bedlam.

Slowly the days dragged on with an occasional rumor of the progress of the Leccos and the callapos. Once, as much to furnish a variation as anything else, I routed out a couple of jars of mincemeat and ventured on some pies. An oven was heated, a big clay dome, such as our great-great-grandmothers used, from out of which the fire was drawn and on a long handled paddle I shoved in a load of pies. Almost instantly they browned and then passed to a crisp black before the paddle could maneuver them out again. The native population, however, appreciated them highly. It was small loss as the manufacture of pie crust is somewhat of an undertaking—at least in that tropical temperature. The lard, native or imported, is a beautiful amber liquid that is bought or carried in bottles and pours with no more deliberation than so much water. 168

A little later a general fiesta in Mapiri helped out the dull waiting a little. We noticed an extra number of candles burning before the altar in the little mud-walled church and for some days before there had been the thrumming

of hollow-tree drums from the little huts of the village. The night before the great day, while it was scarcely dark, the big drums began booming 169 with a typical Indian rhythm; from the line of huts came the droning wail of the guests that rose and fell in fitful bursts, while now and again a straggling line of drunken Cholos, men and women, in a weaving single file, trotted in a staggering hop around the grass grown plaza. There was feasting and drinking and noise; from the barraca across the river came a delegation to lend a joyous hand. Toward morning it died down, slumbered uneasily during the forenoon, and then began working to a frenzy of excitement as evening approached.

All the drums had been concentrated in the church, tallow dips lined the walls, attached by their own tallow to the sun-baked clay, and cast uncertain masses of shifting shadows that flickered in the hot and smoky drafts; overhead a flood of bats chattered in amazement at the invasion of their domain. On one side of the church were squatted all of the old women in Mapiri with dull, cañassa bleared eyes and cheeks distended with coca leaves hammering out a monotonous rhythm on the drums.

Before the altar and facing it side by side were two lines of the smaller boys with the tallest at the front and then shading down to the rear, each 170 naked to the waist but for some cheap necklaces of gay beads. Each had a forked twig like those we used for our juvenile sling-shots, and strung on a wire or twisted bark thread that connected the forks were a dozen little bits of flat tin hammered out of old sardine cans. Like castanets they jiggled the forked stick in rhythm with the drums and as they jiggled shuffling in a hopping, dancing lock-step in single file up to the altar, and then back in the same way half the depth of the beaten earth floor. As one file advanced the other jiggled back and so on alternately. For hours they had kept it up and there was no sign of either a stop or a rest.

The rest of the villagers flitted in or out as ordinary spectators, still nibbling at portions of the feast or sharing a continuously filled bottle of cañassa with the drumming old women. It was not until daybreak that Mapiri dropped into an exhausted rest.

During this fiesta there had been no shooting of dynamite—that is quarter pound sticks with a short fuse like a fire-cracker. This once more popular

amusement had been dampened by the last really important fiesta they had celebrated. A Cholo gentleman had, it seemed, zigzagged out into the 171 grass grown plaza with his stick of dynamite, lighted it from his cigarette, and then in a drunken effort to throw it away had dropped it. He did not notice this trifling difference in his program and swinging dizzily round with the effort of his throw fell sprawling upon the cartridge. His demise is still spoken of with awe on that river. Therefore it was that Mapiri celebrated a quiet fiesta.

And then the balsas arrived. Their Lecco crew gorged and slept and drank for a day and then were as fresh as ever, busy in lashing each three balsas together with cross logs to make callapos for the down-stream voyage. Three of these callapos we had and, when loaded with their freight, crews and workmen passengers, their logs were four inches under water, the little platforms on which the baggage was piled and carefully lashed, rising like a little island on stilts above the current.

CHAPTER XII

OFF ON THE LONG DRIFT



SLOWLY THE RAFTS SANK UNDER THE WEIGHT.

A long line of half-naked Leccos trotted across the grass-covered bluff and disappeared over the edge and down the steep path to the river, where our clumsy rafts swung and eddied in the boiling current. They grunted and sweated and laughed as they threw the heavy packages of our outfit on their shoulders, for they could swing a hundred and fifty or two hundred pounds as carelessly as you could handle a valise. Steadily the raised platforms on the rafts piled higher with the accumulating baggage, while slowly 173 the rafts sank under the weight, until the logs were entirely covered by the muddy current. As the last package was put aboard, the Leccos began lashing the cargo in place with our spare rope and the long vines which they used for towing the rafts up-stream. They used as much care in throwing and tightening the lashings as though stowing the pack on a "bad" mule for a mountain-trail, rather than a cargo raft that was only to drift with the current. It seemed absurd.

“Here, good,” grunted a Lecco, waving a hand toward the mill-race current; “below, very bad, patrón, *muy peligroso*—yes.”

When later we struck the “bad places,” and waist-deep in the boiling, angry waters of the cañons, clung to those same lashings, to keep ourselves from being washed overboard, the need of lashing for the baggage was plain.



THE SHREWISH LEATHER-SKINNED INDIAN WIFE.

The *intendente*, the jefe *politico*, and the only postmaster for many leagues of this virgin interior came down to tender us his farewell embraces; for as a strict matter of fact those three functionaries resided in the single person of that one short, stocky Cholo half-breed, who had given all the hospitality in his power during the dreary weeks of waiting in his little palm-thatched domain, but whose Aymará wife had viewed us with such sullen hospitality. Officially he noted with approval that we had already complied with the Bolivian regulations in regard to navigation, and at the bow floated the green, yellow, and red flag of Bolivia, and with much curiosity he viewed our American flag fluttering at the stern. It was the first he had ever seen. It gained, too, much approval from the Leccos, its decorative scheme of stars and red and white bars drawing admiring comment, and we could have sold it many times over as dress goods or as strictly high-class shirting. As 175 a special mark of favor the shrewish, leather-skinned Indian wife of the Cholo jefe came down to see us off, and while we patted her lord on the back in our mutually polite embracings, she fluttered in the background, clacking unintelligible, but cordial, Aymará farewells.

When first we had dismounted in this tiny settlement of Mapiri this Aymará woman had borne us a fierce dislike that was kept from literal and open war only by the strong hand of her Cholo lord. A little later, unfortunately, one of our men, in making his offering of candles in the little mud-walled chapel, had ignited a saint. When I saw the saint shortly after, his vestments were charred shreds, he was as bald as a singed chicken, and his waxen features had coagulated into limp benevolence, out of which his sole remaining glass eye stared mildly. He had been placed on a little table up against a mud wall, and the Indian women were weeping and wailing before him in abject apology. They were hastily offering flowers, candles, and libations, but with this last straw the Aymará lady's dislike had become even a more fixed, fanatical hatred.

Shrewish, unattractive, and savage though she was, she was devoted 176 in her love for her Cholo husband. Some time after the burying of the saint, one night their son developed a difference with his father in which each tried to kill the other. The father had just reached his gun and would have been successful when, being thick-necked, violent, and full-blooded, he toppled over in a stroke of apoplexy. There being no doctor, not even an

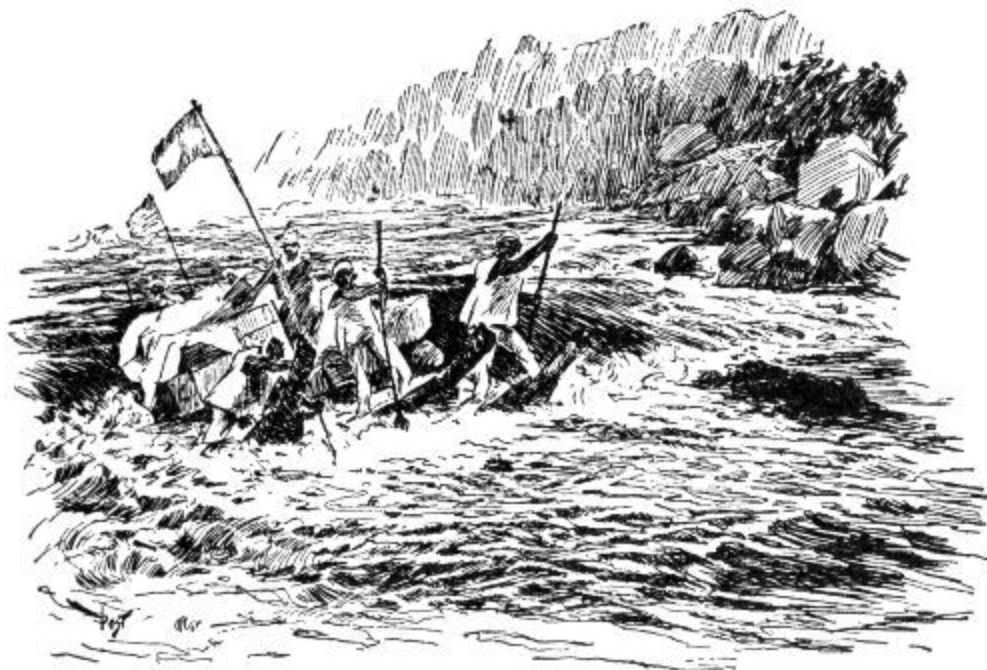
Aymar yatari within three hundred miles, the old lady turned to us in a panic, and, probably despite our amateur efforts, the Cholo pulled through. In the meantime the poor old woman fluttered about in an agony of helpless fear and love, eagerly hanging on the slow words of translation that came to her, for she spoke nothing but Aymar, and everything had to be translated first into Spanish and then into her own tongue. That very night she burned a box of candles before the charred saint, while in the morning we had for our breakfast a fine chicken apiece. Her gratitude endured, and in the quivering furnace heat she had come to see us depart, and as we waded aboard she followed us and laid on the cargo a pair of live chickens as a final gift.

The Cholo handed us a small sack of mail, asking us to distribute it 177 on our way down the Rio Mapiri, these irregular trips being the sole means of mail communication with the rubber *barracas* of this far interior; the Leccos cast off the vine ropes that moored us, and a few strokes of their heavy paddles swung us out into the full, swift current of the river. As we struck it there was no feeling of speed or even of motion, but immediately the green walls on each side of the river began flitting past in a shimmering ribbon of confused green jungle. In a moment, far behind, came the crackling of rifle-shots. It was the Cholo and his Winchester in salute; even while we were pulling our guns to reply he and his wife had dwindled to tiny dots that the sound of our guns could have reached only as a faint echo. Then a bend in the river hid them from view, and my river voyage had begun.

The balsas were slender rafts of very buoyant logs spiked together with heavy pins of black palm; they had a rough bow made by the crooked center log, which turned up in a snout-like projection, giving the affair a curiously animal-like and amphibious expression. For the return voyage three of these balsas were lashed side by side with cross-logs and 178 strips of the inner bark of some tree. The *callapo*, as this combination is called, is entirely submerged and except for the cargo platform and the turned-up snouts, nothing is visible above the muddy river.

As we disappeared around the bend in the swift current, the hills against the background seemed to close in upon us, and as they narrowed, the muddy

river snapped and crackled in peevish, little waves. The banks grew steeper, and the air damp and cool, and although directly overhead there was the glaring blue sky of the forenoon, yet we moved swiftly through an atmosphere of evening. Long, trailing creepers drooped from the overhanging trees into the current near the banks and cut the water like the spray from the bow of a trim launch; the soft murmur of rapidly moving water rose, and was broken only now and then by the shrill cries of parrots flying high overhead; sometimes a pair of macaws, with their gaudy plumage flashing in the high sun flitted across the gorge. But though the river doubled and twisted among the hills, there were yet, according to Lecco standards, no “bad places,” and they passed the bottle of *cañassa* sociably around among themselves, inspecting their passengers with interest and chuckling over their own comments. They had never seen a man with eye-glasses before, and I was a matter of fine interest and guesswork. What were those panes of glass for? Cautiously they would make a little circle with their fingers and thumbs and peer through it to see what effect of improvement might result. I received my name, “the four-eyed patrón,” promptly.



THERE WERE, ACCORDING TO THE LECCO STANDARDS, AS YET NO “BAD PLACES.”

The whole crew of Leccos was amiably drunk; it is the custom of the river, and it seems in no way to impair their efficiency. It has become their right by long custom, and one that it is not prudent to disregard; for a trader, being of a thrifty turn and not caring to buy the cañassa, decided to run the river on a strict prohibition platform. Every one of his callapos was curiously enough wrecked in the same rapids on the day after he announced his thrifty principles. The general allowances is about two quarts a day for three men, and perhaps, if the day has been a hard one, a small teacupful each in the camp. Money to them has no value compared with cañassa. Once, when trying to buy a fine bead neckband from a Lecco, I offered him money up to a dollar, Bolivian, the equivalent of eight bottles of cañassa, and he refused, for his Lecco sweetheart had made it; then I began to barter all over again by offering him a bottle of cañassa, and at once he handed me the neck-band without question. 180

While the current was swift, from eight to ten miles an hour, we had not come to the bad rapids. Sometimes the river would open out into broad shallows, where the callapo would bump and scrape along over the bottom, and then would close up into another gorge that in its turn would merge into tortuous cañons with bluff walls of rock. Drunk though the Leccos were, yet their river skill did not seem to be affected. When we floated along the quieter reaches, they would play like silly children. Occasionally one would be tumbled into the river, and would swim alongside in sheepish embarrassment until he decided to climb aboard, amid the pleased cackles of the rest. 181



LECCOS LOWERING THE CALLAPO THROUGH SHALLOWS.

One, a young Lecco about seventeen or eighteen years old, who handled one of the stern paddles, accidentally stepped off backward into the river. The others shrieked with delight as the Lecco struck out for shore. We saw him land, pull his machete out from under his shirt, and start chopping down some saplings. Perhaps fifteen minutes later, in the next milder 182 stretch of river, down came the Lecco like a cowpuncher on a pony, only his pony was a bundle of mere sticks lashed together with vine, and in place of a rope he swung a bamboo pole, using it as a paddle. He was standing up like a circus-rider on his frail raft, shifting it with his pole over to where the current was swiftest, and he coasted down the inclined glissade between rocks, avoiding every little eddy and catching only the roughest and swiftest places, until presently he had worked his way alongside and stepped aboard again. His little bundle of sticks did not number ten, and not one was as thick as your wrist, while merely two bits of vine at each end held them together.



THE LECCO OF THE TWIG RAFT.

I asked what would have happened had the vine lashings broke. When that was translated to the Leccos, they roared with laughter. That, it was

explained to me, was what they were hoping for, so that then he would have had to swim. Swim! A fine joke to swim rapids and whirlpools that 183 looked like sure death or worse mangling. But I found later that any one of them could have done it on even worse passages. If they are sure to be caught in a whirlpool, they will dive, and the fury of the rapid itself troubles them not the least. A Lecco once, to avoid a whipping by his rubber boss, threw himself into the river and swam six miles in the worst section of the river without a thought. A German later attempted to swim the mildest of these, and his broken body was picked up in an eddy three miles below.

CHAPTER XIII
THE LECCO TRIBE



THESE LECCOS ARE AMONG THE FINEST INDIANS.

These Leccos are among the finest Indians, or semi-civilized savages, I have met. They are sturdy and muscular, with a distinctly Malaysian

suggestiveness, and very superior to any of the surrounding savage tribes of the interior. Yet they have neither religion nor superstition; they have no legend or tradition, and their only historical recollection is from the time when quinine bark was the main river commerce instead of rubber—the time of the “Great Quina” they call it,—about half a century ago. 185 They are brave and loyal, although not a fighting race, and have made but a poor showing against the neighboring tribes. Their life is on the river, chiefly this Rio Mapiri, and they stick close to its banks. Their sole work is transportation with these balsas and callapos up and down the river.

For months in the year the stream is virtually closed by reason of the rains and the impassable cañons. Down stream is simple and finely exciting, but against the currents up-stream, portaging or hauling the balsas through the cañons, where there is often barely a hand-hold on the naked walls of rock, and often vines must be lowered from above, drenched during the day and sleeping on the sand *playas* at night, is the hardest kind of labor. As had happened while they were trying to reach me on this trip, the food gives out—it is not a game country—and unless they are near enough to the goal to live on nuts and berries, as they did for two days on this occasion, they have to go back, replenish, and start over again, with all the previous labor lost. And there is scarcely a free Lecco among them; they are always in debt to the rubber barracas, who by the sale and purchase of their debts pass 186 them as veritable chattels. With thriftless, unthinking good nature, they accept this condition and at the end of each trip will squander their credit-wages on worthless trifles. A Lecco friend of mine once squandered the wages of a whole hard trip up-stream on a woman’s straw hat and its mass of pink-ribbon bows that he wore for two days in great pride on the drift down-stream until it was lost overboard in one of the worst rapids. He watched it whirling off in the spray and foam with a childish pleasure and no sense of loss, but rather with the calm complacency of a man who had lost a trifle and could with easy labor earn another.

The Indians whom I had met before were the Quechuas and the Aymarás, the great tribes of the high plains; heavy-boned, stocky, and powerful peoples, who, in feature and color strongly resemble our own Sioux and Apache type. These Leccos, on the contrary, were slender, well-built men, with a direct, soft quickness of movement that revealed the perfect strength

that lay behind it. In feature they were absolutely Malay—a perfect reproduction of any of the Malay tribes that fringe the coast of Asia.

Other rivers have the balsa and the callapo too, and the long rapids through narrow gorges, but the Indians of those rivers lie down and clutch for safety when they go through them. Your Lecco goes into the boiling smother of a cataract with a grinning yell of pure joy, and keeps his feet like a Glo'ster skipper in a high gale. 187

The balsa of the Leccos is a raft made of the light, corky wood from which it takes its name. Eight-inch logs of this balsa wood are pinned together with palm spikes from the hard, black palm that is also used as arrow-points and for bows. When floating in the water it looks like some unwieldy amphibian that has risen to the surface for a fresh supply of air. It is generally about twenty-five feet long and about four feet wide. The Leccos lash three balsas together, broadside on, by means of stout cross-logs tied with strips of bark or vine, and this result is called a callapo. It is a structure that is capable of carrying some three tons of cargo—that is if handled by Leccos.

The first thing that impressed me about these Leccos was the distinctness with which they represented another race. It was not the mere divergence of tribe; it was more fundamental—it was a racial difference. There was nothing in it to suggest even a remote relation to any of the tribes with whom I had come in contact up to that time, or, for that matter, with any of those that I subsequently met. To begin with, the Leccos looked clean—a condition that one seldom finds in the Quichua or Aymará nations; although cleanliness is almost an invariable condition of all river peoples. Their complexion was of the soft, warm brown of the Hindu or the Filipino, having no suggestion of the dull chocolate of the negro or the weather-beaten copper of the Aymarás or of our own Western Indians. 188



NAPOLEON A LECCO CHIEF.

Their features again are decidedly Malaysian—straight high nose with thin nostrils; forehead fairly high and well shaped; finely cut thin lips, and the narrow, though not slanting eyes of the East. The hair is oily jet-black, thick, and grows to a point on the forehead, in the style made known by

Aguinaldo, and is kept neatly cut in a straight, bristly pompadour. They do not care for the gaudy feather head-dresses of their savage neighbors 189—not even ear-rings—and for head decorations are content with the brilliant bandanna of the trader, twisted and tied in a band about the head in very much the same manner as used by our own Apaches of Arizona. A band necklace of bright beads, strung and designed in simple patterns by their own women, on threads of wild cotton, is their only ornament. These are almost invariably worn by the men only and are tied tightly about the throat.



A LECCO TYPE.

Another striking point about the Leccos, one in which they differ from all of the "barbaros," or the savages of the Amazon tributaries, is their muscular development. The barbaro in this respect is very deficient. He is strong

almost beyond belief, but it is the strength of sinew and not of muscle. It is like the strength of the monkey, that is not made visible by the ordinary signs of muscular development. The barbaro has no apparent deltoid, no biceps, no triceps, none of the finely developed muscles of the leg and thigh that with us make for strength. He is built like an undeveloped boy who has suddenly suffered from too rapid growth. The Leccos, on the contrary, are beautifully developed physically; knotted muscles shift and play evenly under the soft skin and suggest a swift sureness of movement and a strength of endurance that are demanded in their life on the river. 190

The likeness of these people to the Malays is still further accented by their costume. They wear rather tight breeches of white *tucuyo*, a coarse muslin, that taper to the ankle, and above it a short shirt of gaudy red, yellow, or blue, or even sometimes white, though the red is popularly regarded as the most aristocratic. The shirt is cut square with the armholes in the two upper corners. The hole for the head is emblazoned by a border of crude design cut from varied-colored calicos and sewed on. In the course of many days' association with them, I discovered that the little *chipa*, or bag of native-woven wild cotton, which every Lecco carries with him on any of his river expeditions, is filled with clean clothing. The muddy water of the Rio Mapiri and the Rio Kaka—which the Mapiri becomes farther down—soils everything it touches, and so the Leccos, who are as much in the water as out of it, regularly changed their garments daily, only making an exception when some extra-hard passages would have made it a useless extravagance. 191

In my contact with the South American Indians, whether among the high plains of the Andes or among the forests drained by the tributaries of the Amazon, I received rather the impression of inert, passive races; of peoples who were patiently hoping for the return of the legendary days of their fathers, yet who, dimly, in some way felt that the hope was vain. It might poetically be interpreted as a vague consciousness of their doom of ultimate extinction. The Lecco is probably doomed to extinction as well, but he is by no means a despondent specimen. On the contrary, no more cheery, indeed hilarious, outfit can be imagined than that with which we embarked on our callapos at Mapiri. Candor compels me to own that this exuberance of

spirits was probably largely alcoholic, for it is one of the few rights to which he clings tenaciously—that of being allowed to keep drunk 192 while making a voyage on the river. For the Lecco will not work to any good purpose if kept sober; they feel that they have been defrauded and cheated of an inalienable right, and at the first convenient opportunity they will avenge the injury by running the callapo on a rock in a rapid, while they themselves will swim through it like otters and make the shore below safe and unrepentant. Unlike all other savages, who become treacherous and turbulent under the influence of liquor, the Lecco becomes even more genial and jovial when in his cups. He is pre-eminently a man of peace.

From the moment that we shoved out into the stream everything was a huge joke. If one slipped on the submerged logs of the callapo and floundered overboard, the rest hailed it with yells of delight, and they dug their heavy paddles into the water and tried to pull the callapo beyond his reach. The victim would dive and come up in some unexpected place, where the effect of the black pompadour and the beady eyes suddenly popping above the opaque depths of an eddy, followed by a damp, sheepish grin, was irresistibly funny.

They are perfectly at home in the water, and will swim any rapid and the dangerous whirlpools that are constantly forming below them, without hesitation—places that it would be fatal for a white man to attempt. There is a story of a Lecco who went through the most dangerous of the rapids with his wife and baby and a mule—the mule and baby inclosed in a framework of palm amidships on the balsa, and the wife helping with a paddle at the stern. They made the passage safely, but it was the survival of the mule that excited their admiration. 193

Their huts are one-roomed affairs with the floor of beaten clay, upon which, at night, are laid woven grass mats that serve as beds. The walls are of *charo*—a kind of poor relative of the bamboo—lashed to a slender framework of the same material by split strips of the *mora*, the typical hut of the tropical frontier. Stout posts sunk at the corners give the strength to support the roof. The huts are about ten by fifteen feet. The steep-pitched roof is thatched with split palm-leaves that render it water-proof even in the heavy tropical thunder-storms. A high broad shelf at one end serves as a

second story and a place of storage. In some there is a low shelf of charo along one side that serves as the family bed, though these latter are only in the houses of the more ambitious Leccos. All cooking is done at one end over an open fire, the smoke escaping as best it may through the interstices between the layers of charo. A single door is the only opening. 194

Near by is the little platano or plantain patch, and a few yuccas. A few scrawny chickens use the house as their headquarters, and are reserved for fiestas. A pot or two, purchased from the traders complete the household equipment. Invariably they boil their food, even to the platanos that are so much better roasted. This is in striking contrast to the barbaros of the farther interior, who are without the knowledge of boiling food; they either eat it raw or roast it slightly.

The Lecco women are also as distinctly Malaysian in appearance as the men. They have fine figures and retain the free gracefulness of carriage of the nude savage, and, up to the time they are sixteen, if not absolutely pretty in feature, are distinctly pleasing. One, however, that I saw in the rubber barraca of Caimalebra, living with a Bolivian refugee murderer, was an absolute beauty by any standards of comparison. They were living happily, and on one trip I enjoyed their hospitality for five days. The single garment of the women is an exaggeration of the Lecco shirt, reaching nearly to the ankles. It is pleasing in its effect, and sets off the graceful beauty of their figures in a way that recalls the simple fashions of the Hawaiian and Polynesian peoples. The women of other tribes are apt to adopt slatternly skirts after their introduction to the frontier civilization. 195

The girls are fully developed at fourteen, and they usually mate a year or so later with a Lecco boy of about their own age. The boy at that time is a full-fledged *balseiro* and able to hold his own in the struggle with the river—their only test of arrival at man's estate.

Sometimes a mission priest comes down the river, and then, if the family has prospered, there will be a grand fiesta and a marriage will be performed according to the rites of the Church. This will cost forty bolivians—about eighteen dollars—for the priest's fee, and considerably more for the drunken orgy that follows. To have been married according to the ceremonies of the Church is a great distinction, and also a rare one.

Of any form or ceremonial that the Leccos may have had at one time, there is not a trace left. All vestiges of their own original superstitions have long disappeared. Nominally they are Catholics, and are claimed as such by the padrés, but in reality they are without religion or belief. The rites of baptism and marriage seem to appeal to them, but apparently more on the ground of the superior dignity that is lent to the following fiesta. Baptism is performed by any trader who happens to be passing on the river, and to their complete satisfaction, while his crew is impressed as godfathers. I was invited to perform it once, but declined, to their evident disappointment. 196

There are no ceremonies attending the death and burial of a Lecco. During the last illness the neighbors may drop in on a visit of sympathy, and cañassa will be handed around. When death occurs, one member of the family, the husband, son, or son-in-law, wraps the body in a piece of tucuyo, and carries it on his shoulder to a secluded place in the jungle, and there buries it. The slight mound above the grave is its only mark, and that disappears after the lapse of a season or two. Apparently there is no idea of spirits haunting these places, for the Leccos pass them without hesitation after nightfall—something that the Cholos do not care or are afraid to do. 197

The Lecco families are small. Two or, at the most, three babies are the rule, and it is not at all uncommon to find a childless family. Cañassa and the frequent drunken fiestas that are their only relaxation seem to be the means by which they are accomplishing the suicide of their race. Girl babies are preferred to boys; for when a daughter marries, her husband will eventually have to support her parents. But with a son it is recognized that his duty is to his wife and her people. The women are faithful to their men, if their men care for them and guard them; but if the men become careless or apparently indifferent, the women regard it as a tacit relinquishing of the rights of fidelity, and establish such casual relations as suit them.

With rare exceptions the men are, in effect, in a state of slavery. The debt system prevails, and they are easy victims. The trader spreads his gaudy stock of trade stuffs before the Lecco, and the Lecco buys recklessly whatever attracts him at the moment. The trader gives him full swing 198

at first, and the Lecco gets himself heavily in debt. And that debt is allowed to the exact extent of each particular Lecco's value as a balsero or rubber-picker. A well-to-do balsero has a debt of two thousand bolivians; poorer ones less. And the Leccos are valued as slaves in the terms of the debt. The Lecco never gets free from his debt.

Of his race the Lecco has no knowledge. He has no written language—not even primitive hieroglyphs or crude pictures. He is even without a primitive instrument for making music. To all questions about themselves, as to where their fathers lived before them, or as to where their families came from even before that, or to the flattering questions as to the time when the Leccos “were a great people,” they have but one date to give. That is the “time of the Great Quina,” when the bark of the quinine was worth a dollar and ten cents a pound, gold, on the river. This is their only date, and it was about sixty or seventy years ago.

They rigidly retain their own dialect, which they call the Riki-Riki, although they have acquired a Spanish patois in their dealing with the traders on the river. The Riki-Riki is strongly labial, though with 199 many guttural sounds, and, like most barbaric tongues, is impossible to reproduce with our alphabet. The counting reduplicates systematically and on the basis of five, instead of ten as in our system.

CHAPTER XIV

DRIFTING DOWN THE RIO MAPIRI

That night we made camp on a sand bar in one of the more open reaches of water and close to the river's edge. With their short machetes the Leccos cut some canes, unlashd our tentage from the platforms, and rigged a rough shelter. In the balmy air of the sunset there was no indication that it was needed, but during this season a tropical rain comes up with the suddenness of a breeze, and pitching a tent in a driving downpour in the darkness of perdition is no light pleasure. For themselves, the Leccos simply threw a matting of woven palm-leaves on the sand and their camp was made. The bank was lined with a fringe of driftwood, and Spanish cedar and mahogany made admirable fuel, and gave one at the same time a sense of wanton, extravagant luxury that the humbler cooking fires of our North never obtain. Presently little fires crackled into life along the playa while gathering around each were groups of Leccos in their loose, flapping, square shirts, or else stripped to the waist in the hot evening air, intent on the small pots of boiling rice, platanos, and chalona. Quickly the velvet darkness of the tropics fell, and the high lights flickered on naked skins; slowly the moon rose above the purple hills of the background, transforming the muddy surface of the swirling river into a shimmer of molten silver.

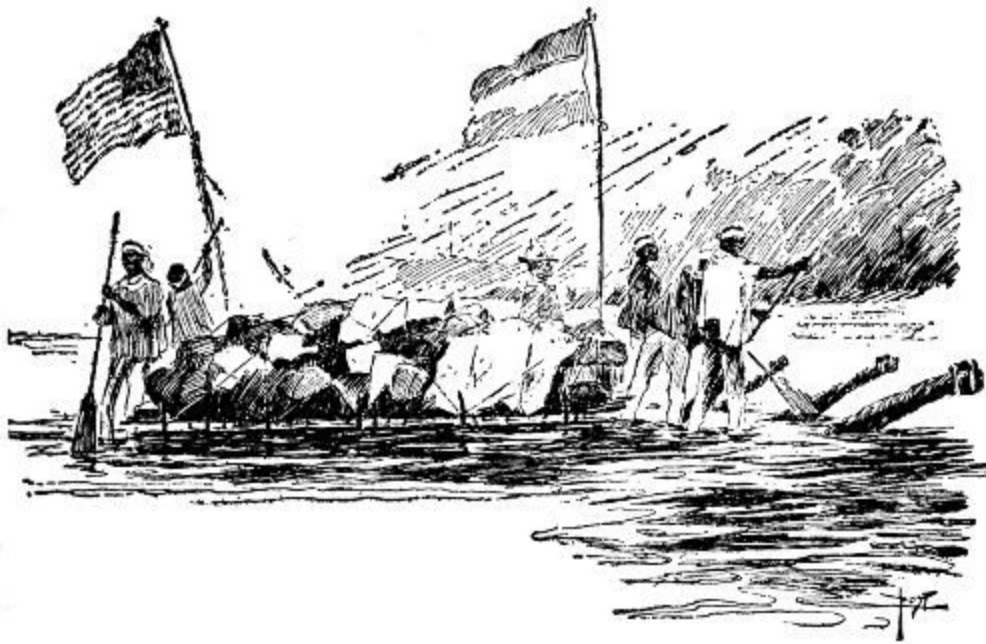
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The smooth, sandy playa softened in the mellow light, while, in the foreground, the campfires threw in strong relief the easy play of naked muscles in the shifting groups of savage figures; beyond were other figures silhouetted against the night or merged with the bulk of the callapos, gently swaying at the river's edge, to the low roar of the current. The subdued chatter of the Leccos, the crackling of the driftwood flames, the occasional cry of some morose tropical bird of the night, and once in a while the far-

off, snarling howl of a jaguar in the hills beyond blended like the carefully studied tones of some painting, and the peace that passeth the understanding of cities descended.

The very pleasing moon also added to the enthusiasm of the sand fleas and sand-hoppers; diabolical out of all proportion to their physical capacity and by the aid of the fourth dimension triumphing over my netting, they made of sleep a periodic and exhausting labor. 202

I looked out and envied the impervious Leccos; half naked to the night they sprawled on their patches of palm matting and only awakened in response to an itching thirst and then prowled round to locate the extra ration. Somewhere back in the hills were the savages, the Chunchos and the Yungus, but they rarely come down to this river. It is too populous, according to their standards, and precautions against them are rarely needed. Farther on, when we got into the Rio Kaka and the Rio Beni, some care was essential; and it was necessary to camp on the largest sand bars and close to the water's edge, where the camp could not be rushed in a sudden dash from the jungle.



WE SEEMED TO MOVE WITH INTOLERABLE SLOWNESS.

The next morning, with the first faint trickle of dawn along the rim of purple hills, the camp was astir. A single fire was stirred into activity, and in the dim, gray light there was a hasty cup of tea and a raw platano, and again we waded aboard the callapo and swung out into the current. The cool gray-green of the early morning had faded to a delicate sapphire; the purple hills loomed nearer in the soft haze; above them shimmering waves of amethyst overspread half the skies. A faint glow as of soft coral flickered over the crests of a stray cloud, that, close after, flushed with the bolder brilliancy of the ruby and the topaz. There was no pause; one color after another, exquisite in its gorgeousness or delicacy, as though from the slowly opening door of a prismatic furnace—crimson, violet, deep-sea blues, and old-gold—shifted and coiled above the purple hills. A thread of silver tipped their crests and then, at their center, there was for an instant the gleam of molten gold, and a second more above the low morning mist there floated the glowing mass of the sun. The day had begun. 204

For hours we drifted down the swift current. Now and then a snake or perhaps an otter glided silently into the eddies as we drifted by. We seemed to move with intolerable slowness and yet when we watched the jungle on each side slipping by, we could see the speed—six, eight, and sometimes ten miles an hour. The sun rose higher; it beat down on the unsheltered callapo like the hot blast from a furnace; the animal sounds in the forests ceased; the faint morning airs died away, and nothing broke the stillness but the occasional shrill flocks of parrots. The muddy surface of the river turned to a heated brazen glare, and the long breakfastless hours of the forenoon crawled past.

Presently as we swung around a bend there appeared a tiny cane-walled hut surrounded by a few platano and yucca trees. Splashing in the river were naked little babies, and as our Leccos set up a shout a woman trotted down to the bank and waved back. We paddled out of the current and made a landing, while the young Lecco who had run the river on the bundle of sticks took on a sack of clean clothes. 205

The Leccos are very particular in these matters; each morning from out their home-woven cotton sacks they would don clean trousers and shirt, and at every opportunity, going up or down the river, they would stop and turn

over to the Lecco wife the soiled ones and take aboard a clean supply. When a trip is too long for a complete outfit, they would get busy at each midday breakfast and wash their own. The sack they carried would hold about as much as a small keg, and it was always crowded to its capacity with their queer, square shirts and tight ankled trousers. Their only other baggage was a plate, a spoon, and a tiny kettle for rice. Clean clothes every day is a peculiar hobby for a primitive tribe.

This Lecco woman, or, rather, girl, who trotted down to the water's edge was about sixteen, wore only a single long garment, a chula, that came to above the ankles and had no sleeves. Some forest flower was in her black hair, and she was a beauty, not by any of the savage standards alone 206 or by the easy imagination that gives some youthful savages a certain attractiveness as a matter of pure contrast, but she was beautiful by any of those standards that obtain in our home countries. Along with her regular features, delicate nostrils, soft eyes, and regular, curving lips, with a soft, light-coppery, tawny complexion, so soft and light that the color came and went in her cheeks like a fresh-blown débutante, she had the carriage of a queen, though that was nothing to a race of women who carry burdens on their heads from babyhood and who can swim like otters. I saw later very many Lecco women, and while all were superior in type to those of the neighboring tribes, there was but one that could compare with the features of this first Lecco girl and the two might have been sisters, so close was the type of their beauty.

More Lecco homes appeared, and at each some one of the crew received his new stock of clean clothes and packed his pouch with them. Then Guanai appeared, or rather we stopped under the river bank close by, for the straggling collection of huts lies some distance back from the river. A few rubber-traders, half-breeds, and Cholos live here, and control the 207 Leccos. Most of them, when I was there, were refugees from the other side of the Andes, and here are beyond the reach of the Bolivian authorities. Once in a while some one of them is caught and taken out in chains by the soldiers sent in for the special purpose, but as a rule that followed only as the result of internecine difficulty and resulting treachery.

The head man came down to the bank to meet us with his neck stiff and awkward in some home-made bandage. He was still half-drunk, but very hospitable. The night before, it seems, there had been a fight, and when the candles were stamped out in the little hut it became very confusing, he explained, hence the stab in the neck and somewhere a couple of men were nursing bullet-holes. We handed over the few letters from the Cholo at Mapiri, and he was eager to get news of La Paz and the outside world. For years he had lived here, a refugee from the law, and unmolested; some day he will meet with as sudden a death as he had often bestowed, and another head man will fill his uncertain shoes. A torn straw hat, cotton shirt, and Lecco trousers were his sole costume, and he hunts barefoot and runs the river as readily as any of the Lecco tribesmen. 208

Below Guanai the Rio Mapiri is reinforced by the Rio Coroico and the Rio Tipuani, clear, cold streams. All along little brooks and mountain torrents have also been adding to the volumes of our river, so that it had grown to a goodly size. Below this settlement of Guanai were the worst and most dangerous passages. Any of the rapids are bad, but they are less to be feared than the great whirlpools that form below each one of them. It is these *remolinos* that are more likely to catch the rafts and tear them apart. The rough water of the rapid can be watched, and the callapo can be kept head on in the current, but below there are no means of judging when a whirling vortex will form that will drag the callapo under and perhaps later throw it out farther down in scattered fragments.



BUT IT IS THOSE PARTS OF THE RIVER THAT THE LECCOS FAIRLY LOVE.

For fifty miles the hills crowded in, and there were only rarely any open, slower reaches of river. Huge masses of rock had broken from above and hurled themselves into the gorges, where the current was choked in masses of high-flung spray. The Leccos know that on one certain side of these rocks there was disaster and with their heavy paddles they pried the raft in the proper currents. At first the water was smooth—smoother than in the broader reaches—but the banks moved past more swiftly, and from out of the water itself came a little rattling, crackling sound—the sound of boulders on the river-bed crashing together as they were swept down-

stream. Then the surface of the river broke up in snapping little ripples, while under our feet there was the feel of the raft straining in the eddying thrust of the current. But it is these parts of the river that the Leccos fairly love; their eyes sparkled and they laughed and chattered with excitement.

Ahead there was a roaring smother of foam, which curled back in a crested wave; the paddles, with the callapo snouts as a fulcrum, swung the course to the right, and a second later there came a rush and a crash as a mass of boiling water climbed over the starboard cargo and we careened until the crew on the lower side were breast-deep in the smother. It was only for a second, and the raft drifted out among the eddying whirlpools that formed below. One, a fairly small one, caught us at the stern, and we were drawn under as if caught by a submarine claw; the waters rose to the breasts of the stern crew, while they, braced against their paddles, grinned back at us cheerfully. Then the vortex broke and very slowly the cargo rose dripping into view.

Every rapid, bend, or cataract in this part has its name, an honor 211 denied the distances up the Mapiri of the day before. We passed the Conseli, and entered Kirkana—the spelling is phonetic—a magnified mountain brook that boiled through the tortuous passages for miles. There was not a mile that did not have its channel choked with rock, through which we shot in a smother of foam like a South Sea Islander on his surf-board. Then came a cañon, with walls of gray rock on which were stains or symbols that in a rough way suggested some of the old Inca forms, to which the Leccos have given the name of “Devil-Painted” rapids. Beyond lie the rapids of the “Bad Waters,” and then the Ysipuri Rapids, where there was a large rubber barraca in charge of an English superintendent.



The night's camp was at Ysipuri, a rubber barraca that was complaining bitterly at the time that it was overstocked with marmalade and snakes. If you have never lived on marmalade for six months hand-running when transportation is practically cut off—and a cheap, tin-can marmalade made mainly for the calloused tongues of a half-breed trade at that—you do not know what real desolation in a rubber jungle is. Also it was the hatching season for snakes and there was never a day, even scarcely an hour, when a few feet or less of snake was not being untangled from the cane walled thatch of the house. Two were fished out of the kettles in the cook-shack as the Lecco lady-cook started to prepare the midday breakfast and even the ordinary security of a hammock was no guarantee against them. Rarely were they big, some were mere babies and others but adolescent boas; one of eight feet in length was killed, but this was an exception, for the general run were juveniles of from a few inches to two or three feet. Also eight feet was not a big snake, not in a country where you can hear tales of thirty and forty foot reptiles. 212

The chief in this barraca was a white man; he had a well kept place with its out-buildings and little Indian quarters laid out with some system. There was sweet corn, real sweet corn, and not the *choclo* of the Aymará, an unripe ear of common field corn; melons, yuccas, bananas, and the best attempt at a garden that could be made in a tropical jungle. Also, before dinner that evening a Lecco boy came in with a log of wood which he dumped in the cook house; with a machete he chopped it up—for firewood as I thought. Presently, at dinner there was a most delicious vegetable, hot and looking like cold-slaw or sourkrout. It was my old friend the log of wood, the bud of the cabbage palm chopped by a rubber picker somewhere out in the forest. 213

CHAPTER XV

SHOOTING THE RATAMA

At daybreak we left the Ysipuri barraca and emptying our rifles in salute to the Englishman's Winchester, we started on for the next rapids, the greatest rapids on the river—the Ratama.

Two miles above the Ratama the walls of the gorge began to close in steep cliffs. Here and there shrubs clung on little niches, while from the high edges long vines hung down and were whipped taut in the swift, glassy current below. The air began to cool in the deep shadows, and there was a damp chill in it like the breath from a cavern. The Leccos were not chattering now, for this place may on any trip prove to be serious, and the silence of the smooth drifting was only broken by an occasional kingfisher, which clattered by like a flying watchman's rattle.

Slowly a dull roaring, echoing from the distance, steadily obtruded 215 itself; the current was still glassy, but as it moved it snapped against the walls of the cañon in angry ripples. Every Lecco in the crew was poised, with his paddle, as tense as a strung bow. Now we knew who was the captain of the crew. It was the forward Lecco on the right; he was the only one who had anything to say. It was no childish joking now; there were commands. Occasionally he grunted his order, and the paddles dipped as they held the raft true, bow on, in the middle of the current. With a grand sweep we swung round a bend between the walls of rock and there far ahead the white waves of the Ratama were snapping like great fangs against the dusk of the cañon, while above them hung a heavy mist that blurred the outlines of the gorge beyond.

The callapo increased its speed; the Ratama seemed to be springing toward us with each leaping wave; the roaring water deepened, and the voices were

drowned. The Lecco captain dipped his paddle, and the rest followed the signal, and gently the callapo was held true, with the three upturned snouts headed straight for the foaming center. The cliffs had closed in like 216 the walls of a corridor, and they flew past like the flickering film of a moving-picture; the spray from the trailing vines was whipped in our faces and floated upward to form rainbows in the slanting sunlight high overhead. Then for a second we seemed to pause on the edge of a long slide of polished water, the edge of the cataract.

The Leccos crouched for the shock, and we could fairly feel their toes gripping the submerged callapo logs, while their paddles were poised above their heads. Then came the brief coast down the smooth water and the plunge into the great wave that loomed above our heads, only to break with a drenching roar over us and the lashed freight. The Leccos dropped on their knees, gripping a hold as best they might; their eyes glittered with excitement, and I could see their wide-open mouths in a yell of wild joy, though every sound was drowned in the crash and roar of waters. The paddles swung in powerful circles, and at each dip the paddlers went out of sight, head and shoulders in the smother of foam.

The water was above my waist, and somewhere below the surface I was hanging on to the cargo lashings, with my feet braced against the 217 logs. Under the boiling smother of foam I could feel the callapo writhe and twist in the strain; a keg broke loose, and a Lecco lost his paddle in recovering it. His paddle was of no consequence, for he could whittle another, and he fondly believed the keg held the beloved alcohol—cañassa—though he was wrong, for it held nothing but pickled beef, and worthless, as I later found.

Sometimes a Lecco's shoulder would rise above the boiling smother, with the brown muscles playing in hard knots; sometimes we would slew side on to the current, and no power could hold us straight until a bursting wave would throw us back; sometimes for an instant the dripping snouts of the callapo would be flung high in the air and fall back with a crash that made itself heard above the roar, and the raft would quiver and strain with the impact. One saw nothing; we might have been standing still. There was nothing but the lashing sting of the whirling spray and the thunder of the

cataract. Then, in an instant, the roar and the tumult were behind, the waves calmed, and the callapo shot out into the calmer waters below, where the whirlpools and eddies shifted and coiled. 218

Vortices into which one might lower a barrel without wetting it whirled lazily past within paddle-reach, and sometimes one would suddenly form ahead and the Leccos would watch them intently as to their possible direction, and then paddle to shift our course. These they can generally avoid. It is when one forms or suddenly comes up from underneath that there is danger. A few did catch us this way and the Leccos would stand with braced feet, reading by the straining logs the possible strength of the vortex, and the callapo would grind and slowly sink, until by sheer mass it broke the force of the whirl. Often we would go down by the stern until the after Leccos kept only their heads above water, and even we, farther forward, would be submerged up to our shoulders. There was nothing to do but wait until the vortex broke of itself.

In the Ratama the roar and excitement drowned any emotion, but this was slowly waiting in uncertainty and speculating on how far one could really swim before being drawn under like a chip. Not far, that was certain, and the Leccos watched this shifting, coiling passage in a silent gravity that they had shown nowhere else on the river. It is the breaking up of the logs and cargo that make the danger, at least to the Lecco—greater than the power of the river itself—and a white man would have no chance. 219

From the Ratama the river and the country back of it opened out, and the last of the eastern Andean foot-hills were almost passed. A few more rapids were left—the Nube, the Incaguarra, the Beyo, and the Bala—but after the Ratama they dwindled to harmless riffles. The Beyo Cañons resound with a deafening roar, but it is from the thousands of macaws that have their nests in the soft sandstone cliffs, and it is their clatter that carries for miles in the soft evening airs.

Presently the chief of the Lecco crew chattered with the others. They argued each according to his recollection, for down somewhere on this stretch of the river—it was the River Kaka now since being joined by the River Tipuani and the Coroico River, mountain torrents both—there was an old camp that was our objective. The jungle had long since wiped out every

trace and there was nothing to depend upon but the memory of the Leccos. As a matter of fact, there probably is nothing that could be more reliable; it is the one thing they know, is this river, and every turn, every eddy, every tree or drooping vine along the banks is marked down in their primitive minds with the vividness of painted signs. The callapos strung out each in the wake of the other drifting around a long turn of smooth, swift water. The chief grunted, the crew clattered and grunted back in obvious affirmation. The paddles dipped, and from the following callapos came a yell as they, too, began to splash and pry their way out of the current. One after the other they swung round and bumped into shallow water on the heavy gravel of a playa; beyond rose a steep bank overgrown with masses of creeper and jungle. 220

The Leccos chopped a way in with their machetes, and with a grunt a Lecco announced a find. There was a tent peg, a broken kettle, a broken bottle neck, and a bit of rope. It was the proof of the site of the previous camp in its exact location. Five minutes later the lashings were off the freight and a splashing line of Indians and Cholos were bringing the freight ashore. Here was to be established the permanent camp; the long journey from the coast had reached its goal. 221

The Leccos and the Cholo workmen were still splashing through the muddy shallows from the grounded callapos packing the freight for the camp when Agamemnon announced himself as cook. Before this moment he had idly occupied himself as valet, butler, laundress—at least since leaving La Paz—faithful adviser, major domo, village gossip, and occasionally the village drunkard. And now when he announced himself as cook no husk of humility could conceal the fact that he regarded all other cook possibilities in that camp on the Rio Kaka with a scornful contempt.

Later it developed that at this particular time his sole knowledge of cooking was confined to an ability to make guava jelly, an accomplishment which, in view of the fact that we were somewhere around five hundred miles by trail and raft from civilization, was of no service at the moment.

The difficulty over the cook situation had arisen suddenly in the first hour of making camp. Back in Mapiri there was a certain fat little Cholo who had sewed a strip of red flannel down his trouser legs in sign of 222

the fact that under some circumstances he was the Mapiri police force; what these circumstances might be never developed for during our long wait he was busy at nothing more official than taking care of the sugar-cane distillery that belonged to the intendente. Before that, rumor had it, he had taught school in Guanai down the river with a row of empty cañassa bottles by means of which he illustrated addition and subtraction. This was as far as the school went; with that course completed, it issued its diploma. This little Cholo urged himself as cook and, as we needed a cook, he was added. As it turned out he was probably the only man in Bolivia who could *not* cook, or at any rate the only one who had never passed the stage of being able to boil water.

When the callapos swung in to the playa and grounded on the shallow beach the cook started to get his first meal. The water was brought to a boil successfully in a large kettle between two logs. Presently it began to exude half-cooked rice and cheerfully the fat Cholo added another kettle to hold the overflow. Presently, also, both kettles began to exude half-cooked rice and two more kettles were added to the logs. Once again the pots seethed and frothed and again came forth the overflow of half-cooked rice, still swelling, from four interminable geysers. 223

Dully the Cholo beat at it with an iron spoon and the Leccos grinned at him as they filled their little pots with the overflow. Heaven alone knows how much rice the cook started with, but in the end half the fire was drowned out, every Lecco had his little pot of half raw rice, a row of big jungle leaves had each their little mound of rice alongside the fire log, and the hot tropic air was drifting sluggishly with the odor of burnt rice. And every pot and kettle in camp held remnants of the salvage. Therefore, it was that Agamemnon became cook.

CHAPTER XVI

OPENING UP THE JUNGLE

Among the Cholo workmen it developed that each preferred to cook for himself with his own little pot and over his own individual fire. It was too great a waste of time and energy to have eighteen men building eighteen fires three times a day in order to cook their fifty-four meals. So a compromise was effected. The original Cholo cook—who was good for nothing—kept up one long fire on which the row of pots simmered. After each meal enough would be issued to each pot owner for the next meal. In the early morning the general day's rations were issued. The Cholos wrapped them in smudgy bandanas and laid them away beneath their bunks—their bunk shack of cane, charo, being the first thing attended to—and then traded back and forth according to fancy, a little rice for a gristly shin bone of chalona, or some chancaca for a bit of coffee or chuño. Coca formed a regular part of the ration and was regularly used by all the workmen. 225

Agamemnon as a cook developed famously. As to results one could never properly place the blame upon him. With the exact and retentive memory of the utterly illiterate he followed directions with absolute fidelity. He was of the same family as that famous cook who, after having been instructed by the missus in cake-making, invariably threw away the first two eggs because in the original effort the first two had proved to be undesirable citizens. Agamemnon was of this order, yet he never failed to throw in all the frills of table service he could think of. This came from his days of stewarding on the Pacific coasters.

Every morning he appeared with a box lid for a tray set forth in fresh green jungle leaves and on it a species of muffin that he had developed or the boiled green platanos that took the place of bread, a tin can of jam, or some

turtle eggs if we had been lucky in a trade with some passing batalon of Leccos. Coffee he served with a flourish and from his camp fire 226 below the bank on which our tent was pitched he would bring up a bucket of hot water with which he could keep a continual service of clean camp plates.

In the intervals at meals he stood back and fanned off the wild bees that flocked to the jam and condensed milk tins. Two little holes pricked in the milk tins guarded them, but with the jam it was different; often a half tin of jam had to be thrown away, the contents solid with reckless, greedy bee suicides. They would light on the jam while it was on the way to your lips or stow away on the under side of the jammed muffin, compelling the utmost vigilance on the penalty of a diet of raw bees. With all the reckless handling they received, not one of them stung.

It was the ant that was the irritable, hot-weaponed party who went out a-jousting from the sheer lust of battle. They were infinite in variety from the sluggish white-ant that left the table a hollow shell of sawdust on up to the leaf-cutters and army ants to whom nothing was so precious as the straight line in which they were going. But the worst, the most vicious and accursed was the large black variety one of whom made a murderous attack 227 upon me in the darkness.

He is nearly an inch in length. To the Leccos he is known as *buno-isti* and they also assert that he lives in very small communities in holes in the ground, not building the ordinary nests. Agamemnon had been stung and had promptly, darkey fashion, tied a rag around his head and stayed in his tent all night groaning. A Cholo boy was stung and he too tied a rag around his head and groaned throughout the night. It seemed absurd for a mere sting to have that effect and I looked upon them with a proper scorn. I have been stung by hornets and scorpions and the latter seemed to me, at the time, as the ultimate of all stinging sensations. I was wrong.

For some reason these *buno-istis* seemed to have a love for passing themselves in review up the guy rope, along the ridge pole, and down the other guy rope of the tent. By observing I noticed that no sooner did the *buno-isti* reach the bottom of the guy rope than he started back to the front guy and began another tour. One evening I stepped out in the darkness, my

foot caught on a root and I stumbled; I clutched for the guy rope to save myself and the instant my hand touched the forefinger connected with a high voltage current that gave all the sensations of a red-hot sausage grinder. I had caught a buno-isti on his way up the guy rope. 228

A delayed lantern revealed a crippled buno-isti and a finger with an almost invisible sting on the first joint. There was no swelling nor did any follow at any time. Yet the pain was intense; I could feel it spreading from the finger to the hand and then, slowly with an acute torture that brought no relieving numbness up to the shoulder. There it halted. But for hours, as the camp watch showed, there was no sleep possible, not until the exhaustion from pain paved the way. For three days the effects lingered in the form of a bruised sensitiveness that made that arm all but useless. A scorpion sting is a gentle tickle compared with the buno-isti.

Slowly the camp grew. A patch of jungle was cleared on the high bank above the river beyond the reach of any sudden freshet. In the early days of the camp one of these freshets descended from the Andean foot-hills and before the last of the outfit had been carried to the high bank the Cholos were struggling in a current up to their belts or portaging by the aid of poles held out to steady them. Where the first hasty camp had been was a torrent of muddy waters and a tiny island cut off from us by a creek torn in the bank by the flooding river. The water rose five inches a minute for about eight feet and then slowly went back during the night a few inches. 229

For something like eleven miles down this river there was placer gold. Wherever a sand-bar or a sand bank showed it was of black, gold-bearing sand. Anywhere you washed you got a trace or color in the pan and sometimes thirty or forty bright flecks of gold glittering against the rusty iron bottom. But with that current, the uncertain rise of freshets, the distance from civilization and main supplies, only an Indian could wash out dirt and make a living at it. The plan was to prospect the placer area extensively and establish a basis for the permanent working camp that was to follow. The gold was there, but how deep to bed rock or hard pan, whether it were best to work by dredge or shaft or open workings, these

were the questions that had arisen back in the world of civilization and were solved on the basis of the results of this first camp.

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From the bank at the water's edge there stretched back a mass of matted jungle, creepers, vines, and underbrush and above, a mass of vines that tangled the treetops in great patches of aerial islands. Paths had to be cut, some kind of a working map made, the natural difficulties and conditions set forth, and the beginnings of the permanent camp put in form.

The eighteen men were swallowed up in the jungle. The clearing was scarcely made and burned before the jungle was again closing in and rising from the ground like sown dragon's teeth. And slowly progress was made and up and down the river the camp became known and voyaging rubber traders and crews stopped as at a port of call.

One expedition passed the midday breakfast with us. Its head was an Englishman, a wiry, frontier hardened man who was on a punitive expedition at the head of his men, rubber pickers, balseros, and headquarters men from his barraca. Somewhere in the hundreds of thousands of acres that represented the rubber domain of which he was chief there was a boundary dispute. His trees had been raided and here, like a feudal baron—or rather like a salaried feudal baron, the fief of a plush-cushioned, rocking chair lord of a board of directors the half of seven seas away—he was at the head of his two callapos and fourteen Winchester's and a scattering of twenty bore, miserable trade-guns with their trade powder in gaudy red tins and a month's rations for the expedition.

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Again, a couple of Englishmen who had drifted down to Rurrenabaque, the last settlement of the frontier from this side of the continent, stopped as they were slowly poling up the river with a couple of new dugouts. Their crew was of Tacana Indians and these dugouts were the first known on the river. In effect these men had independently invented the "whaleback."

The endless series of rapids made the callapo with its baggage platform a poor freighter. In their mahogany dugouts they had a series of deck hatches that, when the cargo was on board, were bolted down over rubber gaskets—rubber pure as it came from the tree and spread with a bundle of parrot feathers over a sheet of coarse muslin and then smoked in a hot, blue palm

smoke. With a couple of these dugouts lashed together they proposed to shoot the little cañons and the Nube, the Incaguarra, the Diablo Pintado and the Ratama. And they did, too, dropping paddles and clinging with tooth and claw to the bare wet decks on which they had omitted to put cleats or rope holds. But it was an eminently successful venture and they slowly chipped away with adze and ax until on their next trip they had a fleet of seven dugouts, each some thirty-five to forty feet in length, and from a single log of *caobo*, mahogany, or *palo-maria*, with which they could run the river in either the dry or wet season. With balsas and callapos, as our long delay in Mapiri showed, only under the pressure of emergency was it possible to get up the river. 232

As the work progressed it became evident that our original outfit was not sufficient to make any adequate preliminary development. It was not possible to get to bedrock without some machinery, a pump, and some means of sawing lumber for sheet piling. The Cholos were perfectly useless at whip-sawing a log. We tried them and the work was too gruelling. 233 They were curiously inefficient in any line outside of their narrow experience. A block and tackle was an unsolved riddle, although they recognized its power. They would take it along cheerfully in the morning and then later send for some one to come up and work it; they could never fathom which rope to pull. Main strength and awkwardness were their reliance and when these failed—*carramba*, what more could be done?

According to the custom of the montaña they had been contracted for six months before a judge, an intendente, and amid all sorts of mystic ceremonials of red tape without which Bolivian law and custom looks askance. Five weeks had been a dead loss in Mapiri and two weeks more for gathering them and the time of actual transportation and then almost two months of work in camp came perilously near the expiration of their contracts when it was considered necessary to bring in a new gang. These were hungry to get back to their little villages and join in the high class carnivals and drunken dances. Some of the Cholos were worthless, while others would come back again after a rest on the other side of the Andes. Segorrondo, the squat little drunkard, was one of the best men in the gang and he had added a new adornment to his peculiarly unattractive exterior. In a fight with the major domo he had had his head 234

laid open with a machete from over his right eye to almost the back of his neck. It was a mere scalp wound, fortunately for Segorrondo as the machete glanced.

It took six men to hold him while he was stitched up with six stitches. Beauty was to him no object compared with the pain of stitching, and when our surgical job was over, the effect of only six irregular stitches in a twelve inch cut may be imagined. Then we bandaged him securely, gave him an extra drink of cañassa, and once more he grinned cheerfully. Later he and his antagonist appeared for another drink, each affectionately embracing the other. Without the slightest difficulty the wound healed, leaving an interesting scalloped pattern that was a source of much pride to its owner.

But it was obviously necessary to get out to the coast for machinery, supplies and another gang of workers. A *proprio*, a messenger, was sent overland up the river to notify the Lecco rivermen a few miles above and a week later four balsas and ten Leccos swung around the bend under the bank in the dawn and we started. 235

The crew of a balsa is two men, one fore and one aft of the platform with poles or a jungle vine for a drag rope. It is not safe for more than one passenger to each balsa for the narrow raft of a wood almost as light as cork is lightly balanced as a canoe. There is no freight worked up river, except rubber, and of that the big bolachas are wedged in under the stilts of the platforms.

Slowly the little fleet of balsas hugged the shore, poling against the current. Then across the river appeared a stretch of narrow beach and the poles were dropped and the balsa swung out across the current to the other side. Here the vine drag rope would come in use with one Lecco pulling and the other poling, and fairly rapid progress could be made. There was a short stop at a tiny Lecco settlement at Incaguarra where the chief Lecco, the cacique, lived. He was a shy, bashful, good natured old man who invited us into his hut where we gave him the customary drink.

On a grass matting was an old woman, a very old woman, his mother, the cacique explained. She was past all intelligence and in the last stages of senile dissolution; huddled up in a corner, she murmured 236

and clucked to herself, meanwhile playing aimlessly with an empty pot and a few bits of grass. The dulled eyes gave no signs of interest or understanding when the old man spoke to her; she suggested more an animal, an aimless, warped little monkey rather than a human being.

A few months later she died of old age and the old cacique, her son, came with her body wrapped in a frayed matting and borrowed a pick to dig a grave. He obviously was deeply grieved in the subterranean Indian way, and yet there was not the slightest vestige of ceremonial or belief connected with her death. She was dead, a hole in the ground was necessary, and there alone and by himself and full of grief the old man dug it in the remote jungle without any more curiosity in death or religious expression than he would have felt in digging a post-hole for a new hut.

We bought a few platanos and yuccas from this place and made our breakfast there. Two hours after leaving a freshet from the rains in the mountains ahead suddenly made itself felt and we were forced to camp till it went down a little. We did not move until the next morning.

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CHAPTER XVII

TWENTY-THREE DAYS AGAINST THE CURRENT

The next day the river was harder and steeper and the banks offered more difficulties either for poling or dragging. From one side to the other we shifted, losing hundreds of yards in crossing as we swept down with the muddy current. And yet these crossings were never made until the last moment when the poles could find no bottom and the steep bank came down like a cliff into from fifteen to fifty feet of water. The little rapids that were nothing more than riffles coming down—that is, in comparison with the real cañons and rapids—were slowly poled and dragged through with double crews, inch by inch around some jutting, strategic rocky point and into the upstream eddy beyond. Boils of water burst from under the balsas until you balanced with the Leccos on the straining raft like rope dancers on the same strand.

Once—and no one would suspect a clumsy looking balsa of tippiness —an extra heavy boil of water burst under the balsa ahead and shot 239 Agamemnon and the Leccos into the water. Fortunately it was at the edge of an eddy and no serious consequences resulted except that it kept the Leccos diving in ten feet of opaque, muddy water, for half an hour to recover a rifle. And it took a half a day to get the rifle in shape again.

That night we reached Caimalebra, a rubber pickers' shack, where was collected the rubber from a still further sub-divided picket line of rubber pickers, and here we camped, exhausted. The Ratama was just ahead and this could only be made if the river was below a certain stage. It was curious to watch the Leccos read every river sign; by this bush and that boulder they knew the height of water in any rapid above. Here in

Caimalebra they announced that unless the river went down at least the span of a man's hand, six inches, it would not be possible to get through the Ratama cañon and rapids.

That afternoon they shook their head against going on, the six inches made it impossible. By morning it would be lower as they read the weather signs. A little stick was stuck in near shore to measure. In the dawn the river had risen six feet and was raging past the camp, carrying the usual collection of swirling dead driftwood and newly uprooted trees. Food was running low for we had taken nothing from the main camp, as they would need it all before we could get back. The Leccos had a little rice that was giving out, here and there we could get platanos from a rubber hut along the river, but the main reliance was to be on the country between these points. The day before a wild turkey, shot with a rifle for the shot cartridges swelled so that a shot gun was useless, was delicious but scanty. This day I took a balsa across the river to try for pig or parrot or turkey, or monkey if we were lucky, or something anyway, for the Caimalebra place was vacant of platano or food except for the small family there. 240

All day I tramped over the hardest kind of country with four of the Leccos, swinging down ledges by the jungle vines or wriggling through the masses of tangled growth in the trail of a Lecco with a short machete. And as a result—nothing. Once there was a parrot motionless in the fork of a tree high up and across an impassable gully and not worth while. 241

The river had dropped two feet and risen three later; all day it had been playing at this game and the heavy clouds in the hills made the prospects discouraging. It was a scanty meal that night. After darkness had settled a tropical downpour came up that showed no signs of abating. Steadily it poured until after daybreak and all hands slept as best they might, soaked to the skin. The shelter tent was in a thin, widespread brook that the upper trenching did not stop or divert. As fast as one built a little protecting dam it was washed away and the bank poured a steady stream into the river as from the eaves of a roof. And the river rose ten feet in the night. It seemed impossible that we could ever get around the Ratama, but there was not a half day's rations left in camp.

It seemed as if it was useless to wait for the river and essential that we should get to the big barraca of Ysipuri where there were ample supplies for our party. There was no overland trail, it was through a jungle, six, ten, fifteen miles, you could take your choice of the Lecco guesses. So 242 with a couple of Leccos we started. The others were to try the cañon when they would, and reliance was well placed in them; there are no finer rivermen to be found anywhere in the world.

The hunting of the day before had seemed hard going, but it was nothing to this; up and down over gullies and waist deep in the tumbling brooks at their bottom; down sheer cliffs where the tropical vegetation grew so rank that a natural ladder would be formed by the tangle of interlaced roots or hanging mora, and skirting the face of ravines clawing a hand and foothold step by step. I carried only a rifle and twice I had to pass it to a Lecco and then had no easy task left. As for the two Leccos, they carried somewhere around a fifty pound pack each and barefooted swung along among the vegetation as easily as might a couple of monkeys.

Perhaps the river went down suddenly, though it is more likely that it was the removal of the diffidence that our presence entailed; at any rate, the Leccos themselves pulled through that night and reached Ysipuri with the balsas. For thirteen days we were held in Ysipuri, the river 243 persistently refusing to lessen its height, while a succession of rains sent down a series of heavy freshets. It was not a dull time.

A Lecco was held as a prisoner by the agent on a charge of attempted murder. I saw him as in the dusk of evening he sat in the doorway of his prison hut taking the air. His wife and small boy sat with him and kept his legs muffled in an old poncho so that the heavy iron shackles riveted upon his ankles would not show. He was a fine looking Lecco and obviously of enormous strength. It seems that another Lecco was found with his back cut to ribbons, apparently from one of the twisted bull whips of that country, and with his breast beaten in.

The victim lived and this Lecco had disappeared. Presently he was captured and held in leg shackles, waiting for some indefinite arraignment. However, while we were at the barraca he escaped, leg shackles and all, and was not heard of until, some months later, he turned up below at our camp and we

became good friends. There was the gravest doubt as to his guilt, the Leccos are most peaceful, and the whole affair was the result of a drunken fiesta of mixed breeds in which not one was fit to remember anything. 244

In addition there was a serious fight among the Cholos, Leccos, and rubber pickers one Sunday evening in which shots were fired, a dog killed, and a couple of men wounded slightly, while numerous others nursed unseen sore heads and bruises. An appeal for help was sent over the little creek that ran through the barraca and the agent called on us; so our little party of three white men, a half dozen of the more reliable employees, and the messenger splashed back through the darkness with our guns in our hands—in addition my heart was in my mouth—and reestablished order. It was a drunken fight over the favors of an old Lecco lady, a bleared old party of some fifty coquetting years.

In one day in the main shack two snakes were killed, one in a room and the other in the kitchen, both of the deadly German-flag species. Beautiful, slender reptiles they were, with broad bands of black broken at regular intervals with narrow bands of cream and vermilion stripes, and of exceeding venom. That same night as I threw open my blanket preparatory to turning in a third German-flag made a graceful letter S on the blue wool. Alarmed he darted off through the cane walls into the next room, the store-room. Two successive rooms were emptied before the snake was at last killed. There was not a man in the place who would have gone to sleep with that snake in the place, if it took all night to get him. 245

Then, just as we were about to start, a young boy was brought in, half Lecco and half Cholo, the son of a man who had been murdered while working in his little yucca patch up across the Uyappi River. He had been shot from behind through the stomach and had lain helpless until he died, although this boy, from his own account, was in the hut less than a hundred feet away all the time. The boy, he was not twelve, stuck to his story that he had heard no shot, nothing out of the ordinary. The chief agent in the barraca consulted with the Lecco crews who had brought him in.

“He did it,” they responded; “make him tell.”

He was flogged with a knotted rope's end and though he still clung to his palpably false story—and also he had been heard to make threats against the old man. After the flogging he was locked up to face another later unless he should have repented. 246

Up here in nicely civilized and sensitive surroundings the flogging reads like the brutality of a savage tribe. It was revolting and yet—what would you have done? The intendente would have had him flogged with a twisted bull whip—do you know what that is or what that means? A twisted thong of rawhide whose blow, drawn skillfully in the delivering, cuts a strip from the flesh; where fifty lashes properly laid on are equivalent to death. And to have turned him over to the legal authorities—the legal authorities east of the Andes! They are there in name—but their functions are a joke. The best the boy could have hoped for would have been to march wearily day after day in leg shackles and chained to his guards or to any other adult prisoner, over the snows and blizzards of the high passes and then to rot dully in a Bolivian jail. Probably he could not have undergone the rigors of the march, and lucky for him if he could not.

As it was, he had the benefit of a civilized doubt and received only what the sentiment of his own people demanded. And he was not too old but what he could profit by it. By strict adherence to legalized forms, or those of them that would have been applied, he would have been killed by slow, indifferent inches. 247

At last the river went down enough and we were off. We poled steadily along through an unending series of rapids, crossing from one side to the other through cañons and losing in the crossing all and more of the hard won ground. In one place in three hours we did not gain one hundred yards. And then came the rains again.

We barely made the farther side of the Uyappi when the river laid siege. It rose twelve feet in the night and held us three days in a little hut at the junction of the two rivers, raining for two of them. The agent at Ysipuri had joined with us as he too was going out on business, and his balseros combined with ours made a very respectable expedition. The tiny hut was built by one man for himself and into it each night crowded some twenty Indians. They held a dance, a queer, shuffling trot with dull, droning

mumbles that passed among the Leccos as song, one night and the next day they spent in celebrating the birthday of one of the crew. Cane platforms were built in the hut until there were three floors, or tiers, to the eaves and on these we all crowded sociably. 248

Their shy diffidence gave way, they laughed and joked openly and with a childish innocence over any man being able to see out of glasses. They asked me questions of my home, my tribe, and my rivers, but the answers were Greek to them. They had no means of knowing the outside world. They answered my questions cheerfully, through an interpreter each way, of course. They taught me to count in the Lecco tongue, the Riki-riki as they call their dialect:

One—Bera
Two—Toi
Three—Tsai
Four—Dirai
Five—Bercha
Six—Ber-pachmo
Seven—Toi-pachmo
Eight—Tsai-pachmo
Nine—Ber-pela
Ten—Ber-beuncay
Eleven—Beri-beuncay-ber-hotai
Twelve—Beri-beuncay-toi-hotai, etc., etc., etc.

Twenty is simply Toi-bencai and beyond this few Leccos could go with certainty, while some were at sea even up to this point. Yet they had no difficulty in actual counting; it was simply over names for the higher numbers that they stumbled. 249

Once more we began the poling and dragging. This stretch of the river had given us no concern coming down, yet it was one of the hardest we encountered on the long pull up. One rock that jutted from the shore took my balsa an hour and a half to pass. Time and time again the vine parted and my Lecco and I were swept down with the current and around in the eddies, to repeat the process after we had paddled ashore and tried again.

In another place we had to work the balsa up into the very spray from a cataract only four feet high, but over which the river poured in a thunderous volume, then cast loose with one mighty shove, and paddle for the opposite bank, while in the meantime the balsa was being tossed in the bursting boils of water at the surface or spun and dragged like a chip by the whirlpools that floated with the current. Three times this swept my balsa half a mile below—only one balsa made the crossing at the first try—and it looked more than once as though we would be upset for an uncertain swim. 250

That night we made camp at Tiaponti. Here a new cane shack had just had the triumphant finish to a palm thatch roof and everyone in that little finca

was already drunk. From somewhere we got one precious chicken for ourselves and the Lecco crews laid down to sleep, scarcely bothering the cook; they were so exhausted. It was the only time I ever saw any of them decline the opportunity for one of these festal drunks.

Early the next morning we started. One more day that was a little easier and for hours we poled upstream against a gentle current along the bank and picked wild guayavas from the overhanging trees. It is a delicious fruit—although never since have I been able to find its kind, even in the cultivated tropics. This wild guayava looked somewhat like a small, gnarled quince on the outside; on the inside it had a most delicate pink pulp beyond a little rind, a delicious pulp that combined the melting flavor of the strawberry with the texture and modifications of a superior watermelon. It was good.

That night we landed in Guanai,—twenty-three days of baffled progress against the same river and the same current that had flicked us down from this same Guanai in two days.

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CHAPTER XVIII

BY PACK MULE THROUGH THE JUNGLE

It was useless to attempt to battle with the river further. Above, before Mapiri could be reached, were narrower cañons where there were only handholds and often not that, where the cañons were often nothing more than a polished flume of rock. It had taken the Leccos two failures and over a month of the most gruelling work when they finally reached us before in that village, and then they had been living on berries and roots and palm-nuts for the last two days. So we decided on the overland trail to Mapiri. There we could get our saddles and outfit for the trail over the high passes.

Up to Guanai there was no trail, not even a Lecco foot-path, and it was a relief to give the orders for mules and see the sure-footed, flop-eared 253 brutes come ambling to our doorway. For a saddle there was a wreck, a dried leather cast-off that would go after some piecing with rope. An arriero, dressed in a suit made from old flour sacks with the brand still showing in faded blue, had a pack train that was just going out with some rubber and it was his cargo mules that we hired. His ordinary route lay through the Tipuani country and he charged us some outrageous sum—something like five dollars apiece, silver—for going out via Mapiri over the worst trail in Bolivia and some sixty or eighty miles out of his way.

Officially, both Mapiri and Guanai recognize that they are connected by a land trail yet we had not left Guanai a half hour before the last vestige of a trail was gone and the mules plunged into a wilderness of low scrub and tall ferns. The Andean foothills twisted themselves in a maze of huge convolutions through and up and down whose great gullies and jungled ravines we slipped and scrambled. By intuition or obscure landmarks the Cholo arriero found his way and presently we zigzagged down a slope where once more appeared the overgrown remains of a trail. Then that too

disappeared and we followed up the bed of a mountain brook, struck 254 off to one side, again plunged into the brook, climbed a hill, struck another foaming torrent and skirted its banks or followed its windings—the ravine through which it flowed being impassable in any other way—and at last struck a tiny, grass grown, level glade. It was not late, yet overhead the tops of the trees were matted in jungle growths until but scant light filtered through, there was the cool dampness of evening and the perpetual sound of the creaking chirping bugs that, in the open world, only tune up for night concerts.

The rains had left the jungle dripping with water; we ourselves were as wet as though we had been out in a storm, and even the blankets from the tent pack were clammy and damp. By morning they were wringing wet and all hands were soaked to the skin. A night storm and a hasty camp were responsible, although how a camp could be made on a spongy soil up against a mountain that shed its waters like a roof on your camping bed, and for one night in a march, is a matter of engineering and not of travel.

In the morning all the wood was too wet to burn and a cold breakfast of leftover tea from the night before, some soggy *galletas*, crackers, and 255 chancaca added no zest to the opening day. Like the day before this was spent in climbing through the jungle-matted hills or taking advantage of occasional brooks. Here and there the trail reappeared, generally in a series of steps cut in a slippery clay hill, steps three and four feet high and with their tread banked by a log to keep it from washing away. It was killing work for the mules and generally we dismounted and climbed alongside. They would go up in a series of goat-like jumps, throwing the watery mud in a shower with every plunge. Walking up such places was safer for they were really of about the pitch of a ladder and a single slip on the wet, greasy clay would have sent both mule and rider in a broken mass to the bottom of the gully.

Early in the afternoon—it was not two o'clock—we were blocked by the Mariapa River; it was a creek, broad and shallow and turbulent and swollen with the recent rains. The only ford was impassable, so once more we sat down to wait for a river to go down. It rose instead and that night we camped by the ford, wet from the afternoon rain and caked with mud.

There was no wood dry enough to burn and a cold supper with a tin of Chicago's most famous clammy beef stew—"roast beef"—purchased in Guanai set forth the camp banquet log. It was already dusk above the tree tops when we made camp and darkness below so that the Cholo arriero had not noticed where we hung the shelter tent from the bushes and lay down together. In the morning we awoke covered with a multitude of scurrying, inquisitive ants of some large red species. They did not bite and were inoffensive so far as that was concerned, but our belts, our holsters, our shoes, our gauntlets, everything of leather, looked as though it had broken out with small-pox. Tiny disks, perfectly round, had been cut out of the surface of the leather; and in some apparently choice spots where the surface leather had become exhausted they had started cutting out disks in deeper layers. One gauntlet was worthless and the upper of one shoe was on the verge of dissolution. 256

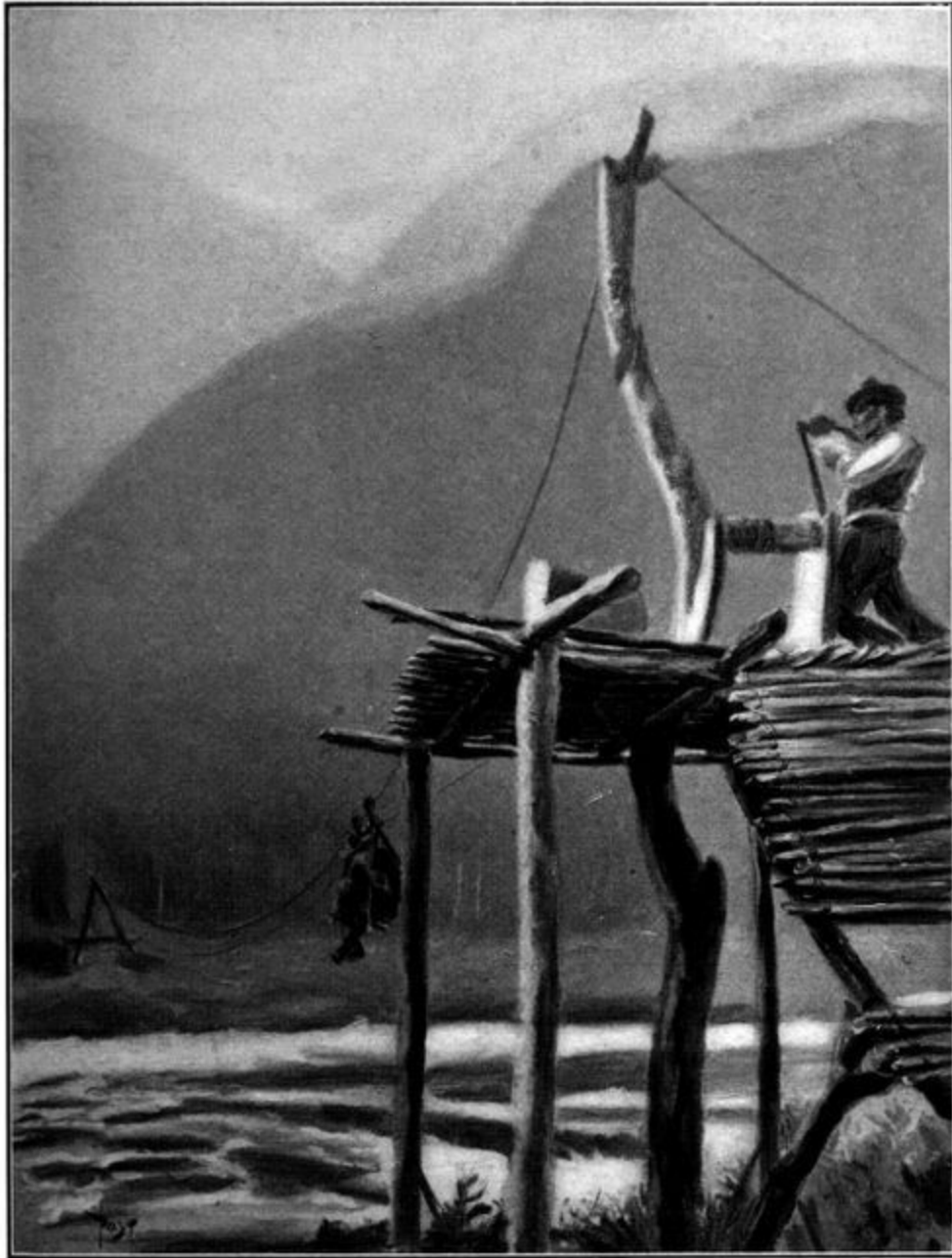
By morning the river had gone down enough to make it possible to attempt it. The cargo mules were packed with their packs high on their backs and driven in. As the pack mules took to the water, our riding mules—who had always carried cargo with the others—came scrambling down the bank and before they could be stopped were out in the ford. 257 Thereupon we undressed, cut long stout poles, hung our clothes about our necks, and started for the farther bank.

The water was from the mountains, cold and icy, and the river bottom was rough with boulders. With the pole we groped along after the cautious fashion of a tripod while the cold current rose and chilled rib and marrow and made the matter of balance one of delicacy. There was no danger of drowning, but to be swept off one's feet meant broken bones among the white waters below. Not until it was too late to retreat did these phases loom up clearly. Often one stood poised and balanced by the pole with its hold down stream while the current boiled around the up stream armpit, not daring to grope for the next step lest the pressure of water would carry one off. It was different with that tough old arriero; he cut himself a pole, hung his clothes around his neck and came briskly across the water through which I had been teetering uncertainly for twenty minutes.

Another camp, high and, for a wonder, in the open from which we could see the rolling Andean foot-hills stretching like a billowing sea to the horizon. Three months of steady traveling would not bring one to those farther hills that were within vision. 258

The smoke of a rubber picker's hut drifted up from a little gully below us and the arriero came back with a chicken, a bunch of platanos and some onions. The grub box was empty and for that day we had been going on a handful of rice for breakfast, and parched corn and Indian cigarettes. Not a sign of game had been encountered since leaving Guanai, not even a bird big enough to eat. The mules were thin and gaunt, for them there had been only what they could forage in the jungle or here and there along the trail.

From here on there was a fairly defined trail. There was also a continuation of small rivers and half the time we seemed to be fording. An occasional rubber picker's hut was in plain view and the late morning smoke from their curing fires rose from many points in the forest. A sugar-cane finca with its distillery alongside for cañassa spread beyond a broad, muddy river. The mules forded this river, as did the arriero, but there was a bridge there, a rough tower and platform on either side of the river and a rope stretched across. On the rope a trolley worked back and forth from which was suspended a tiny platform for the passenger to straddle. On the farther platform an Indian ground the windlass that produced the ferriage. It cost four cents, gold, to be hauled across high in the air, over this affair.



On the Rope a Trolley Worked Back and Forth from which was Suspended a Tiny Platform

The old Indian at the distillery sold us some real bananas, some platanos, and three eggs. This latter is one of the rarest of articles in any Indian or Cholo's shack, for always there is a pet monkey and the monkey is more fond of eggs—quite as much for the delicious thrill of breakage as for their flavor—than the Indian; also he is far more adept at

finding them and it is a very vigilant hen indeed that can guard her full original setting of eggs once the monkey's agile suspicions are aroused. One more camp in the hacienda of Villa Vista, a place very similar to the hacienda of old Violand, where at last we had real beds, or those saw-buck cots of native make. I recalled how clumsy these same cots had looked as we had come into the montaña and left civilization behind us. Now they seemed to our sophisticated eyes like the most alluringly æsthetic 260 devices for inducing and encouraging sleep that were ever invented.

From the comforts of Villa Vista it was but one day into Mapiri, and here we got out our own saddles, rubbed the mould off, saw that bread enough was baked to last us out to Sorata, and started. It had been exactly one month since we stepped on board the balsas at the camp down the river. And that same distance from Mapiri to the camp had been made on rafts on our voyage with the current and shooting the rapids and cañons, in three days—a day's travel down the river being equal to ten days' slow work against the same current.

Again the slow, killing climb over the high pass; the toll gate with its queer little Indian child, the drizzly promontory of Tolopampa, Yngenio, and then the final blizzards and snows at the summit of the pass. From this summit it is less than a half day's ride into Sorata, a trail that takes the best part of two days' climbing to make the other way.

At Sorata we changed mules and took the regular trail, not this time that rarely used, but shorter back trail where the sullen, hostile Aymarás have their homes, and on the third day were once more above the valley of 261 La Paz. We looked down on its warm red roofs and the little green patch of its park with the masses of low dobe houses through which there ran the feeling of rectangular streets with pavements and the lazily drifting throngs with actual stiff, starched collars and shoes with soles and laces instead of the patch of leather with a pucker string around the top, and thick crockery plates instead of enamelled tin, and pastry and roasts, and twice a week a real band in the plaza—all the effete accomplishments of civilization. It is no wonder the Bolivians solemnly assure you that La Paz is the Little Paris of South America. When you approach it from the eastern slopes of the Andes, it is a little Paris, a little London, a little old New York.

Two weeks later I was on my way back into the montaña while the chief engineer was on his way to Iquiqui or Callao after machinery. A Mr. and Mrs. Jackson had their headquarters in Sorata where the former represented a rubber company and they, together with Drew, a wiry little Englishman, who had packed into the country with nothing but a blanket and the ragged clothes he walked in, and myself, combined to charter a tiny stage-coach, the “*mosquito*” as it was known. This, with six horses to haul 262 it to the top of the alto and then with horses in relays at each tambo would bring us to Achicachi on the southern shores of Lake Titicaca in one single day of from before dawn till sunset. From there it would be muleback over the first pass and down the trails into Sorata.

The mosquito was just big enough for four and a tight fit at that. This was fortunate for the little coach—from the outside it looked more like a packing case—with slits of side windows slung above a pair of axles on top of which perched two barefooted Aymarás, one to drive and the other, a boy, to sling the long thonged whip pitched and tumbled in the steady gallop over the rough trails of the plain like a motor boat in a choppy seaway.

At the mud walled tambo of Cocuta the first change of horses was made. Before we reached Machicomaca, the next tambo for new horses where we ate breakfast in a mud walled, windowless room, the brake broke or fell off and had been lost somewhere on the rough trail. The steady gallop of the tough, rough mountain horses kept time to the steady singing and punctuating crack of the whip. And yet rarely was a horse struck. An 263 Aymará will drive a crippled animal or leave it to die of starvation on a lonely trail without a thought, but it is rarely that he will abuse a beast with actual violence.

After the change of horses at Copencara there came a steep descent something under a mile long. The driver stopped just over the crest and pointed to the broken brake. Drew spoke a little Aymará, but the sight of the broken brake and the steep hill was enough. We began untangling ourselves to descend. Drew climbed out stiffly and was followed by Jackson, this freed his wife, but she had scarcely put her foot to the step when the mosquito gave a lurch forward and we were off. There had not been even time to jump. It happened in an instant; the door was banging with the

plunging coach; Mrs. Jackson was thrown in one corner and above the noise of flying stones and rattling of the coach could be heard the Aymar^á yelling at his horses and the crack of the whip.

Unused to breechings, these mountain horses, half wild—at least as far as harness was concerned—had felt the mosquito press forward against them. They were off in a flash and jumping down this hill with an unbraked 264 coach bouncing at their heels. If the horses could not outrun the coach we stood a certain chance of piling up in a wreck, horses, Aymar^á, coach, and two perfectly good and useful Americans. So it was that the Aymar^á held his horses at their top speed.

Never was there such a ride—not even in the rapids of the Ratama. In one instant of lurching we looked fairly down upon the swift, blurred ground over which we sped, and in the next there flashed past the rim of snow-capped mountains and then the cold, deep blue of the high heavens. The flying stones from the horses banged against the mosquito in a vicious storm. Inside my voice could not be heard above the uproar. I had somehow wadded all the ponchos and blankets and wedged Mrs. Jackson in one corner of the mosquito in very much the same way as one packs china; if we smashed the wadding might help a little. Then I braced myself with my feet against a corner of the roof with all the purchase I could secure and pushed against the bundle I had made. It was the only thing I could think of, and at any rate, it held us both firm against the terrific bouncing.



Never Was There Such a Ride—Not Even in the Rapids of the Ratama

Presently,—though it seemed an hour—we could feel that the bottom of the hill was reached and then came the slow lessening of speed as the Aymar^á brought the horses gradually to a stop. We climbed out, the Aymar^á got down off his perch and looked over the horses curiously, and waved his hands in expressive pantomime at the mosquito and back at the

hill, a steep water-worn trail of ruts on either side of which the ground dropped in rough slopes. Luckily it was straight, the lightest curve, at the pace we had gone, would have shot the outfit halfway across the gorges before we struck the ground. One horse was lame and the others sagged until we made the last change at Guarina, another old time Aymará village.

CHAPTER XIX

THE INDIAN UPRISING

It was in the cold dusk of the high altitude and tingling with the chill winds that blew from Mount Sorata when we clattered through the streets of Achicachi. Little crystals of ice were already forming in the stagnant pools and little flurries of snow stung as it whistled through the dull streets of this ancient town. On the edge of Lake Titicaca, this ancient town of Achicachi is the home of petty smugglers who can run their contraband in the native straw boats across from the Peruvian shores. The remains of the old mud wall that surrounded it in the days of the Incas are still fairly preserved in places and its population is still practically Aymar^á, with only a sprinkling of half-breed Cholos.

On fiesta days the little police are held in their barracks on the big open plaza and sally forth only in parties. The Aymar^{ás} gather in great 267 numbers from a score of tribal divisions and unite in the typical drunken dances and festivities. Factions forget and renew old differences and toward evening little battles break out in the streets or the plaza. The streets are unsafe and the few white Bolivians and better Cholos stay within. Always there is the danger of an Indian uprising and that occasionally takes form. Between times in the fiestas the Aymar^{ás} are handled without regard, at the first word—or less—they are clubbed and for but little more shot.

The dusk of fiesta is filled with drunken, sullen Indians among whom wander here and there dishevelled creatures with clotted wounds. Occasionally the sullen buzz rises, a little restless movement begins from some section of the big plaza, and in a moment a knot of Bolivian police are plunging in to come back with bloody carbine butts. Always there is the dull hatred of the Bolivian by the Aymar^á which comes easily to the surface

at these times. And there is not a Bolivian statute governing the sale of liquor to an Aymará; if he gets dangerous when drunk, beat him; if too dangerous, kill him.

In the “hotel” in Achicachi the rooms are windowless and range 268 around the four sides of the patio. You furnish your own bed and bedding and each holds a heavy log with which to bar the door. In the patio and in and out of the open rooms some native razor-back hogs wandered at their will and off on one side, more exclusive, was a friendly peccary who would sidle up and grunt sociably in return for a little back scratching. Over by one of the rooms and tied outside was the queerest animal; from across the patio it looked like a very small bear with heavy, long fur yet with queer indefinable difference that explained itself when a closer approach developed a monkey! He was a capucin, the most friendly and delightful of the monkey tribe, and here he was, miles from his warm, tropical home, cheerfully chattering by the side of a tin can that was already filmed with ice and sticking out his pink tongue to lick off the flakes of snow that gathered on his fur—a fur that had grown to enormous length and thickness and left him peering with a brown, quizzical face out from it like a shrivelled winter-clad chauffeur of some stock broker’s quean.

The next evening we arrived in Sorata—and from there on the 269 difficulties began to pile themselves, one on the other. A big, abrupt and surly egotist had been carefully chosen by some Board of Directors back in the States to manage a rubber proposition—in a frontier country like that every one depends for countless things on neighbors, though neighbors may mean separations that measure hundreds of miles—yet this gentleman had left a trail of hostility from the coast, besides a record for both Scotch and rye whiskey that could hardly be surpassed. He wore khaki clothes and a Colt with a nine inch barrel on his strolls in Sorata and he published conspicuously in bad Spanish and English, which he ordered translated, his opinion of all, Bolivian, Cholo, Aymará, or American.

His company had committed unutterable follies from a leather director’s chair seven thousand miles away and he proposed to see those follies carried out to the letter. Sometimes we have wondered why our efforts in South American trade and development have met with such scanty success.

He was one of the reasons. Rumors came that he had become hostile to our camp down the river, that they encroached on his privileges or were using men whom he had contracted, though we were miles from his properties or influence. As a matter of fact the leather chair directors had made a contract for callapos at a figure below cost to the balseros—and for an advance payment—and had been swindled. The leather chair directors had merely swindled themselves in what was at best an oversharpe Yankee bargain—and in a country where the law does not run east of the Andes and only primitive justice prevails! In default of either of the latter, he proposed to dictate to any one who went into the montaña and down the river when and how they might or might not use callapos offered by balseros. But I had at that time other things to think of. 270

A pack train of some fifty mules with supplies had come in from La Paz for our camp. Also some fifteen Cholo laborers, and a mechanic for the camp and among them a Jap, a queer, silent, pink-cheeked Jap. He was immaculate in appearance and always dapper; how or why he ever drifted into that part of the world was a mystery. He had a little baggage in a nice little lacquered box which, as was revealed later in the rainswept stone hut of Tolopampa, contained the secret of his pink cheeks. In that dull dawn he had out a little mirror and a bit of carmine and charcoal with which he was adding beautifying touches. On down the river in camp he always appeared the same; but he was a fine workman and could go teetering along on the ridgepole of a house as easily as a Lecco could run along the river bank. And this outfit arrived with no money to pay for itself, money that the company should have, and had promised to send in. 271

The agent left by the engineer in La Paz had sent no money and the outfit promptly began eating its head off. The single wire that irregularly kept La Paz in touch with Sorata was down—very likely one of the times when an Aymará had needed some wire in wrapping his iron ploughshare fast to the crooked tree trunk or for tying on his roof tree—and I could not reach the agent. Another day and no wire fixed. On the third came the news from the village of Illabaya, some fifteen miles away that the Aymarás had broken loose and there was an Indian uprising. From the valley of Sorata we could see the mountains with tiny fires flickering at night, apparently as signals, and occasionally an Indian driving a string of cattle into hiding along some

far off Andean trail. The householders in Sorata began storing water in ollas in their patios and rifles and cartridges tripled in price. And still there was no wire to La Paz by which either I or the intendente—who wanted soldiers—could get a message through from Sorata. 272

The men were boarded out and money was absolutely essential to keep their rations going and to pay any more bills that might come in with more pack trains. Once let the slightest suspicion get the air that there was no money at hand and the workmen would have fled like quail and it would have been a matter of the utmost difficulty to secure them, or any others, again. It meant a very serious emergency for the camp. What had happened in La Paz I did not know, but it became imperative to find out, Aymará outbreak or not. The only man available to go with me, Skeffington, was a great tall man, proportionately built, and a splendid fellow, whose weight would be a handicap to a horse in any emergency. So I decided to go alone.

I started at dawn on a little, tough mountain-bred horse and had passed the divide early in the afternoon. At Huaylata I stopped for breakfast—a tin of salmon and some cakes of Aymará bread—a little outside the sprawling collection of mud huts, and an Indian woman came out and sold me a sheaf of barley for the horse. There were no signs of Indian trouble here. The horse ate and then drank and as he finished drinking he threw up his head and the blood trickled in a heavy stream from his nostrils and he trembled. 273

If the horse was frightened he was not more so than I. To be horseless and on foot in an Indian plain and with the uncertain rumors of Aymará outbreaks that might have spread like a flame among that dull, hostile population was the most unpleasant situation I have ever faced. The little Indian towns where I expected to camp, Copencara and the tambo of Cocuta, were safe enough, but the thought of getting even to Achicachi—where I might be able to get a fresh horse—gave me five minutes of cold and clammy quivers of panic at the pit of my stomach. The horse stood with the blood dripping in a steady patter on the cold ground while a puddle slowly grew into a great red blot; he looked at me with what, to my understanding, appeared to be his final vision from dulling eyes; the straggling population of the scattering huts of Huaylata seemed to 274

have become raised to the final power of sinister hostility; there was no doubt that I was frightened. I took a box of cartridges from my saddle bags and distributed them in my pockets so their weight bore evenly and waited. There was nothing else to do. There was no use in starting on foot till the horse was surely dead.

Presently the horse went back to the spring, took a little drink, and then turned to the cebada and began nibbling. I felt better for no seriously deranged animal would eat in its final moments. The trickling of blood grew less and the animal showed in better shape. If he could only last to Achicachi, that was all that I wanted.

I did not think it wise to start on foot and leading the horse—that would advertise the fact that I was crippled—while I could wait in Huaylata without betraying anything more than a sluggish and lazy disposition. I tried mounting at last and the horse grunted and then started slowly. How I nursed him those miles; out of sight of Huaylata I walked; the bleeding had stopped, but he seemed weak; I took his temperature with my hand, I petted him, I gave him a bite of chocolate, and when any Aymará huts or 275 little parties hove in sight I mounted and rode by.

Steadily the horse improved and at times responded to a test trot without difficulty so that I rode through Achicachi without stopping. Only once had I had the sign of trouble and that was a little group of Aymarás near the beginning of an old Inca causeway that cuts across one arm of Lake Titicaca. They were drunk and I could hear snatches of their thin, wailing songs while they were still dots in the distance. As I rode by they were at one side of the trail where an old mud building held forth as a *chicharia* and struggling in that aimless drunken fashion that seems so common to all toppers and that divides all wassailing bands into those prudent souls who are already drunk enough and know it and those who won't go home until morning or till daylight, or the day after, doth appear. They started for me uncertainly, one reached for a stone, but an Aymará rushed out of the house and knocked it from his hand. Some of the more sober came, too, and again the wrangling started, apparently as to whether they should rush me or not. And in the meantime I had ridden out of reach.

There was nothing to fear in that incident, at least so far as my immediate safety had been concerned. But the critical point lay in avoiding trouble; no one Indian or similar group would have had a chance, unarmed as they were, against any man with a gun, but in a peculiarly abrupt Indian fashion the countryside is aroused and trouble is apt to close in on the trail ahead in a particularly congested and fatal manner. 276

I had planned to camp in Copencara, but the delay left me plodding along in the cold darkness and I was glad when I reached Guarina. In the blackness I rode into a pack-train of sleepy llamas before they knew it—or I either for that matter—and on the instant I could hear the patter and thud of their padded feet as they scattered in a panic stricken flight, while from out of the night came the hissing herd-calls of the Aymará drivers trying to hold them together. Off from the highway that led through the town and from somewhere beyond the walled streets there came the dull beating of many Aymará drums and the mournful tootling of their flutes. Now and again there was the bang of a dynamite cartridge and the pop of firecrackers. An Aymará flitted by in the streets and I called to him for the way to the house of the corregidor—the chief official. All I could get of his reply was the respectful “Tata” as he disappeared. 277

There was not a light that gleamed through a chink in any window or door, the wretched streets were deserted, and only the noises of the fiesta and the occasional glow from a big bonfire down some alley showed where the only signs of life existed. It was possible that the corregidor was barricaded in his house as in the very recent affair at Illabaya and I had no mind to intrude on any collection of Aymarás beating tom-toms and raising drunken memories of their abused ancestors. It looked ominous.

Presently another dim figure pattered through the darkness and again I asked for the way to the corregidor. The Aymará gave explanations that I could not have followed in daylight and then started off to lead the way, straight down an alley to the plaza where were the bonfires and the drums and the dancing and the explosions. Along one side we skirted until the farther side was reached. It was a big plaza—almost as big as the town—and it was filled with Aymarás from miles around. A mass of shifting groups shuffled in their trotting dance around the fires and hundreds of 278

unattached guests wandered drunkenly about or lay stupefied as they fell with their faithful wife—or wives—taking care of the bottle of alcohol till they should revive afresh and athirst.

At one end of this plaza my guide stopped, he was a tattered ragged Aymará—a pongo—a carrier of water and of the lowest caste, and left me at the headquarters of the corregidor to whom I had the customary right of the country to appeal for shelter. When there is no corregidor you go to the padre. He was a Cholo, a heavy, thick-set man with a strong face, dressed in the ordinary clothes of a white man, whose peculiar dull complexion alone marked him as Cholo. A couple of tattered police lounged in the doorway and a half dozen Cholos were idling around this headquarters. A Winchester leaned against the corregidor's chair, some of the others carried theirs as they shuffled about, and back in the dimness of the room could be seen extra carbines leaning against the walls, and from every belt there was the bulge under the coat that indicated a revolver.

The corregidor looked at me curiously; a lone traveler at night on the high plateaus in these uncertain times and speaking bad Spanish was 279 something of a novelty. One of the ragged policemen took me in charge and once again I was back in the dark alleys. Before a door in a long wall we stopped and then a rusty key squeaked and both horse and I walked through into the walled patio around whose sides opened the windowless rooms. The policeman brought in a bundle of cebada for my horse and a bowl of native Bolivian soup-stew, stinging with *aji* and grateful in its warmth. For the food and forage I paid, but for the house and shelter the corregidor would accept nothing. There was no bed nor did I need any, with my saddle and blankets. After the door had been barricaded with the log used for the purpose, I was asleep at once to the lulling of drums and flutes and banging dynamite.

CHAPTER XX

AMBUSHED BY LADRONES

Early in the morning I was off; some of the celebrants of the night before were strewn along the streets, still drunk, and among them the sociable hogs rooted or wandered. The horse I looked over anxiously, but he was sound as a dollar and even a little frisky in the keen air. Once in a while an Indian was to be seen plowing a tiny patch of the Andean plateau with a bull and a crooked tree trunk or here and there a single figure plodding the trail. In the afternoon I caught up with a Spaniard, the manager of a gold mine back in the mountains he said, and together we rode comfortably along. Until we met I had no idea of the enormous craving for companionship that can develop in the human mind. Bolivian fashion, he had galloped and exhausted his horse in the early morning and now it could not be urged off a tired walk.

At Cocuta we stopped and had a little supper, some fried eggs and a hot stew, mainly of aji, while the horses rested with loosened girths. La Paz was only some twelve miles distant and to the edge of the high plain from which its lights could be seen even less. I was going on so that I could get in that night. The Spaniard's idea was to stop in one of the mud rooms of the tambo and ride in, freshened, foam-bedecked, and prancing in the morning. The mud rooms, acrid with llama-dung smoke from the cooking fires and infested as well, made no appeal to me. My companion went outside to look over his horse and came back in a state of suppressed excitement. He beckoned me over in one of the mud rooms:

“There are here a gang of ladrones—highwaymen,” he said. “We must go on at once I know them. They killed the mail carrier on the trail last month. We dare not stop here—we will saddle slowly and ride on as if we had not noticed them. Then we can see if they follow.”

We tightened the girths and the Spaniard's Indian boy picked up his bundle and swung alongside on foot—he could keep up with the horse at the end of a day's march on the trails. As we rode out of the corral there was a group of Cholos and Bolivians mud spattered and dusty who had evidently just arrived. Their animals wandered around while their riders with a bottle of alcohol and some bottles of native beer were getting drunk as rapidly as possible. One of them had on an old style blue army overcoat of the United States and, so far as looks went, they easily lived up to the reputation of brigands that my Spanish friend had just given them. 282

The interesting question for us was whether they would follow and overtake us. The cold afterglow of sunset was almost at our backs and we carefully watched the long, level horizon on which Cocuta long remained in sight for signs of horsemen. The Spaniard was for covering ground as fast as possible, but I insisted on keeping to a walk; his horse was played out and needed to be saved up to the last minute if we were really in for a bad time.

It grew dark, and the thinnest possible silver of moon gave only an accent to the night. No following horsemen had appeared and we were feeling quite relieved when the Indian boy spoke to the Spaniard. Off on our right, perhaps a couple of hundred feet from the trail furrows, rode a little group of horsemen. There were four or five, in the night it was uncertain, but they were off the trail—for nothing that one could imagine except of a sinister purpose since everyone follows the trail—and suiting their pace to ours, were walking abreast without closing in. We had dismounted to ease our horses and now we climbed back into the saddles. The figures did not close in nor did they give any sign. 283

“They are trying to count us,” said my friend, and then he added, “have you another pistol, señor, one that you could lend me—I have not one.”

I had not. And I remember to this day the cold, clammy undulations of my spine as I realized that the only gun between us belonged to me and that whatever responsibilities the situation developed the field of action was also to be wholly mine.

The hold-up in these parts is not practiced with the gentle chivalry of the “hands up” or stand-and-deliver method; you are first shot up and, if the

aim has been successful from the chosen ambush, your remains are searched. Spanish—or the surviving Bolivian procedure—places a 284 very high value on the testimony of surviving principals, so much so that one of the effects of any form of hold-up is to see that there are no surviving principals.

The little figures off the trail kept pace with us and gave no sign. Presently they gradually quickened their gait and disappeared in the darkness ahead. The Spaniard laid his hand softly on my arm:

“They have gone ahead to await us in an arroyo, señor,” he said. “Be sure that your pistol is in order.”

These arroyos are gashes in the high plateau, sometimes only six or eight feet deep and more often deep gullies with a dried watercourse at the bottom into which one rides in steep zigzags like the mountain trails, and by reason of having the only gun it became my part to ride ahead. Presently we came to one—deep and as dark as the inside of a cow. There was nothing else to do so I cocked my gun, a forty-four, Russian model, and shoved the spurs in so that my horse would take the trail, down into the arroyo first. There was not a sound except the rattle of stones from my horse’s feet; there was not a thing that could be seen in the darkness; I was on 285 edge for the slightest sound.

“If you hear a sound, señor, shoot!” said my fellow traveler as I spurred ahead.

It seemed an age before I rode out on the plain on the other side—and it was only a little arroyo. And there were some eight or ten more of these ahead. How many we passed I do not remember, but it was from the opposite bank of one deep gully that I heard the rattle of displaced gravel and I swung my gun into the direction of the sound and blazed away. Down the last slope of the near side my horse slid and then in a rattling gallop stumbling and pitching over the dried watercourse on up the opposite side while I banged away in the direction of the first sound. More gravel poured down and then there came the sounds of scurrying and of hoof beats pounding on hard ground. Close behind me came the Spaniard in a clatter

of flying stones and still further behind the noise of his Indian boy scuttling down the bank and trying to keep up.

On the farther bank we halted and took stock. To this day I do not know how many shots I fired for I broke the gun, dumped out all the shells, 286 and reloaded without taking stock of expended ammunition. But the tension was gone; we looked at each other in the darkness and the rest of the trail seemed easy.

“They will not likely appear again,” he said. “But there are one or two bad places yet.”

There were narrow zigzags with sharp turns guarded by jutting rocks where a man could be hidden until the horse pivoted for the sharp turn and this constant riding with a cocked gun into a black gash that maybe contained something that never appeared wore on the nerves. How much I did not know until, as we rode into the outskirts of La Paz, a couple of fighting bulls broke loose in the streets and a loose fighting bull is very dangerous. A man on horseback was perfectly safe, but at the shrill, terrified cries of “*los toros! los toros!*” and the low bellow of the bulls, I spurred on a law-breaking gallop through the streets of La Paz and did not stop until I had clattered into the patio of the hotel. My nerve was gone.

The trouble over the lack of company funds was soon located. Our agent in La Paz, a hard drinking old man of many exaggerated politenesses and a teller of tales that began with a British commission in a Bengal lancers regiment and drifted through Sioux and Blackfeet raids, a man who 287 was utterly delightful across a club table, had been seized with a madness for power. The poor old fellow, as honest as he was shiftless, a genteel drifter for years, had become an appointed and accredited resident agent and with a full company cash box felt for the first time in years the thrill of responsibility as “agent” and had been for days shifting from club to hotel and back to the club maudlin with boasts and Scotch-and-sodas. It did not take long to straighten out affairs and soon I was headed for the interior.

Once more I was back in Sorata. One of the men, our only mechanic, an Englishman, was quarantined in a little house on the outskirts, down with

the smallpox. We had shared the room in the Sorata posada together before I started across the high plain, and he had become sick twenty-four hours after I left. The intendente of Sorata was irritated at him, he was some trouble with his smallpox. They had locked an old Indian woman in the house on the outskirts to which he had been removed and kept a guard at the door so she could not escape. She was cook and nurse.

The queer official government doctor who ran a queer medicine shop and barely kept alive under the government subsidy, shuffled up to the house each day and called inquiries through the window that were answered by the sick man. Fortunately he was not very ill, and he pulled through. While the peeling or shedding process was on we would go up and sit across the alley from his window and smoke some pipes with the patient. 288

At night he used to be annoyed while he was helpless, by the Aymarás, who would hold little dances and celebrations under his windows, tooting the doleful flutes and beating the drums. While he was sickest he was helpless; one of his first messages was to the intendente to chase off the Indians. It had the usual result—nothing. His first convalescent act was to crawl over to the window one night with his gun and open fire. Two muffled echoes from the night proved that he had punctured two drums and he was left in peace. True, the Aymarás complained but the intendente came back with the information that a crazy smallpox patient was a free agent and they had better keep away. Thereafter no more drums or flutes broke the night's peace.

CHAPTER XXI

THE MUSIC OF THE AYMARÁS

This Indian music is interesting and I was fortunate in being able to have some preserved in musical form for repetition. In the remains of the vast Indian nation shattered by Pizarro, the Empire of the Incas, every man and boy, almost from the age when he can walk, is an adept on their simple reed flutes and Pandean pipes; the drum he merely thumps. They are a musical race; there are songs and airs for each season, for the planting, for the harvest, for the valorous deeds of the vanished caciques, for their gods of old to whom a new significance has been given by a pious Church, and the long-drawn chants by means of which, at their yearly gatherings, they pass down the history of their race. As there is no written language, there is no written music; it is handed down from generation to generation by the ear alone.

Their national instruments are but three in number: the flute—a reed 290 about eighteen inches in length, with six holes, and a square slit at the end for a mouthpiece, played after the manner of a clarinet; the Pandean pipes—a series of seven reed tubes that, in the large ones, are four feet in length, and in the smaller ones scarcely as many inches; and the drum. The last is the universal instrument of all peoples; there are few races so low in the scale of human society as not to possess it. The Pandean pipes are in a double row, and at the time of preparation for the Indiads, or the intertribal wars, the outer series is filled with cañassa, the native liquor, and the player receives the benefit of the intoxicating fumes without the delay incidental to drinking from the bottle. Only the men play, the women and girls never; their part is in the chanting and in the hand-clapping that measures the weird rhythm, although before marriage the girls are allowed to join in the dances and the drinking that goes with them.

In the cities and villages there are the constant beating of the drums and sound of the flutes. Every community or group has its special festival days. Now it is a wedding or a christening with the hosts of “compadres”—godfathers—or the Church day of some obscure saint celebrated by the mission padre, then a village fiesta or house-raising, and from day to day the sounds of barbaric strains stretch in an endless chain throughout the year. In riding over the high plains in the Indian country one is seldom beyond the sound of the thin flutes. Every llama and sheep herder passes the monotonous hours with his playing. In the still air it carries for miles and softens in the long distances with a weird pleasing effect. The strain is short, but one bar, and for hours it is repeated with unvarying exactness.

291



[play]

Even in the bitter cold and snow of the trails of the high passes the presence of the Indians is announced long before their appearance by the echoing flutes. They plod along in single file, muffled in their ponchos, driving the llamas or burros before them; one of them supplies the music, but as the air is thin in these high altitudes and breath is precious, they relieve each other at frequent intervals. There is no marked cadence to the music; it is a weary minor air unlike the sturdy measures we associate with marching music, but it undoubtedly stimulates its audience in some mysterious way with an inspiring effect.

292



[play]

But it is in the great fiestas that one has the best opportunity of hearing the Indian music. I was waiting in the Indian town of Achicachi for the arrival of my mule to carry me over the pass to the village of Sorata. The fiesta was for the birthday of the town and in honor of the ancient gods of the place; at daybreak the Indians gathered within its walls from miles.

With the light of dawn the streets began filling with dancing bands of Indians in their gaudy festival attire. They were there in thousands. The plaza was a weaving mass of brilliant ponchos and feathers; Indians with contorted masks, and jaguar-skins trailing from their shoulders, performed dances in the cramped spaces cleared for their benefit; silver and gold bullion decorations glinted in the clear atmosphere along with cheap tinsel and tin mirrors; and above all rose the sound of the Pandean pipes, the flutes, and the drums, filling the air with a confused discordant roar.

Often several groups of Indians would band together and in single file follow the pipes and drums in a little jerky, dancing step. Sometimes they went through simple evolutions, figure eights and circles, or divided and

came together in the pattern of the “grand march” of the East Side balls. The players would dance as well, and occasionally some inspired individual would halt the line while he whirled dizzily around in one spot to his own music. The others would watch these performances with approval, chanting in a high wailing key and clapping their hands in accompaniment.

With the darkness of the night the dancing and playing in the plaza became less and less. The groups withdrew to their 'dobe huts and squatted on the mud floors. A tallow dip or a smoky wick floating in a dish of grease 294 furnished what light there was. The wind from Lake Titicaca blew fresh and keen, but in the lurid gloom of their squalid huts the air was foul with the crowded Aymarás. The chanting took the place of the dance, and the flutes and pipes led in the air; the drums were silent. With the finish of each verse or section the note ended in a prolonged maudlin wail that continued until it became the opening note of the succeeding stanza.



[play]

This song is also popular with the Cholos—the half-breeds. They hate the whites, and sing it with either Spanish or Aymar^a words of foul denunciation. In Sorata one time they marched past below my window, singing it for my benefit. Between verses they cursed the “gringos” in vulgar Spanish.

It was in this same village of Sorata that I was present at its greatest Indian fiesta. It is the fiesta of the harvest and generally lasts for an entire week. The mission padre pronounces it the feast of Todos Santos, but to the Indians that is a matter of indifference. The maize and the “choque” (potatoes) have been gathered, and the “chalona” (frozen mutton) prepared for the ensuing season; the year has ended; it is the fiesta of the harvest. They go to confession on the morning of the first day, but the remainder is spent in their own customs.

The little parties organized themselves after the early-morning visit to the 'dobe church and paraded with their odd trotting dance-steps through the lanes of the town. There was the usual collection of thin drums and shrill flutes, with here and there the mellower tone of a Pandean pipe. One band stood out conspicuously in the crowding throngs. This band had been 296 carefully trained by its host, who did not play himself, but with a proud dignity directed its evolutions. A huge Aymará headed the party; he played Pandean pipes with tubes four feet in length. A great drum swung by a rawhide thong from his shoulders. Its shell was from a log, the core of which had been burned out. Following him was the line of Indians in a reducing scale, each with a smaller set of pipes and a smaller drum.

Each Indian contributed but a few notes to the air; the range of the pipe was limited. The drums never rested; they marked the sonorous rhythm of the measures. The training was perfect; there was never a break in the succession of notes; the effect was much like that of a calliope, but more mellowed and pleasing. They played but two airs, and these seemed to be reserved for that peculiar form of orchestra.



[play]

This they would play for hours before changing to the other, as follows:



[play]

White squares of cloth hung from the shoulders of the players like the capes of the old Crusaders, and with their brilliant new ponchos and the 298 bright green of the parrot-feather decorations they made a most picturesque effect. The weird and barbaric music was rather attractive at first as it rose from the distance and swelled in volume while the procession came nearer, but after eight or ten hours it palled, and the prospect of a week more of it was not cheerful. But an outbreak in the Indian town of Illabaya, ten miles off over the mountains, brought it to a close much earlier.

To Mrs. Arthur T. Jackson, of Boston, the wife of a prominent rubber-dealer in Bolivia, who was in Sorata at the time, the only white woman within hundreds of miles, I am indebted for the transcript of the Indian music. An accomplished musician, she was much interested in the subject, and at different times during her months on the Indian frontiers she had gathered and noted the airs as she heard them in the fiestas.

CHAPTER XXII

BACK HOME

More difficulty developed when I, in an amiable frame of mind bought a chance in a watch from a Sorata man, for when a man moves from a village he raffles off all his household goods and his own and his wife's jewelry. This raffle was made famous by the fact that I won something. I won the watch; and the next morning was arrested by the intendente on the complaint of a thrifty Soratañian that the whole machinery of the raffle had been undermined and debauched, and Bolivia dishonored in order that the dice might give me this marvelous watch. The watch, by the way—I will keep it for years as proof that I am Fortune's favorite—*did* strongly resemble gold in a dim light and when wound would tick for quite a while, but in its general aspect was on the order of those given as a premium with two cakes of scented soap for a quarter by the slick corner spieler of a gang of pickpockets. 300

At last we were to start the next day over the pass to Mapiri with our outfit and men. The surly American with his ever-present extraordinarily long barrel Colt sent a messenger to me to announce that his home office, easy chair, contract on the Mapiri River happened to cover all of the available balsas and callapos and that I could not use any. Presently we met in the plaza and he remarked with a suggestive emphasis, "You got my message about my callapos?" I replied briefly that I had and that I would act as my judgment dictated when I arrived in Mapiri. "Very well," he said suggestively; "then you know the consequences and can take them."

That night a friend came to our party with the information that this man had shipped in to his barraca recently some dozen Winchesters and considerable ammunition and that he was arranging to ship more. That gave their barraca some twenty-six rifles—a pretty heavy armament for merely a peaceful

rubber company. His ignorance of the country and his truculent vanity and the carelessness with which he talked “fight,” drunk or sober, made it a matter of no little concern. And he neither knew nor respected the rights and customs of river travel, although he attempted to dictate them. 301

Like many patriots he was willing to fight as long as he could hire his fighting done for him—an absentee bravo.

We bought four Mausers and a thousand rounds of ammunition and started back to our camp, with five white men and some thirty-five Cholo workmen and three pack-trains of supplies.

Once again we climbed sleepily into the saddles at daybreak and began crawling up to the final pass over this third and last great range of the Andes. The first night’s camp was hardly below the snow line in a little sheltered cove on the mountain flank; the next morning a slippery climb in a blizzard that coated every mule in ice as though with armor brought us to a ragged, narrow cleft in a long fin of rock through which we passed as through a gateway. It was the summit of the pass. There was on the farther side the usual votive cairn of stones built by the Aymarás with the twig cross at its apex while, leaning against the fin of protruding rock as far as the eyes could penetrate the blizzard, were narrow, spear-head pieces of shale placed on end as further efforts in worship or propitiation of the great god of the mountain. 302

From the pass the trail dropped a trifle and we crowded for that night into the tambo in Yngenio. They were a surly lot and viewing with a hostile suspicion—doubtless with causes inherited from the remote past of the conquistadores—any outfit of wayfarers.

Again followed a day of sleet and snow-squall with an occasional rift in the clouds when, thousands of feet below, could be seen the soft greens and the waving palms of inviting tropical warmth and dryness. The narrow trail zigzagged up the bare mountain steeps, followed for a distance the wanderings of the crest, and then dropped in another series of zigzags to lower levels. For hours there was this constant rise and fall. In a cold rain we camped in a stone hut, Tolopampa, a place that has the reputation of

perpetual mud and rain where the skull of some deserted Aymará packer still kicked around in the cold mud outside.

And then at daybreak began the drop into the warmer zones where 303 there was sunlight and a riot of tropical color. For two days it was one unbroken descent while the back grew weary and exhausted leaning against the cantle and the stirrups interfered with the mule's wagging ears. The clayey mud of the wallowing trails rose up and wrapped us in its welcome until boot-lacings, spur and puttee buckles blended in shapeless, indistinguishable masses. And then, five days after leaving Sorata, we plodded into the straggling line of palm thatched huts that is credited on Bolivian maps with being the town of Mapiri. For two days the mules were rested while the arrieros passed the time in keeping mildly drunk. Below the high bank on which the town stood, the River Mapiri boiled past in muddy eddies; here in a cane hut we camped and oiled and packed the saddles; from now on it would be rafts, callapos, until we again reached the main camp.

In Mapiri the callapos were waiting and we embarked. One camp on a sand bar, one camp in Guanai and the next day we shot more rapids and came into the country of the truculent one with the long barreled Colt. The barraca lay just around the bend where the river broke in some small 304 rapids and then saved itself in miles of smoothly coiling eddies for the grand smother of the Ratama. It was here at this chief barraca of his company that there might be trouble—we had been warned that if we attempted to round this bend in any unapproved, uncensored callapos we would be fired on. The four Mausers had been issued and the case of ammunition unscrewed. There were four callapos with the white men on the one in the lead. It was rather exciting, this uncertainty, but it was accompanied by the invariably clammy spinal undulations and the strong desire that I was somewhere else or that what that jungled river bed held for us was an incident of the past rather than of this imminence.

As though casually the freight had been loaded on the callapo platforms so that it made an informal breastwork and quite as informally we loafed behind it. And then the callapos drifted silently around the bend—we had not fired the salute that is ordinarily made when approaching a barraca at

which one is going to stop and call—and the clearing with its collections of huts and palm thatched roofs broke into view. A little figure scuttled across the clearing and disappeared. The edge of the clearing on the bank was within a stone's throw and not a sound broke the stillness. A word to the Leccos and their heavy paddles began working us over to the bank where a little path ran down to the water's edge. If the two camps were in for a frontier war, a feud, it might as well be found out at once. Before there had been only the threats of a foolish man—here was the place and here were the men under his control. How far would they back his stupidities?

305

In single file we climbed the steep path to the clearing; at the top the head man came forward cordially.

“What's this about firing on us as we came around the bend—you getting in Winchesters by the crate?”

He laughed cheerfully:

“Oh, phut! If it amuses that old fool outside to send them in I don't mind, but if he wants to start any fighting let him come on in and do it himself.”

We told him of the rumors and the threats that came from Sorata.

“Sure, I know,” he said; “that old cuss didn't do much else but talk fight with me when I was out; how many rifles, how we're going to run things—you know him—and I'll bet he's never heard anything more than a firecracker go off in his life. He'd fire me if he thought I had you at my table. Bring up the hammocks and come on into grub!”

306

And so like most other really serious things it faded away on a close approach. But it had held all of the serious elements.

The next morning we swung out into the river and again shot the rapids of the Ratama and drifted out where the whirlpools drew the callapos under neck-deep. As we approached the site of our camp we turned loose the rifles and shortly came the answering pop of guns. The callapos grounded on the shallows at the foot of the bank, the old Cholo workmen swarmed around

the new comers and waded ashore with the new freight. Where we had left the beginnings of a palm thatched roof was a long bunk-house; a patch of young platanos was opening its long leaves with its promise of our own base of supplies; a hen clucked around with one lone chick—the rest having succumbed to snakes—the result of some trading with the cacique; under a palm thatch there drifted the blue wisps of smoke from a bank of charcoal burning and a well defined trail stretched through the jungle to a clearing farther down where the placer workings would be finally located. 307

It was like the Swiss family Robinson—it was coming home. The Cholo with the one silver eye, the drunken shoemaker with the scalloped scar, and all the others crowded around and chattered in a happy excitement. The proper native custom is to celebrate so according to formula a tin of alcohol was ordered for the night and the workmen decked themselves with leaves and shuffled round in what passes for a dance until exhausted. The next day the time expired ones started up-river with the callapos.

It had been five months since I left the camp and we began that slow, heart-breaking struggle against the current. It was with all the feelings of having at last reached my restful home that I turned into my hammock that night. Rapidly the camp grew under the influx of the new men; the song of the whip-saw rose in the forest and long clean timbers began piling themselves along the trail; now and again the roar of some huge tree shook the air as it mowed a swath of jungle in its fall; a tiny store was opened and now and again Leccos came to trade—out from the original jungle of the year before had come a tiny, fragmentary community hanging on to the frontier. 308

And three weeks later I started on a callapo down the river to cross the interior basin of South America, over the Falls of the Madeira and then down the Amazon and to London. Two days and two night camps with a callapo and a crew of Leccos and one forenoon we drifted and scraped on the gravel beach of Rurrenabaque. Here was the last touch of a town, or of a straggling settlement that I would sleep in for many days.

CHAPTER XXIII

OFF ACROSS THE CONTINENT IN A BATALON

A clumsy cart, with its two wheels cross-cut from a single mahogany log, and slowly dragged by a pair of mud covered oxen, crawled across the open space before the settlement that had been left, after the Spanish custom, in crude reminder of a plaza. Under the midday tropic sun the quivering heat-waves boiled up from the baking ground and through them the straggling line of high-peaked, palm-thatched, cane houses shimmered in the glare. Under the torrent of heat the jungle sounds were silenced, and only in the distance, from the river's edge, came the splashing and clatter of the Tacana woman, with the happy shrieks of the sun-proof, naked babies.

The wooden axles of the cart cried aloud for grease as a ragged Tacana prodded the lumbering oxen; on the raw hides in the cart lay a tiny 310 sack of mail and beside it the tawny mottlings of a fresh stripped jaguar skin. The cart stopped before the cane house of the intendente and that functionary rolled lazily from his hammock and signed a paper; the half-breed roused himself from the corrugated floor of split palm logs, and disappeared in the jungle paths of the scattered settlement to gather his crew, and by that I knew that at last my time for embarking on the muddy, swirling current of the Rio Beni had arrived.

Eight hundred miles back, through cañon and mountain torrent, over the giant passes of the inner Andes, lay the Bolivian capital of La Paz, the last civilization from the Pacific shore. Two thousand miles to the eastward from this little frontier nucleus of Rurrenabaque lay the civilization that groped its way westward from the Atlantic, while between were long reaches of desolate rivers, and primitive jungle.

The few whites—refugee mostly; two, I knew, had a price on their heads on the other side of the Andes—popped out of their cane shacks to see me off. Even in these remote parts, where distance is counted in so many days' travel, the long river-trail to the Atlantic is reckoned out of the ordinary. My big canoe would take me only to the Falls of the Madeira, and yet it would be three months before the crew would return to Rurrenabaque on their slow trip against the current. 311

My Rurrenabaque host, a dried-up little Englishman who had packed alone on foot over the high passes to this interior, and whose reckless nerve will pass into ultimate legend, flapped about in half-slipped feet as he supervised the loading of my baggage on the *batalon* that was sluggishly swinging to its vine moorings in the current. His Cholo wife with her flaring skirts, high-heeled, fancy shoes, and pink stockings, fluttered amiably about, while a green macaw and its inseparable companion, a big, gaudy blue-and-yellow macaw, crawled affectionately over her shoulders. Such idle Tacanas, Mojos, or Leccos who incautiously and curiously approached were pounced upon by my host, whose reckless Spanish was somehow intelligible and efficacious. He impressed a little Tacana man to carry my cartridge-belt.

“Wot ho, *chico*, 'ere you are, grab 'old! Wot ho, *sokker el rifle y los balas*, 'urry hup—*pronto, de prisa, vamonos!*” And the naked little Tacana baby—for he was scarcely more than that—trotted proudly along under the little load. “Abaht t' leave us, wot ho, yus! Goin' 'ome—I'm goin' 'ome myself, next year.” 312

Next year! Wherever you go, however far off the main traveled trails you may drift even into those unmapped spaces where the law is carried in a holster and buckled on the hip, you will find them, American or English, those who are scattered on the fringe of the world—and always they are going home, and always next year! Home! Their home is where they are; their lives, their affections, and the loyal little interests that intertwine and make the home are all about them. And they realize it only vaguely, when they have finally set a date for departure and it begins to loom in the future like approaching disaster in the multitude of little separations. Like my friend they may be *compadre*—godfather—to half the river; little disputes

are laid away unto the day of their arrival, and their word is righteousness to the simple Indian mind; in the land where there is no law they are ready in emergencies to carry justice in the breach of a rifle; they have earned the trust of the weaker, white or native, and stand forth in the full cubits of their real stature—and always they are looking forward to going home, next year! Born from out of poverty and the slums, with a pathetic loyalty they dream of the land in which they have neither ties nor friends and where a fetid alley in some sweated city is hallowed in their vague desire.

313

314



THE TACANA BRIDES ADJUSTED FOR THEMSELVES COMFORTABLE NICHES IN THE CARGO.

Down on the gravel beach the Tacana crew was gathering. Each had his own paddle, a light, short-handled affair, with a round blade scarcely larger than a saucer and crudely decorated with native forest dyes. The paddle, a plate, a spoon, a little kettle, a short machete, bow and arrows, or perhaps a gaily painted trade-gun and a red flask of feeble powder, constituted his

entire equipment for the many weeks on the river. Indifferent to the white-hot gravel, they pattered in bare feet and tattered clothes—for unlike the Lecco, his near neighbor, the Tacana is careless in his dress—and dumped a bunch of fresh-cut, green *platanos* in the bow. The soldered tins of rice, strips of *charqui*, and the boxes of *viscocha*—a double baked bread as hard as cement that does not mould in the tropic humidity, had already been stored. Two Tacana girls, still children in years, but brides of two of the boys of the crew, waded out and climbed aboard the canoe; the half-breed threw aboard the little sack of mail; I waded out; the vine moorings were cast off, and with a splashing of paddles and the last clattering farewells, we swung out into the Beni's muddy current. The lonely little group of aliens on the beach fired their rifles in salute, their diminishing figures quivered and blurred in the heated air that boiled up from the hot gravel shore as I emptied my magazine rifle in response, and then they turned and 315 plodded slowly back to their cane shacks.

The sun blazed down on the open canoe, and on each side the heavy jungle dropped to the water's-edge without the ripple of a leaf, and only our progress fanned the air with a thin, hot zephyr. The Tacana brides adjusted themselves to comfortable niches in the cargo, and chattered gaily with the crew. Once in a while there was a tortuous passage choked with snags that required careful work on the part of the helmsman while the crew, perched on the thwart six on a side, hit up a rapid stroke to fifty-five and once to sixty. The half-breed and I swung our feet over the tiny deck aft and broiled.



AT THE TILLER PRESIDED A HUGE TACANA.

The batalon was a huge, heavy canoe, thirty feet in length, with a beam of about ten feet while the bow and stern were blunt, giving the canoe the effect of a pointed scow. At the stern was a rudder with a high rudderpost, and at the tiller presided a huge Tacana upon whose face were the traces of the painted stains from some recent celebration. Every stick in the batalon was heavy, hand-sawed mahogany. The cargo was piled high amidships, with a view to its possible use as a breastwork in the event of an encounter with savages, and it was not lashed in place, for there were no more rapids, and the excitement of shooting them was past. 316

The first day was short, for to make an actual start was most important, and then on succeeding days the daily work from dawn to sunset flowed easily along. We stopped for the night at Alta Marani, where two Englishmen had

a little headquarters of their own. They had a fleet of dugout mahogany canoes with which they shot the river between Mapiri and Rurrenabaque. Four canoes were lashed side by side, the cargo was bolted under the decks, so that in principle, independently invented here and by them, they were diminutive whalebacks like those of the Great Lakes, and the gaskets and cargo tarpaulins were of pure rubber.

The years of frontier life had browned them like Tacanas; they spoke half a dozen native dialects; barefooted and half naked, they could run the river or hunt with any Indian, and their toughened skins were indifferent to sand-fleas and mosquitos. One, a mighty hunter, painted his face in ragged streaks after the manner of the Tacanas when on the hunt. Wild animals, he claimed, seemed to have less fear of him, and in some way he believed it blended the man with the flickering sunlight of the forest. It may be, for I have seen the brilliantly mottled jaguar skin flung on the ground in the forest become merged to practical invisibility fifty feet away.

Half the night they sat naked to the waist in clouds of mosquitos and insects, talking. The single tiny candle flickered in the cane-walled darkness of their shack; the glittering eyes of the Mojo and Tacana retainers gathered in the doorway to listen to the peculiar noises made by white men in conversation. Here and there on the walls was some splintered arrow—the idle souvenir of some little fight, a tapir wallowed through the jungle across the river; and the occasional wail of a wandering jaguar came to us as we talked for hours of Thackeray, Stevenson, Dickens, Scott, Kipling, and “Captain Kettle!”

The last was first in adventure, but least in charm. “That fellow,” they said, “e certainly did know a ship!” A few tattered books were there, their covers long since gone, for they had been traded about over hundreds of miles of this interior, and among them were Laura Jean Libbey and Bertha Clay. Naïvely they asked me about the latter. “They’re books all right—but there don’t seem to be much to them.” And they were pleased to learn that their prejudice was rather shared by the academic standards of the distant outer world.

The lives, of these men, as they looked at the matter were filled with trivial routine; romance, character, adventure—were the things bound in books.

“After the Ball” and “Daisy Bell” still lingered as great popular triumphs of ballad and the Indians shuffled and grinned as these calloused ditties quavered through the darkness. If I would stay, I was promised all kinds of hunting—jaguar, tapir, monkey, wild hog, big snakes, and, as an additional lure, only half a day’s march back from the river a brush with the savages! The palm roof of these men was the last that I was to sleep under for many days.

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NEVER WAS SUCH AN EXHIBITION IN THE HISTORY OF FIREARMS.

Before dawn the next morning the little campfires of the crew sprang up along the bank; the Tacanas shivered in the soft, cool morning air as though it were a biting blast, and then, with the first rays of the rising sun, we waded aboard once more and were off. Well into the forenoon the Tacanas suddenly stopped paddling. “Capibarra, patrón!” they whispered excitedly. On the bank, not forty yards away, stood the capibarra, an amphibious, overgrown, long-legged guinea-pig sort of creature, which blinked at us with startled eyes. From the steady platform of the drifting canoe I fired, and missed. The second shot also missed. In brief, I emptied the magazine

while the capibarra darted about in a panic, attempting to climb the steep bank. The bullets spurted dirt above, behind, below, and before him.

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The ninth shot at last laid him out dead. Never was there such an exhibition in the history of firearms. The crew in the meantime had unlimbered their shotguns and arrows, and were also pouring in a heavy fire, and with equally unsuccessful results; it sounded like a fair-sized skirmish. At noon, when we tied up to the bank, the crew quietly departed into the jungle for game while I was busy; they would take no further chances with the larder with me along.

“Why did you not tell me?” I spoke sternly to the crew chief, but he only shuffled uneasily on his huge bare feet; it was later that I learned it was believed that my eye-glasses were the evil influence that made my rifle useless.

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CHAPTER XXIV

THROUGH THE RUBBER COUNTRY

As we tied up, the next day, I saw the crew quietly sneaking their bows and arrows and feeble shot-guns out of the batalon. I stopped them, and, buckling on my cartridge-belt, prepared to go along. We all went, though it was a very hopeless party of Tacanas; but my luck had turned. Not a hundred yards from the bank we ran into a troop of six big, black spider-monkeys, and I got the entire troop; only one needed a second shot. It was pure luck, for shooting these monkeys is virtually wing-shooting with a rifle. They dash over their arboreal paths faster than a Tacana can follow them on the ground, and one's only chance is when they pause to swing from one branch to the next. Never again was I able to approach the record of that morning, but after that the Tacanas always left their own weapons in the batalon when we hunted for the larder.

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They could pick up game-signs as they paddled, and read the indications of animal life as though it were writ large in the silent forests. When we went ashore, they would string out in a long, silent line of skirmishers, and presently there would come the grunting coo of a monkey, the scream of a parrot, or some long-drawn animal-call. The big Tacana helmsman, who kept near me, would say, "There are three spider-monkeys over there, patrón," or perhaps a red roarer monkey, whose bellowing love-song at sunrise and sunset carries through the still air for miles. Always it was as the Tacana said. The line of Tacanas could fairly talk with one another in an animal language that did not alarm the forest and would deceive any but a Tacana ear.

Sometimes there would be a wild hog, sometimes wild turkey, or a big, black bird very much larger and more delicious in flavor; but it was the monkey that was the standard diet for many days. With seventeen able-

bodied appetites in the outfit, the hunt was a necessity, and monkey the most accessible game. If there ever seemed to be a trifle too much, the Tacana crew would rouse themselves during the night and have additional feasts, until by dawn the supply was gone. On sand-bars they would forage for turtle-eggs, and every day they usually collected a bushel or two of these. But it was monkey that furnished them with the greatest delicacy and the keenest pleasure in the hunt.

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BUT IT WAS MONKEY THAT FURNISHED THEM WITH THE GREATEST DELICACY.

Though monkey-shooting was necessary and there was for the moment, the thrill of skilful shooting, yet the element of pathos dominated. A clean shot stirs no thought, but to wound first, as must happen in many cases, gives a queer little clutch at the heartstrings that can never be shaken off. The little monkey, the frightened, hopeless agony of death stamped on its tiny, grotesque features, dabbles aimlessly with little twigs and leaves, stuffing them at the wound; sometimes it feebly tries to get back among the

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branches that make his world, and, as you approach, there is never any savage, snarling stand where he meets extinction with the cornered heroism that seems for the moment to balance the scene. Instead, he pleads with failing gestures of forlorn propitiation, and with hoarse, cooing little noises, for the respite that would be far less merciful than the *coup de grâce*.

Never will I forget one; it was a question of seconds only and as he lay there on the ground he waved the little hands at me as if to motion me back, he turned the little twisted face away with an appealing, deprecating coo from which, in this supreme moment, even terror was subdued. I have watched men on the field of battle with the death sickness upon them and where, even under these surroundings, while a spirit is struggling into the great mystery there comes the inevitable awe that lingers like a vision in the recollection.

That was human. Yet even here, before this sprawling, almost human figure, the feeble gesture, and the soft, caressing coo of final request I felt an emotion rising with a solemn dignity; it was life itself that was passing from the pathetic little body. I held back the Tacana who rushed up and the picture is still vivid of the flickering sunlight in the jungle forest, a few fallen leaves flecked with a mortal red, while a full grown white man and an Indian stood back silently in response to the fading appeal of a little, dying monkey. 325

For the daily hunt the canoe was moored where the jungle met the river, but every evening at early sunset the camp was made at the edge of some broad, sandy playa as far from the forest as possible. Long before camping the Tacanas had kept a shrewd lookout for recent signs of savages, and after chattering among themselves would indicate a playa that seemed proper and secure. The savages, primitive and nomadic, scarcely more than animals, offered no menace by daylight, but in the darkness lies their opportunity. With instinctive adroitness they can crawl through the jungle without a sound and be in the midst of a camp before it is awakened; but in the open spaces they are timid. They will line up fifty yards away and open with an ineffective volley of screeches and arrows. 326



OFTEN WE PASSED THE LITTLE SHELTER OF PALM LEAVES.

Secure in this custom, the Tacanas set no watch, and we all slept peacefully depending on any savages that might come to furnish the alarm for their own attack. Though signs of them were all about, we were never molested. Often we passed a shelter of palm-leaves by the shore that had been used by some party that had come down to the river to fish; for only in the interior and on the smaller and absolutely virgin rivers and tributaries did 327 they have their headquarters. Sometimes there would be a tiny dugout against the bank, and their camp-fire would send up a thin, blue column of smoke against the purple jungle shadows. The Tacana helmsman would throw the canoe beyond arrow-range, while the crew would cease paddling and call “Ai-i! ai-i!” across the river, the recognized call of amity. Sometimes there would be the glimpse of a timid, naked figure darting from one shadow to the next, a head peeping from behind a tree, and perhaps a wailing “Ai-i! ai-i!” in response, but rarely more.

Once we came upon a little party working their way in a dugout against the current under the bank. The Tacanas looked to their arrows and put fresh

percussion-caps on their shot-guns, but the instant the savages spied us they scuttled up the bank and remained in its shadows till we drifted past.

Day after day passed in the slow monotony of routine. The low, flat country never varied; the hot, brazen glare of the Beni's muddy current rambled in a twisted aimless course ever to the eastward. Always at the dawn the viscocha, or hard biscuit, was soaked to edibility in hot tea, and then 328 we started in the soft, cool stirring of early sunrise. Slowly the cool breeze disappeared, the chatter of the parrots died away, the water fowl aligned themselves in motionless, drying groups, incurious and fearless as we paddled past their sand-bars and, like the opening door of a furnace, there came the fierce heat of the tropic day. The muddy river gave no hint of its depth or channel, and sometimes the canoe would run aground and the Tacanas would tumble overboard, laughing and splashing, to ease her off and then line out, with wide intervals, as skirmishers, to locate a channel that would pass us through the maze of submerged sand-bars. Not a thought was given to the alligators that infested the river, and the Tacana who located the channel would swim carelessly about with huge enjoyment. Again would come the steady splashing of paddles and the double line of rhythmic, swaying Tacana backs; then at noon the daily hunt and the drowsy resting in the forest shade while the Tacana girls busied themselves with the breakfast where a pig, a capibarra or a row of monkeys were slowly roasting on the hot coals.



A Night Camp on the Rio Beni on the Way Out

Rapidly the afternoon wears away until cooler, more mellow glow 329 announces the approaching sunset and then the chatter among the Tacanas as they discuss the signs for the night's camp. The little *tolditas*, the mosquito nettings, would sway from their poles in the gentle breeze, a quick supper would evolve from the remains of the noon breakfast and be followed by the issue of the cane-sugar alcohol. Sometimes after dark the Tacanas would paint their faces in streaks with the berries foraged at noon, and grimace and hop about the glowing embers of the fire with shrieks of joy. Any odd grimace or ridiculous streaking caused a riotous outburst, for their minds were as simple as infants'. Once—and it gave them delirious pleasure for a whole night—they set fire to an island of *charo*, the cane from which the walls of their shacks are made, and all through the darkness it crackled and burst in little explosions, as though a nervous picket-line were protecting our flank.



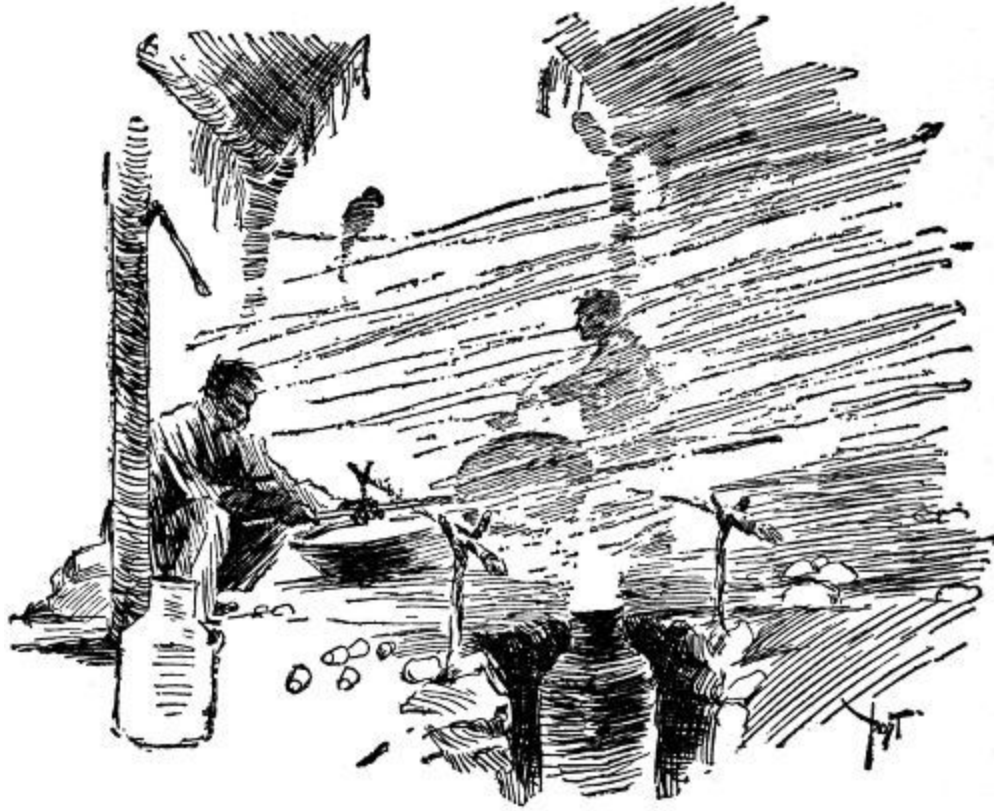
IT WAS ONLY THE SHACK OF A LONELY RUBBER PICKER.

Slowly the days passed, and it was with the most cheerful emotions that we at last picked up the first signs of the frontier toward which we were working. It was only the shack of a lonely rubber-picker, and the poorly made hut was bare to the verge of destitution. Its whole outfit was scarcely more than that of one of the Tacana crew; there was a cheap shot-gun, some powder and ball, yet the bow and arrows were his hunting mainstay to save the expensive use of the other. Near by there was an uncultivated patch of rice, corn, a few yuccas, bananas, and some tobacco-plants. Under the cane bunk was a pair of primitive rubber shoes, made of the pure rubber mixed with a little gunpowder, and smoked on a block of wood roughly hewn to the shape of a foot. I often saw these curious rubber shoes, which apparently can serve no purpose with their callous-footed wearers except that of stylish ornament. In one corner were a few, brown *bolachos* of rubber, which would be valued at twelve or fifteen hundred dollars in the market, but for which the picker would receive from his patrón not

enough to free him from debt for his past and future supplies meager as they are.

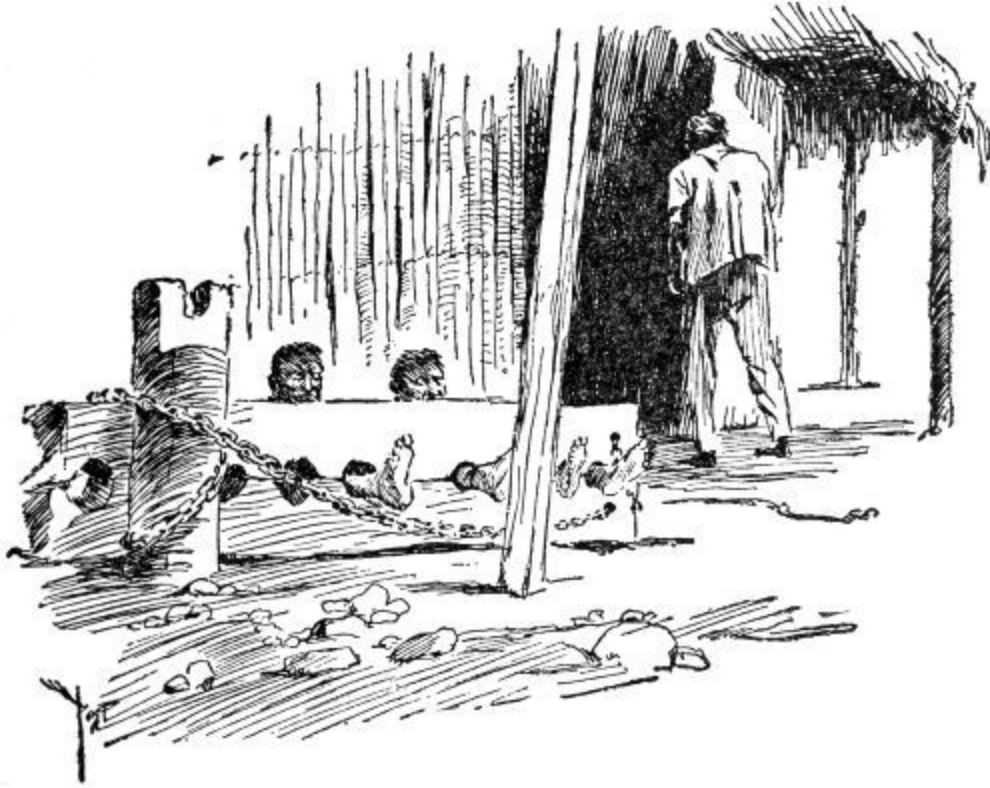
As we tied up to the bank, he and a boy helper had just gathered the rubber sap and were busy smoking it. A huge tin basin, a giant counterpart of the tin basin that sits on the wash bench outside every American farm-house, was half full of a white fluid that looked for all the world like a rather chalky milk; before it, in a little pit, was a tin arrangement something like a milk can with an open top out of which poured a thin, blue, hot smoke; and above the pit was a frame on which rested a round stick that held a globular mass of yellowish rubber previously smoked and cured. The round stick was rolled over the basin, a cupful of the new rubber was ladled over the mass as it was rolled back into the smoke, and there held and manipulated until the whole surface was thoroughly smoked. In the thin, blue smoke it at once turned a pale yellow.

Layer by layer the *bolacho* is built up with each day's gathering of sap, and months after, when it is cut open and graded, the history may be read in the successive layers; this day's sap was gathered in the rain, the paler, sourer color showing that water had trickled down the bark and into the little cups; the dirt and tiny chips show that this day was windy; and there in the darker oxidization of the layer, is revealed the fact of a Sunday, a fiesta or drunken rest before the succeeding layer was added.



IN THE THIN BLUE SMOKE IT AT ONCE TURNED A PALE YELLOW.

Sometimes as the batalon of the patrón makes its regular trip for collection, nothing will be found but a gummy residue of burned rubber, a 333 rectangle of black ashes where the hut had been, and near by broken and mutilated remains of the picker; for the feeble trade-gun is only one degree better than the enemies with which the rubber-picker has to contend. In such an event the patrón curses the savages and, when these losses become too frequent, may return on a punitive expedition; for labor is scarce in these remote districts, and the loss is economic, not sentimental.



JUSTICE IS ADMINISTERED ACCORDING TO THE STANDARDS OF HIS SUBMISSIVE
DOMAIN.

Farther down the river is the barraca of the patrón, a large clearing in the forest back from the bank of the river. Here survives feudalism, and justice is administered according to the rough standards of his submissive domain. Somewhere you will find the stocks, with the rows of leg-holes meeting in a pair of great mahogany beams. A pile of chain-and-bar leg-irons lie in a near-by corner, and a twisted bull-hide whip hanging from the thatch above. In an open, unguarded shed beyond was piled thirty thousand dollars' worth of rubber,—it is only a fraction of the crop,—awaiting shipment, and in the early moonlight we sat with the patrón himself, a bare-footed, cotton-dressed overlord who was scarcely distinguishable from his own debt-slaves. And he, in his turn, was in almost hopeless debt to the commission-houses, who hold him by their yearly advances in trade.

Rarely now did the *tolditas* swing from their poles in a night camp on a *playa*; on down the river it became a series of visits—sometimes the daily voyage was longer in the darkness—but vigilance was now no longer needed in choosing a camp, and every night the Tacanas carried our outfit up the bank, where we slept serenely in a rubber-shed. Coffee [335] reappeared, and the Indian wife of the picker or patrón served it at once on our arrival, and then rolled cigarettes from home-grown tobacco. Rubber was the talk—rubber and savages. There was no outside world, and I was a curiosity. The Brazilian boundary was yet a month's journey with the current to the east, and Rurrenabaque, against the stream, was six weeks of hard travel to the westward. To them La Paz was a vague name, the metropolis of the world, perhaps, if their primitive existence has ever stirred to the idea of a metropolis.

Rubber and savages made their universe! Were the savages bad coming down? Well—they are bad this year down the river farther—a picker was killed last week only a half day's march from the river. One of his men shot another the other day among the cattle, but two more got away! What will be the price of rubber? The last known price is already three months old in the quotations in Manaus. Money, real money, it was useless. Never had a gold coin looked so feeble and futile as on this river, where merchandise was needed. I bought a big rubber sheet and a rubber bag, and I paid [336] a box of cartridges, a package of pencils, and a fountain-pen such as are peddled on the streets of New York; I was supposed to have the worst of the bargain!

CHAPTER XXV

A NEW CREW AND ANOTHER BATALON

One night we made no camp at sunset, but steadily paddled in the darkness; for the journey was nearly over for the Tacanas, and their paddles dipped in happy, eager rhythm. Then the canoe was beached under what, in the dim starlight, appeared to be a cliff; the crew carried the cargo up the high bank, and there, in scattered groups of twinkling lights, spread the settlement of Riba Alta. It is purely a trading-center where the big rubber houses have their headquarters in widely scattered, high-fenced compounds. There was a church of mud, with a tiny bell; a small detail of Bolivian soldiers and their officer, who, wonderful to relate, spoke English; there were enormous warehouses stacked with goods at startling prices, with French, German, and English clerks who could chatter with the natives in half a score 338 of primitive dialects, and then, in the cool evenings, sip huge gin cocktails from high tumblers and indulge in local slanders. In the room of each was a huge pile of accumulated newspapers from home that they carefully read, one each day, following the successive dates—and the latest was three months old! It was as isolated as a Hudson Bay post of a century ago.

I presented my letters and had a room, a hammock, a shower bath, and filtered water to drink in place of the coffee colored river, and I was disappointed, for the clear, crystal fluid was insipid and tasteless after the long weeks on the Beni. The Tacanas were to rest there a few days and then begin their long slow return to Rurrenabaque and, during that time, I arranged for the last stage of this interior journey on down over the Falls of the Madeira where a river steamer was to be met and the actual frontier had its beginning, or ending. From Riba Alta the Beni becomes the Madeira River, by the addition of the Madre de Dios, the Orton, the Mamoré and the

Abuna. And a day's journey beyond Riba Alta are the first of the Falls of the Madeira. There are fourteen of them scattered along the river for 339 two or three hundred miles, and ordinarily only two can be run, the others being weary portages, and fourteen portages with a heavy mahogany canoe is no light, frivolous trip.

The last canoe that had come up over the falls reported that a steamer from Manaus would arrive and leave the village of San Antonio, at the foot of the last falls, in less than a fortnight, and every effort must be strained in order to make it. If I missed that, there would be six long weeks in that unkempt Brazilian village before the next transport from civilization would arrive. A railroad has now been built around the falls, starting from near San Antonio, and steamers are a little more frequent. Now that road is completed it opens up one of the greatest virgin territories of rubber in the world.

A German rubber-trader in Riba Alta was fortunately leaving for Europe, and we were to join forces. He hunted up a little canoe, about fifteen feet long, but with a disproportionately wide beam that made it look like a coracle. It was as heavy as a scow, and we stowed a block and tackle to drag it over the portages. We needed four paddles and a pilot, for speed 340 and safety cannot be secured without a pilot. His wages were equal to those of our whole crew, a bonus of the cargo space for the return trip, a rifle, and cartridges and also the amount of alcohol necessary to get him into this amiable frame of mind. He knew the cataracts and their condition in the varying stages of high and low water like a book, he could take advantage of the speed of the current and then swing into the portage at the last moment; he shot the possible passages and chose the right bank for a portage; to miss the latter and then work slowly up stream far enough to make a crossing and not get caught in the falls is slow work; while an error of skill in choosing the cataract that may be run may fairly be considered as fatal.

The crew had to be rationed for a six weeks' trip, down and back, while the persistent rumors of savages made a rifle and cartridges a necessity for their return. The traders in the settlement regarded it as hazardous for us to attempt the trip over the falls with so small a party, but my German friend felt that in the speed with which we could pass each cataract with a light

boat there was security, and the crew were indifferent, or confident in the presence of white patróns, and so we started. 341

In Riba Alta there were two young savages that had been captured in a recent raid far up one of the tributary rivers. One was an Araona and the other was a Maropa. Reared in the dim twilight of the jungles, their eyes were unaccustomed to the brilliant tropic light of the open, and since their capture they would hide in the houses by day and venture forth only in the evening. Their skins were rough and calloused from the jungle growths, and clothing was a delightful novelty, though only a toy. They would array themselves in any garments they could for short play-spells, and then discard them and step blissfully forth in their comfortable nothing.

The tribes of this part of South America are among the most primitive in the world. Though they had no knotted muscular development, each of these savage children already possessed the strength of a man, and in their aimless play could shift boulders that would tax the strength of a Lecco or Tacana. They could scale any one of the branchless trees in the compound like a monkey, and with as little apparent effort. Sometimes when they were not watched too closely, they would use bow and arrow with native skill; like a flash the arrow would be loosed and a lizard would be split as it ran, or a fleeing chicken skewered. I was told that after a savage child is captured, the greatest care must at first be used in feeding it, as it is totally unaccustomed to salt, and even the slight amount used in bread has a poisonous effect upon it. The Maropa had ulcers that were attributed to this fact. The food, *platanos*, is rubbed in ashes to slowly accustom them, and after about six months there is no further difficulty. 342

The night before we left Riba Alta an Indian was brought around to tell me an experience. He was a rubber scout who hunted up possible new areas of rubber trees; he corresponded to a “timber cruiser” in our own Northwest. Somewhere, about a couple of hundred miles back in the interior from this settlement, he had come across the trail of an animal unfamiliar to him—and from his savage infancy such forest lore had been his sole academic curriculum; it was a trail “like a snake—but not a snake.” It was approximately three feet in width judged by his gesture of measurement, and there were feet marks on either side of the trail like a turtle’s 343

flippers—but only two. He had not followed it for he was afraid. About a week later in the shallow lagoon of one of the great lakes that are known to exist in that part, although no white man has yet penetrated to them, he saw a long neck raise itself out of the water—a long neck! And it had a head on it. A snake's neck, he was asked. No, he insisted it was not a snake, he knew snakes, it was a neck with a head on it, something new. Then he fired at it, and it disappeared—and that was all.

He had described, in the combined circumstances, a possible plesiosaur. What he saw I do not know, but when an Indian wants to romance, his animals have the regulation iridescent eyes and spout flames. No combination of two overlapping trails could deceive him, he was adept on animal trails, nor would such a common place incident as an overlapped trail stir his imagination. He had never seen a circus poster, or an illustrated treatise on paleontology, but he indicated the existence of some animal closer, at least, to the plesiosaur than any known and distant descendant.

The crew had been gathered that same night and slept on the beach 344 beside the monteria so that we were able to start with the dawn. Our first day was unlucky. The heavy canoe, with scarce eight inches of freeboard, was swept on a snag that started one of the planks. The inner bark of a tree that is used for calking, and which is always carried for such emergencies, could not keep the water down, and we were forced to beach the canoe for repairs. This delay, with the constant vision of a lost steamer below the falls, kept the German and myself toiling in the blazing sun by the side of the crew emptying cargo, patching and then reloading. The canoe still made water, but we hoped farther down the river to exchange it. That night we had to camp on a sand-bar, and it was not until the next day that we made the first of the falls,—or *cachuelas*, the Falls of Esperanza.

At this cataract is the headquarters of the largest single rubber {baron} in South America. His *batalones* and even tiny river steamers ply from Esperanza throughout the enormous watershed gathering the rubber and sending it out over the falls in large expeditions. Here he has little machine shops, a fair sized village of employees all under his control, while off in one corner by the edge of the jungle is a marble shaft surrounded by 345 a little rusted iron railing that he has erected to the memory of his

wife. The shaft and its pedestal have been slowly dragged around the portages in a labor that lasted months, and, as it stands, the tender tribute represents somewhere near its weight in silver bullion. A little tramway of his runs around this cataract and by its use we saved many hours of portage; even the montería was hoisted with borrowed labor on the tiny car and hauled around.

At this Cachuela Esperanza I observed that it was not a falls such as we picture in connection with the word, a veritable Niagara or Victoria where the water drops sheer in a mass of foaming thunder; it is a gorge or a series of little cañons channeled through mountains of buried rock lying at right angles to the course of the river. The series of the Falls of Madeira seem to be all of this character—parallel mountain-chains of rock at irregular distances from one another, which come near enough to the surface to act as dams until the ages of insistent current have worn their narrow channels. In high water the rock is often entirely covered, and nothing shows but the shift and coil of great eddies and whirlpools to mark the choked gorges beneath. Each main cataract is guarded by a smaller one above and a second one below, often quite as dangerous, and making an average of twenty portages necessary. 346

In three days we reached Villa Bella, a tiny settlement on the peninsula formed by the Mamoré River joining the Madeira. In this little wilderness town, a sort of half-way between Riba Alta and San Antonia, the few streets were already laid out with rectangular primness, each house was compelled to keep a light burning outside until the late hour of 9 P. M., and there was a street-cleaning department of one, whose duty included keeping the weeds out of the streets. There were also rudimentary sidewalks.

The night of our arrival there was a dance given in the cane-walled house that combined the functions of club, café, billiard-room, and hotel. The sole music was by an accordion, and stately, shuffling, swaying dancers simpered and coquetted and performed all the polite maneuvers to its jerky rhythm, while the dust rose from the corrugated floor of split palm-logs, and the smoking kerosene lamps and tallow candles battled and triumphed over the soft evening atmosphere. Every chink and crevice and window held its glittering, enraptured Indian eye, and even the élite 347

caught their breath at the reckless pop of warm imitation champagne at ten dollars a bottle. Truly it was a grand affair. Ice for the champagne had been hoped for, and the gentleman who owned an ice-machine, as he fondly believed, showed it to me and asked my assistance in operating it. Naïvely he had bought an ice-cream freezer, but so far it had proved obdurate to his labor, and had brought forth no ice.

We exchanged our leaking canoe for a sound one, a trifle larger, and pushed on. A few hours below over the Falls of the Madeira proper—a minor one of the series guarding the little rapids at the head we ran, while a short portage brought us into the clear river again. Three *batalones* were running their cargo of rubber through the gorges at the side of the cataract. The *bolachas* of rubber were threaded on long ropes, like a string of beads; one of the crew would take the end of the rope in his teeth, and, swimming or wading, guide it through the eddies near shore. Often he would have to let go, and with a rush it would be sucked into the cataract like a long, knotted, water-snake, while others of the crew would swim out and recover it below. 348



THE BOLACHAS OF RUBBER ARE THREADED ON LONG ROPES.

At this cataract the lightened batalones themselves could be run through, and the whole of three crews would be concentrated in one for the passage. Out into the eddies it would sweep with thirty paddles straining over the high freeboard, giving it, in the distance, the appearance of some huge and absurd water-bug. Six weeks it would be before they would land in San Antonio, and then two, perhaps three months more with their cargo of merchandise working back against the river. With the killing work in the blazing sun, swimming or portaging from the crack of dawn until 349 dark, and a palm mat thrown on the sand-bar at night, it is small wonder that rarely a crew comes back from a trip with its full roster. Even their rugged animal physique is not proof against the continuous exposure and hardship. In addition, there are the savages. One expedition is still talked of where out of three batalones that started with their crews, only three men returned.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE FALLS OF THE MADEIRA AND HOME

Slowly cataract after cataract was passed Madeira, Misericordia, Riberon—with three long portages that consumed a day and a half—Araras, Tres Hermanos, Perdonera, Paredon, Calderon de Infierno (“Kettle of Hell”), which was a series of cool, shaded channels among a multitude of islands, and finally resulted in but a single portage around a tiny cascade, although in high water the Calderon de Infierno lived well up to its name; then came Geraos and Teotonio, two cataracts that challenged comparison with the rapids below Niagara, though shorter.

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DRAGGING A “BATALON” AROUND A PORTAGE OF THE MADEIRA FALLS.

Between two of the cataracts from up a little tributary river there had been reports of newly discovered rubber forests; the frontier had blazed as

though over a bonanza gold field; tremendous tales of the daily pick were told, thirty, forty pounds of pure rubber a day! Expeditions outfitted for a long stay were following one another to claim territory and we knew at the mouth of that river was a rough headquarters where there would be company in the night's camp and the pleasant interchange of rumor. So we made no camp at sunset, though the crew murmured. It was pitch black, the overcast sky shrouded even the faint starlight. We literally felt our way close by the high bank, while the paddles slipped through the water with scarcely an audible drip. The little animals of the night scuttled on the bank, and out of the darkness would gleam tiny, scared eyes.

Suddenly from near the bow came the heavy lap of a tongue upon the current not a paddle's length away. An Indian dashed a paddleful of water at the sound, and with a startled crash against the brush there was a heavy leap to the bank above, and there came the low, rippling snarl of a jaguar and the sound of scattering leaves as its angry tail whipped the undergrowth. With cocked rifles we waited for the gleam of eyeballs—to have fired without that much chance would have made the spring certain—and motionless the crew let the canoe drift past. It seemed an age! 352

An hour more, and we came to the mouth of the little tributary. A dozen batelones were moored along the narrow beach vaguely outlined in the camp-fires along the bank, and back of them were the rough huts that a Brazilian had already erected at this point. Here and there the feasting crews were gorging themselves on monkey and half-burned strips of tapir, while a tin can of alcohol and a gourd dipper were free to all. A short distance up the river the savages had appeared that morning, and one of their men lay dead back in the jungle, while another was in one of the huts with an arrow-hole through his breast. In the main shack a few rods off was a woman, white, pure Brazilian, who spoke in the low, soft modulations of a far-off civilization, and who, by any of the standards of all the ages, was a beauty. She wore the simple, single gown of the frontier, with an undergarment; her black hair was coiled in a flowing mass that curved low over her forehead, and over one ear was the brilliant blossom of some jungle-flower. She was playing a guitar, swinging with white, slender bare feet in an elaborate hammock against a background of rubber-traders, native adventurers, and half-breeds, where the smoking candles dimly outlined 353

their rifles and belted cartridges. A drunken, half-savage woman, her maid probably, whined a maudlin, gibberish, and over all rose the pungent smell of rubber from the bolachas piled in the farther shadows of the hut. It was like the touch of fantastic fiction.

At the cataract of Geraos a Brazilian rubber-trader was trying to portage his batalon and cargo with a half-mutinous, lazy crew of Brazilian negroes. A couple of the crew would work shiftlessly while the rest dozed in the shade; it was the last hard portage, and we offered the Brazilian our block 354 and tackle if his crew would help us.

“Look at them!” he said hopelessly. “Talk to the head-man. If they will do it, I shall be glad. Two days have they loafed like this, and it will be two days more.” He swore fluently in Portuguese. “If I beat them or shoot one, they will have me put in jail in San Antonio. I am losing money, but it is better than jail.” Obviously we were nearing civilization; up-river no lazy mutiny was possible.

The head-man refused surlily unless we would stop and loan *them* our crew.

One of the idling crew—it was not a strike; they were just tired and wanted rest—sauntered over to me. He was a powerful negro, with the smooth, supple muscles rippling under a skin of oiled coal. He was a man without a language, although he could be barely intelligible in three.

“Me ’Melican, bahs, *tambien*.” He thumped his naked bosom like a war-drum, but he was friendly; to his mind we were two fellow Americans greeting in an out-of-the-way place. He pointed to his companion: “Him B’itish, ho, yaas.” Then, like a chieftain chanting, he recounted their 355 voyage on the river: “Ribber him belly bad. *Muchas* wark—belly ha’d. Me bahs him belly ha’d; go far topside ribber. Me seeck; you got him li’ly rum, cañassa? Wanee catchem li’ly d’ink.” And his British confrère added also a pleading for a “li’ly d’ink.”

He insisted that he was an American, although born in the Guianas, but he admired America so much he had adopted it; and he would translate the heated gibberish of unknown patois with his friends as his noble defence of our superior America and wind up with a plea for a “li’ly d’ink.”

At this same cataract, in a wretched hut, lived some kind of a broken down, human derelict, blear eyed and worthless and nondescript, whose desolate fortunes were shared by a poor, wretched Frenchwoman and their unkempt, pitiful children. Between them they stood off the savages from time to time and in the intervals squabbled drunkenly with each other. Six weeks before a battle between two crews at this portage had been fought around their shack. One of the crew had stolen a woman belonging to an Indian of 356 the other outfit and when the trouble died down twelve men had been shot, together with the woman who was the cause of the friction. A new crew had to be sent down to help out with the batalones.

But the cataract of Geraos is one of the finest of the whole system. The buried mountain system of rock lies open to the sky; it has been channeled in deep cañons, above which the waves are lifted in angry fangs. Their roar carries through the jungle on each side like the steady thunder of a storm; whole trees that have lazily swept down-stream are caught in the clutch of the great cañon, and are tossed high above the cañon walls as though they were only straws caught in a thresher.

At the Falls of Teotonio we paddled up to the very brink of the cataract and beached snugly in a little eddy at the side. Here a broken-down contractor's railway made the portage an easy matter, even though it was done in one of the hardest tropical rainstorms that I have ever seen. The lightning and the thunder were continuous, and the rain drove in a steady, blinding sheet, like the deluge from a titanic nozzle.

The little news that came up from San Antonio drove us to greater 357 haste to catch the steamer; the steamer was there, stuck on a mud-bank; it had gone; it was coming. Every uncertain rumor added to our haste and desire. We had not stopped to hunt, and supplies were running low. Coffee was gone, the viscocha can almost empty, platanos and charqui were running low and it was necessary to keep the crew well fed for their hard and steady work. Twice we had scared a capibarra from the bank, each time beyond possible rifle shot, and now we were looking for even a cayman, for a big meal of baked alligator tail would go a long way toward helping out the commissary.

Knowing our need, apparently, the game was perverse in its determination to annoy us by its absence; and then at last, on a playa, far down the river, the crew made out a little group of three capibarra. It was the only time I ever knew of the necessity of stalking that simple animal, and when the capibarra fell, kicking, and the others darted off to seek the bottom of the river, the problem of our larder was solved.

The rapids at the Falls of Macaos we ran and then below there remained but the last. We had expected to portage about the Falls of San Antonio, 358 but as we scanned the distance below, there, against the brilliant green of the forest, was the rusty funnel of the river steamer, with a slender, wispy feather of steam rising beside it. Steam was already up, and how much time had we to portage? If we portaged, it might mean six long weeks of dreary waiting in a frontier village that had none too pleasant a reputation. Should we run the rapids? The pilot shook his head doubtfully, but said he would try. As we paddled along in the swifter current it did not look bad—a few curling waves crested with spray and then long, oily stretches of coiling, boiling water. It seemed possible, and it was worth the chance. We would try, and the pilot swung the canoe for the crested wave and the channel.

We threw off our shoes, unbuckled our belts, and stripped, to be ready to swim in an emergency. We emptied our rifles and revolvers in a fusillade, hoping to attract the steamer's attention and hold it, but no answering whistle came back. An instant later we struck the long plunge down the glassy slope of water at the entrance to the rapids, and a foaming cataract burst over the bow, drenching us with spray. Then came the slower 359 strain and wrestle with boiling waters that burst upward from below, while the crew paddled like mad, with the pilot braced in his cramped quarters aft and chattering at them for still greater effort. The boiling water threw us broadside on, and the whirlpools caught us in a grip that the frantic paddling could not seem to break. It seemed as though we were standing still in the turmoil, and yet a glance at the rocky, boulder-strewn sides showed that they were shooting past like a train.

Broadside on we darted for a second glassy slope of water, and only in the last moment did the canoe swing round so as to take it bow on, while the

wave that broke over us half filled the canoe. Had we been heavily loaded, we would have had our swim. It was the last of the rapids, and a second later we drifted out into the calm current, where before us loomed the high decks of the river steamer. We could have made a portage without risk, and with ample time, for she did not leave until the next day.

With San Antonio village fading behind us in the soft, blue distance of the tropic morning, civilization began slowly to reconstruct itself, though still side by side with the most primitive. Brazilian ladies teetered foolishly over the gangplank that was run out to the mud-bank shore with their high heeled shoes radiant with suggestion of the highly cultured centers of fashion; again I beheld silks and fancy parasols and *poudre de riz* and heard the *frou-frou* of real garments, immaculate and bristling with frills. Sallow gentlemen of wealth and haughtiness came aboard with their retinue of family who, in turn, had their retinue of half savage servants, to escort their rubber shipments and sling their hammocks from the stanchions of the cool forward deck along with mine. 360

All day we broiled sociably together and in the nights—when we anchored in the river—slept softly in the balmy night airs. Together we listened to the Madeira pilots swear as they ran us on a mud-bank and then clattered aft bossing the dumping of the anchor from the steamer's dinghy in order to warp us off again. In perfect harmony we used the bathroom together and splashed in the overhead shower early in the morning, for later the sun warmed the tank above to a stinging heat, and threaded our way among the score of turtles that were herded there until sacrificed to our appetites. Closer we moved to the equator and hotter blazed the sun. And then, at last, early in the dawn we swung steadily out of the great mouth of the Madeira River and into the greater waters of the Amazon, hugging the shore. The little river steamer breasted the current up to Manaus, while on either side the little dugouts of the Indians dotted the river in the cool morning shooting turtles with a bow and arrow for the market at Manaus. And then in that city, still almost a thousand miles from the Atlantic, there was civilization at last—trolleys, electric lights, little cafés, with their highly colored syrups, a theater and gay shops with all the gimcrack luxuries and necessities, a band and the shimmering, swaying endless parade that encircled it weaving in the dense black shadows and on 361

into the luminous mosaics cast by the arclights in the leaves overhead. Dim, in the background, the chaperons purred together but with an unrelaxed and rigid vigilance. It was civilization—all but the vernacular.

La Paz seemed half the world away, for it had been three months and twenty-one days since I climbed the long trail to the high plateau above that Bolivian capital.

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THE END

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