

SIX YEARS
IN BOLIVIA

A. M. L. GUISE



SIX - YEARS IN BOLIVIA

Books by **HARRY A. FRANCK**

Each volume profusely illustrated

**A VAGABOND JOURNEY AROUND THE
WORLD. A Narrative of Personal Experience.**

WORKING NORTH FROM PATAGONIA

VAGABONDING DOWN THE ANDES


FOUR MONTHS AFOOT IN SPAIN

THINGS AS THEY ARE IN PANAMA

**TRAMPING THROUGH MEXICO, GUA-
TEMALA AND HONDURAS**

**ROAMING THROUGH THE WEST
INDIES**

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BOLIVIA · THE
ADVENTURES OF A
MINING ENGINEER
By A. V. L. GUISE . *Illustrated*

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Dedicated
to
MY MOTHER

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SIX YEARS IN BOLIVIA

CHAPTER I

GOING UP

Outward Bound—Across the Isthmus of Panama—Down the West Coast of South America—Mollendo and a Rough Landing—A Zig-zag Railway—Arequipa, the Inca's Rest—Pablo, the "Forty-niner"—Sunrise on Lake Titicaca—An Inland Port—Tiahuanaco; Remains of a pre-Inca Age—A Capricious Cog-railway—La Paz; Steep Streets and Rarefied Air—Fifty Leagues on Muleback—A Night in an Indian Hostel—Demons of the Pass.

I WAS a young mining engineer, recently appointed to the post of assistant manager of a tin mine in Bolivia, to which South American republic I was bound, when I sailed from New York one brilliant day in early August.

The trip down the coast to Colon was uneventful, except for a gale which struck us off Cape Hatteras, and caused our round-bottomed boat to roll and pitch to an extent which rendered unhappy—not to say miserable—most of the passengers on board, the greater number of whom were employees of the Panama Construction Company, either returning to the Isthmus on the expiry of their leave, or going out there for the first time.

On the eighth day we landed at the palm-fringed port of Colon, to learn that the last train for Panama had left. With much difficulty, the casual railway officials were persuaded to run a special train to enable

us to catch the boat which we had been telegraphically advised was being held at Panama until ten o'clock that night for our convenience.

It was long after dark when our special train, drawn by an ancient engine, after interminable delays, pulled out of Colon station. The entire run to Panama—a distance of forty-six miles—was accomplished in spasms, separated one from the other by halts, each of which seemed little short of eternity, often beside a stagnant swamp from which hordes of mosquitoes arose to devour us. The night was black as pitch, and nothing could be seen of the Isthmus but an occasional cocoon palm or banana tree, growing near enough to the railway track to be illuminated by the two oil lamps which dimly lit our antiquated coach. Five hours of this progress brought us to the port of Panama, whence we were taken by tender to the steamer which lay two miles out to sea, awaiting our arrival.

The first few days' journey southward from Panama are dreaded by travellers, because of the intense heat which usually prevails when crossing the equator. We, however, were fortunate to encounter a cold wave that was sweeping up the coast. The sea was smooth, except for the long swell typical of the Pacific Ocean, in which our ship rolled lazily.

On the fourth day out, with the help of a flood tide, we steamed up the broad estuary of the Guayas river, at the head of which—thirty-six miles inland—lies Guayaquil, the port of Ecuador, off which we cast anchor in mid-stream. On the river we passed Indians in dug-out canoes, with cargoes of bananas or cocoa-beans, drifting leisurely with the tide. When the tide turns, the Indian boatman ties up at the nearest point on shore, to await the moment when the water once more flows in the direction in which he is going. Here and there on the shores of the densely-wooded estuary



PISCO, PERU.



BARGE ALONGSIDE THE SHIP OFF PACASMAYO, PERU.

was a clearing in which stood an Indian hut or two—miserable palm-thatched hovels, built on high piles.

At Guayaquil we were not allowed to go on shore, because of the ever-present yellow fever, and our only pastimes were fishing for the sharks whose fins could be seen circling around the ship, or else bargaining with the two-legged sharks, the sellers of Panama hats, who besieged the ship and pestered one to buy their wares.

On leaving Guayaquil, we skirted the Peruvian coast—a monotonous stretch of sand-dunes—calling at the little ports (or rather roadsteads) at every one of which the health authorities boarded the ship on its arrival and subjected passengers and crew to an inspection. All these ports were plague-infected spots, and their inhabitants were fearful of adding yellow fever to their other troubles.

A stay of two days at Callao permitted a visit to Lima, a not-unattractive city, with well-built houses and many excellent shops. The ladies of Lima are reputed throughout South America to be of a high average of beauty. Of this, however, it is difficult for a newly-arrived European to judge, as their faces are so thickly coated with powder that their features are masked. They all wear the black silk mantilla, which covers the head and is draped across the shoulders—a head-dress which becomes them very well.

On proceeding southwards the ship passed close to several little islands, which were swarming with birds. These are the famous *guano* islands—the home of the diver bird. On one day I saw four flights of divers, each more than half-a-mile long, skimming over the surface of the water. At one point we passed a flock of countless thousands of ducks, divers and pelicans, all busily engaged in diving for fish, a shoal of which they had located, the diver birds dropping like a bolt into the water from a considerable height.

Sixteen days after leaving Panama we arrived at Mollendo, where I was to disembark—which, by good chance, was possible to accomplish. I say “good chance” for this reason—Mollendo is, properly speaking, not a port, but is merely a landing-place, situated in one of the most dangerous spots for this purpose on the entire coast. The shore line is very rocky, and jagged points of rock are dotted about for some distance off the shore. There is always a heavy ground swell, which renders the landing of passengers and cargo difficult in the most favourable circumstances, and an utter impossibility when the sea is running high. On the previous day we had experienced rough weather, and the chances of our being able to land on arrival at Mollendo appeared very slim. Had we not been able to do so, we should have had to disembark at the next port—Arica—there to await the next steamer going up the coast, and once more try our luck at Mollendo.

It happened that the sea was comparatively smooth when we cast anchor that Sunday morning, half a mile off shore. Row-boats, manned by Peruvian sailors, took us off the ship. There was a tremendous ground-swell, as usual, and to me it was a novel sensation to be in a little boat in such a sea. At one moment perched high on the crest of a wave, and at the next lying in a deep trough, where land and ship were blocked from view by walls of water, we ran the gauntlet of the black rocks on which the sea seemed intent to hurl us, and reached the little wooden landing-stage. The disembarkation was the most difficult part—at any rate, in so far as the passenger himself was concerned. The boatmen waited their opportunity to approach the wharf, and rowed hard in on the top of a wave. It was then a case of scrambling out as quickly as possible and clambering up the perpendicular ladder which was the only means of access to the landing stage. I was more than a little

wet by the time that I got ashore, as were all the other passengers who landed here. As for our trunks, there was hardly one that escaped at least one dip in the sea before it was hauled up to safety, and the fact that all mine were of water-tight construction was a matter for some self-congratulation.

Mollendo is a horrible little town, of small wooden buildings, situated on a sandy waste. It possesses two little hotels—ramshackle buildings, where one is thoroughly uncomfortable; yet this is the favourite seaside resort of the well-to-do Southern Peruvian and Bolivian, who flock there during the season. Here we stayed the night and left the next morning by train for Arequipa.

The railway to Arequipa, although not such an extraordinary engineering feat as the Cerro de Pasco railway in Peru, is, nevertheless, of considerable interest. To reach Arequipa, it climbs 7,550 feet, winding backwards and forwards up the steep slopes of the hills, through sandy, barren country, in which only cactus grows. In consequence, progress is rather slow.

A curious feature of the uplands of the desert—which here stretches almost uninterruptedly from the sea to Lake Titicaca—are the crescent-shaped sand dunes peculiar to this region. These dunes of fine crystalline sand are constantly travelling in the direction of the prevailing wind, and when their path is crossed by the railroad they do not pile up on the permanent way, but mysteriously dissolve and re-form on the other side of the track.

Towards evening we reached the ancient town of Arequipa—which name, in the Quechua language, means “resting-place.” It was here that the Incas of Peru were accustomed to halt when travelling westwards from Cuzco, their capital. It is a quaint town, of considerable size, lying almost at the foot of the semi-

dormant volcano, *El Misti*—a snow-capped cone from whose crater vapour is usually issuing. Its proximity to this volcano keeps Arequipa in a perpetual tremble. Rarely a day passes but that an earthquake, and perhaps more than one, rocks the city. I was not aware of this characteristic before my arrival, and was somewhat surprised, therefore, to awake during the night and find my bed heaving up and down. I had been in earthquakes before and immediately understood what was happening, but was in no wise reassured by my knowledge. On the following morning, I was astonished to hear no mention of the earthquake. That an occurrence of this nature should pass without comment appeared to me absurd, until I learned that, to the inhabitants of this town, such a phenomenon is as unnoteworthy as the rising of the sun.

It is the habit of travellers to Bolivia to make a short halt in Arequipa, in order that the change from sea-level to the rarefied atmosphere of the Bolivia plateau should be gradual. So I spent a day roaming about the town and its outskirts, and lunched at "Pablo's" a famous eating-house on the *plaza* owned by one of the original "Forty-niners"—who, in that year, took part in the rush to the newly-discovered goldfields of California. Pablo, though ancient, attended to his business himself, and not only did he superintend the cooking but was also the presiding genius of the dining-room, pressing each guest to partake liberally of all the numerous dishes which succeeded each other in overpowering numbers. And woe betide the repleted customer who refused a proffered dish, which action mine host regarded as an insult to himself and his establishment. Rumour had it that more than one sparing eater had been shewn the door by an irate Pablo. I made every endeavour during the meal to win the approval of this tyrant of the dinner-table, with

scant success, for I broke down at the second meat course and earned a stern reproof by refusing another helping.

The next morning the journey eastwards and upwards was resumed. The day was hot and travelling was rendered thoroughly uncomfortable by the stuffiness of the crowded carriage, of which the windows and doors were closed to keep out some proportion of the choking dust of the monotonous desert through which we passed. Many of the passengers suffered from the effects of the high altitude, which, at one point on the railway—Cruzero Alto—was over 14,000 feet; smelling-salts, bottles of ether, and brandy flasks were, consequently, much in evidence, in addition to a quantity of other specifics against the prevailing drought.

It was dark as the train steamed into Puno, the terminus on the Peruvian end of Lake Titicaca. Tired and dusty, and most of us suffering from headaches induced by the high altitude, we stepped from the train to board the steamer which was to bear us across the lake. Our ship, which had been sent out from England in sections and put together on the lake many years previously, was a small boat, and the passengers were many. Accommodation was consequently scarce. I was fortunate enough to secure a berth in one of the few tiny cabins of which the ship boasted, and as the night was cold I had no other ambition but to get something to eat and turn in.

At five-thirty next morning I was on deck to watch the sun rise. That sight alone was almost worth the trip. The lake, steel blue in the early light, was edged on the far shore by a belt of rushes, above which rose the long, dark mass of the Andes range, crowned by snow peaks glowing pink against the blue-grey sky. As the light grew stronger, the mountain-tops assumed a more rosy hue, and the rushes at their feet stood out

in vivid emerald green above the now brilliant blue water. Then the sun rose, and the Andes, stretching as far as the eye could see, shone dazzlingly white. It was then that I first realized the vastness of this lake, perched on the top of the world, at an altitude of 12,545 feet above sea-level. The shores on either side of us appeared miles away, even in that crystal-clear atmosphere, and looking forward or back over the course along which we had been travelling all night, no land was visible. The grandeur of the scene was, perhaps, enhanced by its apparent complete desolation; the only sign of life was an occasional water-fowl, diving at our approach, and now and again a few wild ducks winging their way across the lake.

To a newcomer the air felt intensely cold and keen, and the breakfast bell never sounded more enchanting than on that morning. Bacon and eggs partly dispelled the melancholy induced by scenes of solitude viewed at dawn, fasting. If the coffee had been better, an even greater glow of cheerfulness might have been achieved.

Towards the middle of the morning the port of Guaqui hove into sight. Off the low-lying shore Indians were navigating their primitive crafts—cumbrous rafts constructed of rushes, not unlike small submarines in appearance, propelled by poles, though some of them had rush mats rigged as sails. Half an hour later we were gliding through a narrow channel to the landing-stage.

Guaqui has the distinction of being Bolivia's only western port since the "War of the Pacific" in 1879, when Bolivia and Peru fought Chile, which resulted in the loss to Peru of the provinces of Tacna and Arica and the cutting off of Bolivia from the sea.

After much delay our baggage passed the Customs and we were off again, our train lurching and bumping

along the track to La Paz. Our first stop was at Tiahuanaco, a village built on the site of a prehistoric town, of which now remains but a few ruins, huge blocks of carved stone. Whence these monoliths were brought is a mystery, as there is no rock of that kind in the region. Here, Indian boys besieged the train, offering for sale flint arrowheads, ostensibly relics of a pre-Inca era, found locally, but more probably of German origin.

Some two hours later I looked out of the carriage window, to find that the train had halted practically on the edge of a precipice, and I was overlooking a town hundreds of feet below. This sudden and unexpected bird's-eye view of La Paz was startling; it was as though the brown and arid plain we were crossing had cracked, revealing a fairer—perhaps fairy—land within. From that altitude it appeared to be a toy town of red roofs, lying 1,500 feet below in a narrow valley in which trees were growing. The numberless towers and columns of fantastic shapes which jutted from the steep sides of the valley, carved by wind and water out of the soft sandstone cliffs, enhanced the Arabian-Nights atmosphere of the spectacle—they looked much like the work of Jinns. On the far side of the town towered—white, gigantic, and awe-inspiring—Mount Illimani, “the Great Mother,” venerated by the Bolivian Indian.

We had now reached the *Alto de la Paz*, where we had to change to the electric cog-railway which connects the *Alto* with La Paz itself. I forget the average gradient of this railway, but I know it is very great, and that I breathed more freely when we reached the station below. On the journey down cheery tales were told, for the benefit of “tenderfeet” such as I, of the occasions on which the train had jumped the rails and continued its journey by a short cut down the almost

vertical sides of the valley, which diversions had invariably brought most unpleasant consequences to the passengers. One such mishap occurred several years later, whilst I was still in the country. It so happened that the President of Bolivia was on board. The coupling between the second and third carriages broke, and the casualties occurred in the first two carriages only. The President remained safe in his coach, which, keeping to the rails, had been brought automatically to a halt by the air-brakes. This incident resulted in the arrest of the local manager—an Englishman—of the Peruvian Railway, which operates this electric line, on a charge of complicity in a plot to kill the President, an accusation which, though absurd, nevertheless put him in a very serious position. In the end, he was condemned to pay a heavy fine.

On arrival at the La Paz station, my Chief told me that the next step was to procure Indian porters to convey our luggage to the hotel.

“But,” I objected, looking at some of the heavy packing cases which were included in our baggage, “porters will never carry those boxes”; a remark which received no answer other than the tolerant smile of one who had been there before.

Grouped in front of the station were a number of melancholy looking Indians, in their bright-coloured *ponchos* and nightcap headgear. We beckoned to these. To each was allotted a box, with the brief instruction “Hotel Guibert.” Grunting assent, each porter first removed his sandals; then produced a rope and tied it around his case, which was then heaved on to his back by a couple of his mates. Having passed the ends of the rope around his shoulders and knotted them across his chest, he staggered off down the road to the town, which lay about a mile away from the station. These Indian porters can carry tremendous loads. On



MOLLEENDO.
The principal street.



MOUNT ILLIMANI,
A view from Obrajes, La Paz.



more than one occasion I have seen one in the streets of La Paz with a piano on his back.

Having seen the last of our baggage on its way, a ramshackle victoria drawn by a pair of seedy-looking horses, took us at a gallop down the road, across the tiny La Paz river (which fulfils the dual function of sewer and laundry), and rattled over the cobble-stoned main street of the town to the Hotel Guibert, where we descended. This hotel, a building of considerable size and La Paz's principal hostelry, was fairly comfortable in so far as the rooms were concerned, but in other respects there was little to recommend it.

The houses of La Paz, as of all the other towns on the Bolivian plateau, are built of sun-dried brick—adobe—nevertheless, many of them are of quite respectable size. The walls are necessarily very thick, owing to the friable nature of the building materials. An exception to this style of building was the Cathedral, which had been in course of construction for over thirty years, yet had barely risen above the level of the *plaza* when I left Bolivia. Huge stones for its construction lay strewn in front of the site on the main *plaza*. I was told that the building fund is periodically exhausted; construction then stops for a while, and when it is resumed much of the previous work has to be re-done, owing to damage caused in the interval by weather, even if a change of architect does not result in considerable alterations in the plans.

Some of the streets of the town are reasonably level, but most of them are extremely steep. The newcomer, unaccustomed to such rarefied atmosphere, will find himself obliged, by lack of breath, to ascend by short stages; his heart pounding and his lungs feeling as though they would burst. It is almost equally difficult to descend the streets, paved with cobble stones worn smooth as glass by countless bare feet. More than

once have my feet shot ahead, leaving the rest of me to follow at its leisure, in sitting posture.

My stay in La Paz was of short duration, as it was necessary that I should proceed without delay to the tin mine, one hundred and fifty miles away, of which I was to take charge. I left La Paz in the early morning, mounted on a hired mule, accompanied by an Argentine *arriero* (muleteer), who was to act as guide and drive the pack mule which carried a small trunk and my bedding. The cobbled streets of La Paz behind us, our grunting animals toiled up the zig-zag road that led to the plateau above. Herds of llamas passed us loaded with produce for the town. We jogged along the dusty mule track which runs southwards across the plain to Oruro. It was hot, and, unaccustomed as I was to a Mexican saddle and the short, quick trot of a mule, by three o'clock I was praying heartily for the end of the first day's journey. It was not until the sun had set that the first stage of forty-two miles was completed, when we reached the Indian village of Calamarca, and rode into the courtyard of the local inn, or *tambo*.

The word "inn," gladdening the weary traveller with visions of a good meal and a good bed to follow, is a laughable misnomer when applied to a Bolivian *tambo*. This usually consists of a corral, in which your animals are turned loose, bounded on one side by the guest house—a miserable hut furnished with two or three platforms of dried mud, which serve the purpose of bed and table. Such was the *tambo* at Calamarca. Leaving my *arriero* to deal with the Indian landlord—an evil-looking and filthy individual—I spread my blankets on one of the platforms and sallied forth to stretch my legs and explore the rest of the *tambo*. I crossed the yard where the mules were munching a bundle or two of barley straw, and poked my head through

the low doorway of a hut whence came the sound of voices. It was the kitchen. Several Indian women who, even by the dim light of a solitary candle, appeared indescribably unclean, were engaged in culinary operations—evidently the preparation of my dinner. That settled the matter so far as I was concerned, and I sought out my *arriero* and asked him to procure eggs. A couple of these were forthcoming, and with the aid of my alcohol stove (an essential to every saddle-bag in this timberless country) I prepared my evening meal of boiled eggs, bread, and tea.

Whilst I was eating, several Indians entered the hut and, when they had greeted me, sat around, watching me with considerable interest. My knowledge of Spanish then consisted of about half-a-dozen words, but I understood from my *arriero* that they were *alcades*—the head men of the village. He, I suspected, had previously regaled them with wonderful stories of the importance of my mission, concerning which he actually knew nothing. Finally, they retired, and I set about the winning of as much sleep as aching bones and a rock-hard bed permitted.

At dawn next morning we set out again, on a day's journey that was a repetition of the previous day's, and even more wearisome. The pack mule was for ever dodging off the track into the *tola* scrub, followed by the *arriero* and a string of curses which sounded adequate, even though their meaning was, as yet, beyond my ken; its load was continually shifting, and stops had to be made to re-hitch. We were traversing a flat stretch of country, arid and burnt brown except for the dark green *tola* shrubs that grew sparsely here and there, or an occasional patch of vivid red and gold where lay a field of ripe *quinoa*. The plain lay baking in the fierce sun; "sand-devils"—columns of dust caught up by miniature whirlwinds—scurried crazily

over its surface, and the horizon, blurred and shimmering, floated topsy-turvy in mid air.

At noon of the following day we reached the town of Sica-Sica, which means "half-half," because it is midway between Oruro and La Paz. Here the *tambo* was more pretentious than the others I had encountered, this being the post-house at which travellers by stage-coach from Oruro to La Paz spend the night. I stopped for lunch, and, before taking my departure, I received a visit from the *sub-prefecto*—a highly important personage, who was very amiable. He was delighted when I expressed a desire to "snap" him, and immediately assumed an impressive pose, which, sad to relate, remained unrecorded, as my camera was not loaded!

That night was passed in an Indian village on the edge of the plain, where eggs, fortunately, were easily procurable. The trail now became rough and stony, winding up the foothills of the Andes through a region even more bleak and inhospitable than the plain which we had left. Soon the altitude proved too high even for the stunted *tola* shrub. The only vegetation was bunch-grass, yellowish-brown and spiky, from which llamas, donkeys, goats, and sheep contrive to extract sufficient nutriment to keep them alive. The llama, being indigenous to these regions, knows no better, and thrives on such unsucculent fare, but the others are merely animated skeletons in skins.

Wherever the trail crossed a particularly high ridge I noticed that on the summit, on either side of the track were hundreds of curious little constructions, miniature trilithons, made of two upright stones—usually slabs of slate—supporting a transverse slab. Later, I learned that, whenever an Indian crosses an *apacheta* or pass, with his llamas or donkeys, he erects one of these trilithons to serve as a dwelling for the hobgoblins that

infest these desolate spots, in the hope that, in return for this attention, they will not molest his animals. These mountain demons, it appears, are fond of pushing pack animals over precipices, or causing them to die suddenly, of which malicious propensity the bones which strew the neighbourhood of the passes afford ample proof. If the Indian is travelling without any animals he adds a single stone to a mound of such stones, which others in like circumstances have considered to be offerings sufficiently propitiatory. Every *apacheta* in Bolivia is thus furnished with demon-houses and votive cairns.

CHAPTER II

CONCERNING INDIANS

A Bolivian Household—Night Alarms—Indian Uprisings—Aymará Indians — Petticoats — Matters Agricultural — Coca ; Leaves Mightier than Money—Why Marry ?

AT last, as we topped a ridge, my *arriero* exclaimed : “ There is Ocavi ”—the mine which was my destination—and presently I dismounted at the house of its proprietor, Señor Angel Gemio. This was no palatial abode, but merely an adobe shack perched on the side of the hill. I was greeted by Gemio’s wife, a half-breed woman, who informed me that her husband and his father were down in the village, for to-day was *fiesta*, and, moreover, Angel Gemio was *corregidor*—the village magistrate. Towards evening there was a sound of hoofs outside, and presently entered two men, half-breeds, who introduced themselves as Angel Gemio and his father, Salvador. It was evident that they had been celebrating the *fiesta*, as they were both very drunk, but, though jovial, they were most courteous. They plied me with questions, of which I understood not a word, during the evening meal, which consisted of the national *chupe*, composed of half-cooked potatoes, a few chunks of meat, floating in a thin soup, highly seasoned with red pepper. *Aji* (red pepper) is the universal condiment ; it seasons every dish, and dried red peppers, ground into a paste with water, are invariably on the table at every meal. By the time I had swallowed my first plate of stew, my tongue and throat were on fire.

To attempt a second helping of this demoniacal broth was beyond my powers, and a devouring hunger had to remain unappeased.

After supper I wondered where we were all going to sleep, as the house consisted of one fairly large living-room, a kitchen—which was merely a small lean-to shed—and a larder off the living-room. The family consisted of Gemio, his wife, his father, two boys, a brother-in-law, a maidservant, and a cook. In the living-room was one wooden bedstead. The solution of this domestic problem was speedily forthcoming when Gemio indicated the bed, and made me understand that it was to be mine. “What about the rest of you?” I managed to convey, by gesture. “That’s all right,” was the answer, “don’t worry about that.” Gemio, his brother-in-law, and the women retired into the pantry; the father pulled some sheepskins and native blankets out of a corner, and made his bed on the floor; and the two boys disappeared under my bed! There being no other premises available, I had to remain with the Gemio family during the first month of my stay on the mine.

The Ocavi mining camp lay at the very respectable altitude of 15,000 feet above sea level, in a fold of the hills that shut in the view on every side. The monotonous yellow-brown colour of the landscape was unrelieved except by dark splotches that marked outcrops of rock, and by the brick-red of Gemio’s ore-dump.

On the steep slopes herds of llamas grazed untended, returning towards evening, at a gallop, in Indian file, their long necks bobbing backwards and forwards in an absurd fashion, till they arrived, mewing plaintively, at their circular corral.

From every hill could be heard the cry of the *pucu-pucu* (quail)—a bird believed by the natives to utter the call, of which its Indian name is an imitation, at intervals of one hour. This may be so, but I could never

tell which was the fellow whose voice I had heard about an hour before.

Separated from Gemio's house by a narrow gulley were the peon's quarters, or *ranchos*—a long hut, divided into small cells, each of which housed a family. The narrow doorway, so low that all but the smallest children had to stoop to enter, also served as window to each compartment and for the egress of the acrid smoke of *taquia* when cooking was being done. The filth and stench of these *ranchos* were beyond description, but seemed in no wise to incommode their tenants. Such matters are trifles with which the Indian does not concern himself. Other habitations there were none, except an adobe house half-a-mile away, at the far end of the gulley, where, later, I took up my abode.

Every path in the vicinity was made on the principle of a switchback railway, and the exertion of walking caused me, in the early days, great difficulty in breathing. When taking any strenuous exercise I used to experience a curious sensation all over my skin, as if ice needles were being stuck into me, due to the rapid evaporation of perspiration. Another effect of the altitude was a tendency to wakefulness, and for a long time I was troubled by broken sleep—a thing which I hitherto had never experienced. Both these symptoms, however, gradually disappeared, and within six months I could climb any hill without undue distress, and slept like the proverbial top.

It was September when I arrived, and throughout the day the sun shone brightly in a cloudless sky; yet, in spite of the heavy clothes I wore, I felt the cold considerably. At night, sitting in Gemio's hut was like being in a refrigerating chamber, and, though I piled blankets on my bed until their weight nearly suffocated me, I was never really warm.

About a week after my arrival—by which time, by

diligent use of a dictionary, I had acquired a small vocabulary, which, in conversation, I eked out with a liberal use of French and as much Latin as I could remember—Gemio told me one evening that a concerted uprising of the Indians in that district would probably take place on the following night, in which case we might look forward to being attacked and killed—truly a pleasant prospect! I had heard several stories of the horrible tortures which Indians were accustomed to inflict on their victims before killing them, so I knew what to expect were I to fall into their hands. I had left my rifle in La Paz, and my only arm was a .44 Colt revolver; Gemio had an antiquated rifle which fired a huge bullet. With these two weapons we proposed to make things as hot as possible for any attackers.

The following night was one of some suspense; every time that a dog barked we thought "Here they are!" But it all ended very tamely—nothing happened. I heard later that the Indians had changed their plans when they learned that news of the impending uprising had reached Oruro, fifty-five miles away, and that a troop of cavalry had been despatched to this district.

The Indians of the High Plateau had a very wholesome dread of military intervention, for, during the last revolution, massacres perpetrated by the Indians had been subsequently ruthlessly punished. One such massacre had occurred in a village called Mosa, some twenty miles away from Ocavi. A body of revolutionary soldiers—about a hundred or so—arrived in the village towards evening and demanded quarters. The village priest gave them permission to billet in the church, on the condition that all arms were left outside the building, to which the officer in charge of the soldiers assented. The priest, whose sympathies were with the Government cause, thereupon put into execution a plan of black treachery. In the night, when the tired soldiers were

fast asleep—as also, in all probability, were their sentries—the priest assembled all the Indians of the country-side, and led them in an attack on the defenceless men, whom they butchered; only one escaped to tell the tale. Later, when the revolutionaries had seized the reins of government, the village priest was tried and condemned to imprisonment for life; hundreds of Indians in the Mosa district were rounded up, and every day batches of them were shot in the public square.

A similar incident occurred in the church at Ayo-Ayo, a village of the plain, through which I passed on my way up to the mine. The bloodthirstiness and cruelty of the Indian were given full scope during these massacres, the details of which are revolting. The last soldier to be killed in the church of Ayo-Ayo was the commanding officer, who thought to save himself by standing behind the big crucifix over the altar, in the belief that the Indians would respect the emblem of Christianity. He was seen, however, seized, and mutilated, and, whilst still alive, his heart was cut out and eaten on the spot. When all was over, the walls of the church were blood-bespattered to the height of a man, the stains being visible to this day wherever the whitewash has worn thin.

During the same revolution the copper mines of Coro-Coro were the scene of another tragedy. The Indian labour of these mines also went on the war-path, and attacked during the night the residence of the manager of a mine, a Frenchman, who had brought his wife and daughter with him. Warning had somehow reached him of the impending attack, and he made an effort to escape with his terrified women-folk. The attempt was frustrated by the peons, who were soon in hot pursuit of the little party, whose progress was necessarily slow. Seeing that flight was impossible, the fugitives sought refuge in an abandoned hut, where they hoped to lie

concealed until help arrived. Their hiding-place was speedily discovered and surrounded by their pursuers, whereupon the Frenchman, rather than allow the women to fall into the hands of the Indians, shot them and then committed suicide.

Another story was told me of an incident which occurred during the same period. An Indian had been brought up, almost since birth, by a well-to-do Bolivian family, and was a trusted servant and member of the household. During the revolution, the head of the family being absent, this Indian *pongo* (servant) said to his mistress "*Mama* (mother), the peons of the *finca* intend to murder you to-night. Rather than that they should do so, let me kill you myself," and, without more ado, he proceeded to put his kindly thought into action, with the aid of a cutlass. It may seem that this Indian—whose mistress was also, to all intents and purposes, his foster-mother—was inspired by the same motives which drove the Frenchman of Coro-Coro to shoot his loved ones; according to my informant, himself a Bolivian, this was not the case. The Indian made no attempt to enable his mistress to escape, and, knowing that others intended to end her life, he considered any killing to be done in his household as his own privilege, not to be shared with the common peons of the estate.

The Indians of Mosa perpetrated another act of savagery within recent years. The *finquero*—that is, the owner of the land of that district—had an agent hated by the peons on the *finca*, not only because he maltreated them, but chiefly because he cheated them shamefully. The Indian is accustomed to abuse, and expects it, but to be robbed unduly of his hard-won goods makes him angry. One day this man, accompanied by his son, a boy about fifteen years old, made one of his periodical visits to Mosa. Some fresh act of injustice on the agent's part proved too much for

the endurance of his peons, who adopted a characteristic method to avenge their wrongs and prevent a repetition. They tied father and son to trees, facing each other, and then proceeded to mutilate the boy in the most horrible fashion before his father's eyes. When they had finally killed the lad, the father was released, with a warning never to re-appear in that district. He took the hint.

The Bolivian Indian of the *Altiplanicia* (High Plateau), is not a prepossessing specimen of humanity. He belongs to the Aymará race, whose ancestors were the inhabitants of the table-land previous to the invasion of the armies of the Peruvian Incas, who annexed the territories which now form Bolivia to their powerful empire.

The Indian, as a rule, is a dirty, mean-looking individual. His skin is of the colour of an old copper coin; his face is square, with high cheek-bones and a low, sharply receding forehead; his chest is extraordinarily well-developed, due to unusually large lungs, which enable him to breathe freely in the rarefied air of those altitudes. His black straight hair, usually "bobbed," is surmounted by a gaudy knitted nightcap with ear-flaps, which never leaves his head. Over this, he wears a wide-brimmed hat of heavy felt. These hats, which are made locally, are fairly expensive, costing as much as thirty *bolivianos* (about forty-eight shillings), but, as a good hat lasts a lifetime and serves for other purposes, such as a drinking vessel, it cannot be deemed an extravagance. A cotton shirt, a short jacket and baggy trousers of *tocuyo* (native homespun), the latter reaching to the knees and slashed at the lower extremities, a sash, a *poncho* in which red is the predominating colour, and sandals, form the rest of his apparel.

The women are usually very ugly, and at an early age lose whatever little attractiveness youth may have

lent them. Their dress consists of a cotton shift, over which is worn a shawl fastened by a huge pin like a table-spoon, occasionally of silver but more often of brass. Voluminous knee-length petticoats of bright colours and hats similar to those worn by the men complete their attire. Some of them wear sewn on to their hats curious little figures of pure tin of native manufacture, representing animals and men. The hair is worn plaited in two tresses, which are usually short and thin. The prosperity of the Indian woman may be gauged by the number of skirts she wears, the reason being that, once a skirt is donned, it does not come off again until excessive age renders it irreparable and unretainable. When, as the result of a good stroke of business, she considers herself entitled to another petticoat, the new garment goes over the tokens of previous eras of good fortune. An elderly, well-to-do woman may, therefore, be garbed in layer upon layer of petticoats, apple-green over canary yellow, partly concealing sky-blue, below which again, an elderly red one may be peeping shyly forth, hiding yet more ancient and retiring colleagues from view.

That portion of Bolivia which lies under cultivation is composed of estates called *fincas*. It is the ambition of every Bolivian of any standing, who does not already own one, to possess a *finca* and live on the proceeds for the remainder of his days. The value of a *finca* depends not only on its extent and the fertility of its soil, but also largely on the number of peons attached to the estate, for labour is scarce. The peon is part and parcel of the *finca* to which he belongs; there he has some land to cultivate for his own account, in payment of which he must work a certain number of days a year for the owner of the *finca*. The crops that the Indian has raised on his own ground have to be sold to his master, who thus reaps a double profit.

The exceptions to this system of peonage occur in the *Comunidades*, of which there are very few; the land, in such cases, being the freehold property of the Indians belonging to the community. The district of Colquiri, in which was situated the mine I was on, happened to be a *Comunidad*, and it was in protest against an attempt to impose the peonage system on its Indian population, by a pettifogging lawyer of Oruro, who sought a short cut to ease and affluence, that the massacre which threatened us shortly after my arrival, was to have taken place. This lawyer tried to bluff the Indians out of their rights by asserting his claim to regard the district as his *finca*, and ordering the Indians to do forced labour and bring their produce to his agent. Later, the Indians successfully established, in the courts of Oruro, their title to the land, and I was very pleased that they succeeded in doing so without the necessity of carving me up to mark their disapproval of the free-booting *tinterillo* (petty lawyer).

The existence of an Indian of the High Plateau is a miserable one. The plain, the average altitude of which is about 12,600 feet—is an arid, sandy waste, dotted with dark green *tola* shrub, and cut here and there by the rocky bed of a torrent which exists for a few hours at a time during the wet season, when, although the rainfall is small, large patches of the plain become quagmires. This is the soil which yields, in return for much labour with primitive agricultural implements of wood, a scanty crop of barley, the straw of which is the sole fodder given to mules; *quinoa*, a small grain of which the Indian makes a sort of porridge, and potatoes. So poor is the soil that a field is cultivated once in five years only.

Many varieties of potato grow here—the home of this tuber—the best of which I found to be one of a deep purple colour. At this altitude, however, where water

boils at about 190° Fahrenheit, it is impossible to cook potatoes properly, except in a special cauldron similar in design to the autoclave wherewith surgical dressings are sterilized, with which, under steam pressure, the boiling point may be raised to the desired temperature. Of such cauldrons for cooking purposes, however, I only saw one in use, and that in a German's house.

The greater part of the potatoes which the Indian raises he converts into his staple food, *chuño*—to my mind a horrible article of diet. It is prepared by laying the potatoes out in a field to freeze during the night. In the daytime, when they have thawed, bare feet roll and gradually squeeze out the water they contain. This process is repeated many times, until the potato becomes a dark, shrivelled-up object. Of this, the Indian makes his *chupe*, usually consisting of nothing but boiled *chuño* and water, which he eats sitting on his haunches, picking the *chuño* out of his wooden bowl with his fingers, and noisily sucking up the liquid in which it was boiled.

The wealthy Bolivian is also very fond of *chuño*, so much so that when he is appointed to represent his country in Europe, he takes, I am told, a store of it with him. I have had, perforce, to eat it many a time. It is undoubtedly nourishing, but it looks like old cork and has about the same flavour.

Another form of *chuño*, which is even more highly prized, is made by throwing the potatoes into a tank of water during the winter time. They remain in this ice water for a month or more, and, on removal, after the water has been finally squeezed out, they become white and starch-like, but, to my taste, as unpalatable as the black variety. I think that *chuño* resembles the bagpipes in this—no one not native born can ever like them.

To the Indian there are two things for the attainment of which all else is only the means—coca and alcohol.

The one enables him to endure hunger, thirst, and fatigue ; and the consumption of the other is for what *fiestas* were invented. In a small pouch, cunningly woven, which every Indian carries tucked in his belt, he keeps his precious coea leaves. These leaves, which are the same as those from which cocaine is extracted, grow on a shrub cultivated in the warm valleys of Bolivia and Peru, where they are carefully picked, dried, and dispatched for sale to the Indian of the Puna (highlands), who chews them incessantly. One by one, he puts them into his mouth, carefully stripping each leaf of its stem before doing so. From time to time during this operation he bites off a small bit of a grey substance, resembling tailors' chalk, called *lejia*, composed of boiled potatoes ground into a paste with wood ash, dried, and made into little flat cakes. The *lejia* is to enhance the flavour and effect of the coea. When the Indian has sufficient leaves in his mouth, he chews them into a wad which he puts into the pouch of his cheek, monkey fashion, and there it remains until he can afford himself the luxury of a fresh chew.

Coea chewing is so much a part of the Indian's daily life that, on mines, there are intervals of fifteen minutes each—at ten o'clock and three o'clock—when all hands cease work in order to renew their wads of leaves. The coea pouched during an *acculle*, as this interval is called, is, of course, additional to the early morning, midday, and evening rations. Even the children, boys and girls alike, acquire the coea habit at an early age, and are as assiduous devotees to the leaf as their parents. Several of my peons used as much as two pounds of dried coea leaves per week, although the average consumption was half that amount. The one article of which the mine's *pulperia* (store) might never be out of stock was coea. Other necessities, such as rice, flour, or sugar, might fail owing to difficulties in obtaining transport for fresh

supplies from Oruro, and, apart from a little grumbling, the peons would give no trouble. But their bi-weekly supply of coca stopped, work would have likewise ceased. No coca, no work!

For coca the Indian will do anything. He will refuse to render a service for money, but a pinch of coca leaves will buy his eager compliance and transform surliness into cringing servility. For this reason I never travelled without a small bag of coca leaves in my saddle-bag as it was an "open sesame" where an Indian was concerned.

On one occasion I was riding alone in the Cordillera; it was long after nightfall, and my mule was tired, when I arrived at an *estancia*—that is, an Indian hamlet. I stopped at the first group of huts and, in the Aymará language, summoned someone to come to me. Presently, a surly-looking Indian appeared, whom I told that I required *cebada* (barley-straw) for my mule, and received the usual answer—" *Janiu utquiti, Tata*" (There isn't any, father). I happened to notice that the open door of a storehouse near which I stood disclosed a considerable quantity of *cebada* stored within. An Indian, however, is a perverse brute, who would rather let his produce rot than sell it to a passing stranger. This is probably due to the treatment which he learned to receive at the hands of the early Spaniards, who took what they wanted without payment, and, if the unfortunate owner protested, he was lucky if he escaped with a severe beating.

The Indian proving obdurate in his refusal to supply the barley, I tendered him two *bolivianos* (equivalent to 3s. 4d.) which would more than cover the value of the *cebada* which my mule would eat. But the man refused the money and repeated, again and again, " *Janiu utquiti.*" Thereupon, I took out my bag of coca and offered him a handful. Presto! The charm worked wonders as quick as thought. The Indian,

whose attitude till then had been one of dogged surliness, now became cringing, as he held out his hat to receive the gift, mumbling blessings and thanks. When the precious leaves had been stowed in his coca purse, he called to his family; one member took my mule and tethered it; another brought it water and sheaves of *cebada*. I was then shown into an empty hut, hot water was brought me and sheepskins, the whole family attending on my wants and everything being at my disposal.

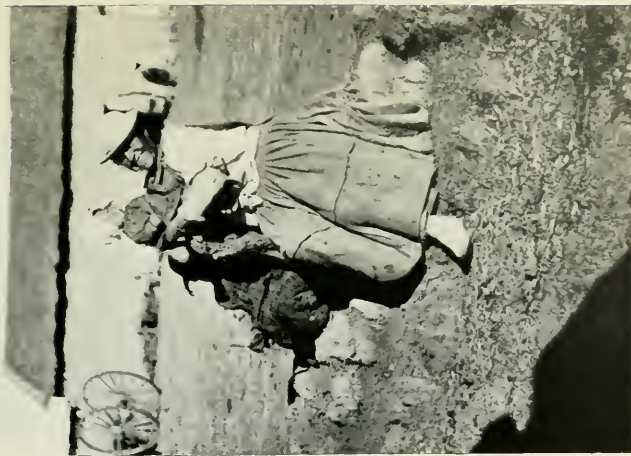
The Bolivian Indian is by religion a Roman Catholic; he is steeped in superstition and still retains many of the beliefs handed down from the days previous to the overthrow of the Inca Empire. I was told that he still firmly believes that one day the Inca will return and drive the White Man back into the "Big Water" whence he came.

Though baptism is very generally observed, marriage is comparatively rare among the Indians, for several reasons. In the first place, the villages and remote districts are visited perhaps once or twice a year by a priest, who then performs baptisms and masses for the souls of the dead. The matter of expense is an even more cogent reason, for the marriage ceremony is to the Indian rather costly, namely, ten *bolivianos* (16s. 6d.) For higher social grades the fees are proportionately greater; to *cholos* (half-breeds) twenty-five *bolivianos* (£2), and to *gente* twice that amount is charged. Furthermore, an Indian man or woman does not care to be permanently tied up should a union prove distasteful, so, though a man and a woman may live together all their lives, others change their mates as circumstances may require.

There was one Indian woman in Colquiri who had seven sons, each of whom bore a different surname, indicating that she had made at least seven attempts to find a congenial consort. In other climes and cir-



AN AYMARÁ INDIAN WOMAN.



A CHOLA OF THE HIGH PLATEAU.

cumstances, this good woman would perhaps have been described as "very temperamental," but such phrases were beyond the scope of her native tongue, and they in her village who bothered to give a single thought to the matter described her more tersely and intelligibly, if more rudely.

One of the curses of the country is the *adelanto* system—i.e. the paying of money advances—which is in universal use; no matter whether it be the hiring of a labourer or the letting of a contract, large or small, a *sine qua non* is an advance in money, invariably large in proportion to the prospective earnings of the receiver. The Bolivian is always working to pay for a "dead horse"—an object not conducive to effort, especially in a land where *mañana* is so continually heard.

CHAPTER III

WAYS AND MEANS

Market Day in an Indian Village—Social Grades—Domestic Difficulties
—A Cook who knew not Mrs. Beeton—Cats a Delicacy—House-
building—Native Mining—Llama Transport.

ONE Sunday afternoon, about three weeks after my arrival at Ocavi, I walked down to the *pueblo* of Colquiri, which lay some three miles from the mine. The village consisted of the usual *plaza*, one side of which was devoted to the church—a dreary, adobe building. On the other three sides were long, single-storied houses, nearly every one of which was a shop, as well as a dwelling, where the principal articles displayed for sale were Bolivian beer, alcohol, sugar, dried red peppers, maize, and a few tins of sardines and condensed milk. Along the approaches to the *plaza* were scattered the squalid huts of the Indian inhabitants. The dwellers in the *plaza* were mostly half-breeds, who, by virtue of being traders, were of higher social status, one or two even laying claim to be considered as *gente*.

There are three principal grades of society in Bolivia—*indios* (Indians), *cholos* (half-breeds), and *gente*—that is, People, as distinct from the low rabble. Yet the majority of those who compose the *gente* class number Indians among their forebears, for there are but few Bolivians of unmixed Spanish blood, except in some remote Southern districts, such as Sucre and Santa Cruz, where families of pure Andalusian descent still exist.

It was Sunday—and, therefore, market-day—and the

plaza presented an animated scene, in contrast to its week-day dreariness, when it was the haunt of the village pigs—gaunt “razorbacks,” who found a precarious living amongst the refuse dumped beside each doorway. In the centre the Indian market-women squatted on the ground, their wares spread out before them on cloths of woven llama wool. The quantity of goods displayed by each was very small—little heaps of maize and *chuño*, a fragment of a dirty cake of salt, and a couple of handfuls of dried red peppers—the bulk of the wares remaining in the grass-lined nets in which they had been brought to market on the backs of the Indian women and their families. The men stood about the square in small, silent knots, or wandered aimlessly from market-woman to market-woman, dully inspecting their wares but seldom making a purchase. Better business was done at the stalls erected at the sides of the *plaza*, where alcohol and coca-leaves were on sale; also German dyes of brilliant hues—red, green, blue, and yellow—to colour the wool yarn the Indians are ever spinning, of which they weave their *ponchos*, belts, and shawls. Drunken Indians lurched about, some of them playing the pipes dolefully, stopping now and again for a pull at the bottle of alcohol clutched in the free hand. A remarkable feature was the stillness that prevailed, in spite of the several hundreds of people present. No noisy chattering, bargaining, or laughter, as in other Southern countries. The tootle of a flute, the mournful lament chanted by an intoxicated Indian, the shrill curses of some market-woman as a mangy dog wandered over her goods, and the yelp of the cur as the stone which accompanied the maledictions found its mark, were the only sounds that disturbed the quiet of the market-place.

I threaded my way through the *plaza* to the shop of a young Magyar named Batinovitch, who had a rather better assortment of goods than his competitors. There are

many Magyars—mostly bagmen and small traders—in Bolivia, where they are known as *Ostriacos* (Austrians), and are not too favourably regarded, because of a lack of honesty in dealing which is attributed to them. In addition to his shop, Batinovitch owned a small alluvial tin claim, which it was alleged in the village was merely a blind for his illicit dealings in tin ore. The Indian miner, when he strikes a particularly rich piece of tin ore, usually hides it for private sale, and this Magyar was generally reputed to be the principal receiver of stolen tin in the district—at any rate, his shipments of tin to Oruro were remarkably large, and it was doubtful whether much of it was alluvial tin. But he was a very slippery customer, and was never caught, in my time, “with the goods on.”

A month after my arrival at the mine, I succeeded in obtaining possession of a room of my own in a house about half-a-mile away. I call it a “house,” but it was nothing but a long hut, built of earth and thatched with grass, which had been partitioned into three rooms. One of these I secured for myself from the owner, who lived in an adjoining room, and with whom I shared the use of the kitchen. My room was windowless, and depended for light and air on the open door, after the manner of all similar buildings on the High Plateau, and had the usual floor of beaten earth. When the rainy season set in, the floor of the hut, which stood on the side of a hill, became damp and soft and spongy, and, during a heavy rain, the water poured through the upper wall as through a sieve, which state of affairs was only partially cured by digging a deep ditch behind the house.

I was very glad to leave my first abode under Angel Gemio’s roof, for, in addition to the inconvenience of living in such close contact with his household, the Bolivian style of cooking was seriously disagreeing with me, and

my stomach protested very strongly against a continued diet of red pepper and half-cooked potatoes. This fare I proposed to alter radically when I entered into my new quarters.

The first difficulty to be overcome was the servant question. Gemio promised to find me a cook, who appeared one day in the form of Maria, an Indian girl who, in personal appearance, worthily upheld the Indian standard of dirtiness. I had, by this time, acquired a fair Spanish vocabulary, and was able to make myself understood. Maria's knowledge of the Spanish language, however, was very rudimentary, and I knew but few words of her mother tongue—Aymar^á. Of cooking, naturally, she had not the least notion beyond preparing the native *chupe*. It was under these conditions that I undertook the task of instructing her in the mysteries of European cooking, and the prospects of attaining any degree of success were far from bright.

The "kitchen range" consisted of a solid platform, built of stones and clay, at one end of which was a small fireplace made of mud. The smoke travelled to the back of the range, passing over a small sheet-iron oven, and was then supposed to be carried off through a length of piping passed through the wall. In practice, however, no smoke ever reached the outside world except through the open door. The fuels used everywhere on the Puna for cooking purposes, even in the towns, are *taquia* (dried llama droppings) together with *tola*, a small shrub which burns very fiercely for a short time, and *yarreta*, a woody moss which smoulders rather than burns. Of these, the principal fuel is *taquia*; to keep it alight, the cook must be constantly blowing through a short, tin tube, adding to the fire from time to time a twig of *tola*, for, unless thus encouraged, the pot would probably not know that it was expected to boil. Whenever Maria began blowing the fire with the force of a blacksmith's bellows, the kitchen was filled with

acid smoke, which used to send me, blinded and gasping, into the fresh air without.

Now that I was the proud possessor of a cook and kitchen and had scraped together a frying-pan and a kitchen pot or two, my next task was to acquire something to cook. An Indian came along, with a live sheep slung about his shoulders, which he offered for sale. This I bought from him, after much haggling, for three and a-half *bolivianos* (five shillings and tenpence). It was no fat Southdown, but a Bolivian animal, than which none scraggier can exist.

My bargain with the Indian who sold me the sheep was that he should also kill and skin it. This he proceeded to do on the spot. Maria, versed in the methods of native slaughtering, brought out an enamelled iron basin; the Indian produced an old knife from his belt, and began to saw through the unfortunate sheep's throat. The knife was dull, and it was some time till he had cut through skin and tissue. When this was accomplished, the basin was put under the neck of the animal to catch its blood—not in order to prevent making a mess in the yard, but for culinary purposes, as I learned on the following day. The dressing of the sheep was a disgusting process, all the offal, with the exception of the lungs, being carefully preserved, but I cannot say carefully cleaned.

I explained to Maria that she was to cut a shoulder off the carcase; that I should return earlier than usual from the mine that evening, in order to show her how to roast it; and that she was to get the oven hot. But the oven was not more than warm when I returned that evening, and it never did get hot, though Maria blew the smouldering *taquia* with hurricane violence. It was late that night when, with smarting eyes and inflamed throat, I told her to serve the result of our combined efforts in my "bed-sitting-room." In spite of the enormous volumes of acid smoke that I had swallowed in the kitchen, my appetite was fairly sharp. In that keen air, one is always

prepared to do justice to a meal. But that shoulder of mutton would have defeated anyone but a cannibal; it certainly defeated me, and I had to rely on the second course—rice pudding made with condensed milk.

On the following day I had to leave Maria to her own devices in the preparation of the mid-day meal. It was with a certain amount of curiosity, not unmixed with trepidation, that I sat down to luncheon. Presently, in walked Maria, carrying a huge tureen full of the old familiar *chupe*, to my great disgust. I had hoped to escape from that dish for a while. I asked her if she had made anything else. "Oh! yes, Señor," she replied, "I have; something very tasty." "Well, take this stuff away and bring in the next lot," I said, hopefully. A moment later, Maria re-appeared, a look of pride struggling through the dirt on her face, bearing a platter on which reposed a peculiar, dark-brown mass. I asked her what it was, and she gave me an Indian name for the mysterious compound, which conveyed nothing to me. So, carrying my enquiries further, I discovered that it was composed of the blood and the chopped entrails of yesterday's sheep, fried. Needs must when the devil drives, and when there is an aching void beneath one's belt, one cannot be too particular. But I cannot say that I enjoyed my meal. Maria received instructions, then and there, never to serve that dish again; that did not deter her, however, and on many another occasion was I obliged to satisfy my hunger with this unappetising concoction.

Much time did I spend in an endeavour to instil into Maria's dull brain the rudiments of civilised cooking, but the results were not encouraging, although she did finally make a fair attempt at an Irish stew. Yet though Maria was probably the worst cook it has ever been my misfortune to encounter in all my travels, nevertheless she was the means of dispelling two bugbears which had haunted me since my arrival at Ocavi, namely, overdoses of red pepper

and the counting of the family livestock. The reason for the latter employment was this. About the second week after my joining Angel Gemio's household, he asked me whether I liked cat flesh. I replied that I had never tasted it. "Oh!" he exclaimed in surprise, "it is very good eating." I questioned him further and learned that, on the High Plateau, cat was considered a great delicacy, which accounted, perhaps, for the rarity of that animal. But the matter that disturbed me was that Gemio possessed two cats. How I watched those cats! Night and morning I enquired after them, and personally satisfied myself that they were still alive, as I was determined that I would not unwittingly partake of them. In those days I was still somewhat squeamish in the matter of food, and I was much relieved to know that those two cats still lived when I left Gemio's hospitable roof.

The construction of new quarters for myself and the other members of the staff who were to arrive in due course was begun as soon as possible, but not until the middle of the following year were they ready for occupancy. The delay was due, in part, to the vagaries of Indian *albaniles* (builders) and partly to the rains. *Albaniles* came and left suddenly without warning or explanation; others who replaced them worked for half a week and spent the remainder of the time drinking down in the village or brawling with one another in their *ranchos*, for, as they worked on contract, they could make more money than the ordinary day labourer and were, in consequence, more enthusiastic participators in every *fiesta*.

The walls of the new house were constructed in native fashion of *tapial*—that is, dampened earth mixed with chopped grass, trodden and pounded into a long, wooden mould. These large, mud bricks are made in position. When the walls are finished, openings are hacked with a pick where doors and windows are to be. The usual roof



MARIA AND THE BUTCHER.

The sheep's carcass hangs outside the kitchen wall.



HOUSE-BUILDING ON THE HIGH PLATEAU.

Peons' quarters on a mine.

is of grass thatch, supported by poles brought from distant, low-lying valleys, and secured in position by strips of raw-hide. Our house differed in that it was roofed with corrugated iron.

The addition of two more members to our staff—making it four in all—rendered our original quarters very overcrowded and, though the new Administration House was not yet complete, the book-keeper, young Granelly, and myself, moved into one of the rooms, which was finished except for the ceiling of canvas, coated with plaster of Paris, which, in such a climate, a galvanised iron roof rendered necessary as a protection against extremes of temperature.

The first morning I was roused early by a splash of ice-cold water on my face, and as I looked about me to discover the cause of this rude awakening, another large drop hit me. At that moment, Granelly, who had been sleeping on the opposite side of the room, awoke with a terse remark—the same thing had happened to him. The mystery was solved when I looked up at the roof, where the moisture from our breath had condensed during the night on the corrugated iron and had frozen. Shortly after sunrise, this frost began to thaw and descended in huge drops. Within a short time the room was converted into a shower-bath, and the two of us were obliged to jump out of bed, grab our clothes, and dress outside, where the morning air blew unpleasantly chill. This performance was of daily occurrence until put a stop to by the installation of the ceiling.

The native methods of mining are very primitive. The one idea is to follow the rich veins of ore, leaving the lower grade ore untouched, with the result that a mine which has been worked for any considerable length of time has had "its eyes picked out." The Oeavi mine had been worked by Gemio for tin for about ten or twelve years,

and the workings, when I arrived, resembled a big rabbit warren, with exits driven up to the exterior wherever it had been found convenient to do so.

The ore was brought out from the mine in raw-hide knapsacks on the backs of *apiris* (boys), who, bending under their heavy loads, scrambled up steep and slippery passages with the ease of goats. The ore of this mine contained much iron, and the pack boys, as they emerged from some hole in the ground, bedaubed from head to foot with red pigment, looked very much like young devils. They dumped their loads on the *cancha*, where the lumps were broken with hammers by women who also graded the ore, the poorer quality being thrown on the dump, while that rich in tin was carried down to the crushing floor.

The crusher, a very simple affair, called a *quimbaleta*, consisted of a large, chiselled granite block, the lower end of which was rocker-shaped. This block, to which a long wooden arm had been lashed, was rocked by a sturdy Indian to and fro over the ore spread on a paved floor. The crushed ore was then screened and the coarser particles treated in a rough jig, while the "fines" were washed by women, by hand, in turf-lined sluices.

The early Spanish settlers in Bolivia must have been wonderful adventurers, for, in their search for mineral wealth, they left no part of the country unexplored, however isolated and inaccessible, even as the people of the Incas before them ransacked the country for gold. There is scarcely a silver lode to be found to-day which does not show evidence of having been worked in former days by those Spaniards.

Parallel to the tin lodes on the Oeavi property ran a lode which had been worked by them for silver. These workings were of the "open cut" type and walled and roofed with dry-stone work, in which craft the Indian of the Puna is expert. Near the silver lode, hidden in a narrow ravine, I discovered the remains of a primitive

furnace and crucible, where the silver ore was, doubtless, smelted.

When first I arrived at the mine, Ocavi and the neighbouring village of Colquiri were connected with the outside world by the roughest of mountain trails; it was not until a later date that a cart-road was constructed. When Gemio had won a quantity of *barilla* (tin ore) it was bagged and periodically despatched to Oruro, packed on llamas hired from an Indian *fletero* (transport agent). The llama can carry a load of one hundred pounds weight. The tin, therefore, was put up in bags weighing fifty pounds each, two of which were secured to the animal's back by cords of plaited llama wool. During the loading, the animals spat at each other and mewed plaintively. When all was ready the herd moved off, followed by the *fletero* who guided them by means of stones thrown at the leading animals from a sling, in the use of which the Indian of the Puna is very skilful. When he is not throwing stones, the herdsman plays his flute or spins wool yarn, as he walks. A llama pack train travels very slowly, and does not accomplish more than ten or twelve miles a day. But time is no object to the Indian, whatever his occupation.

The *fletero* whom Gemio used to employ in the transport of his *barilla* was the only amiable Indian I ever came across on the High Plateau. This man—Pedro Condori—was also remarkably tall for an Indian, standing some six feet three inches in his sandalled feet, and powerfully built. Any order given to Condori was received with a cheerful grin, instead of the usual grunt wherewith an Indian signifies his comprehension; later, I enlisted Condori as a *proprio*, for he was swift and indefatigable, accomplishing long journeys in a shorter time than a man mounted on a fast mule.

The llama, which is a domestic animal, has a wild and much smaller relative in the vicuña, the pelt of which is

in great request. The sandy-coloured wool is woven into *ponchos* and mufflers which fetch high prices, and rugs are made from the patch of white fur on its neck. It is, however, no easy task to shoot one of these animals, as they are fleet of foot and very shy.

There was but very little game in the country—in fact, wild animals of any kind were few. Sometimes I was able to “bag” a *viscacha*, an animal resembling a large, long-tailed rabbit, which lives in crannies in the rocks, or a wild duck or two. Every valley was the haunt of the *leque-leque*—the red-shanked plover, whose lugubrious cry, as it circled and wheeled distractedly at the approach of an intruder, broke the almost oppressive stillness. Occasionally, as one rode along, one stumbled into a colony of *gophers*, basking in the sun at the entrances to their burrows, and, rarely, a fox might be seen disappearing down some gully.

Occasionally, a dark speck could be seen moving slowly across the sky—a condor—sometimes showing as it swung in wide circles the white patches on the back of its wings. These huge wings are much sought after by the Indians to be used in representations of the condor at *fiestas* where bands of dancers appear disguised as birds and beasts. To trap the condor they build a circular stone wall, small in diameter, in the centre of which carrion is placed. Should the condor alight within the enclosure he is a prisoner, for he cannot take flight without several preliminary hops along the ground, to acquire sufficient momentum; thus trapped, the Indians despatch him with sticks.

CHAPTER IV

FESTIVE OCCASIONS

Fiestas—An Unmerry Christmas—Carnival on a Mine—Devil Baiting—
A Feast for the Dead—A Doctor *malgré lui*—Native Medicine-
men.

ANY employer of labour in South America soon arrives at the conclusion that almost every other day is a *fiesta*. That, of course, is an exaggeration; nevertheless, these feast days are many, and some of them—such as Carnival, Easter, and *Todos Santos* (All Saints)—of prolonged duration. On these occasions all work ceases and the entire native population devotes itself to celebrating the festival adequately—which, being interpreted, means getting drunk as soon as possible and remaining so for as long as possible. I believe that the Indian's only object in earning money is to acquire the wherewithal to purchase sufficient drink during the next *fiesta*. Not that he restricts himself to Saints' Days, for, if funds permit and drink is available, any other day will do as well, especially Sunday.

The Puna Indian's favourite and practically only tippie is raw alcohol, usually potato alcohol, of which great quantities are imported annually. On feast days, every Indian man and nearly every Indian woman may be seen carrying a bottle of this poisonous stuff, handled with the greatest of care, even in the last stages of intoxication, usually reached before the day is very far advanced.

Now Cupid and Bacchus conspired together one day to rob me of Maria; and this was the manner in which they

carried out their contemptible design. At Christmas-time, of course, there was a *fiesta*. When a *fiesta* is in progress, all hands, high and low, including the cook, partake in the celebration. The unfortunate foreigner, on these occasions, is thrown on his own resources in the matter of meals and house-work. At breakfast-time, on Christmas morning, Maria asked permission to go down to the village, promising to be back in time to prepare the mid-day meal. At twelve o'clock, however, there was no sign of Maria; nor at one o'clock. Two or three weeks previously, a young fellow named Hahn had been sent up from La Paz to assist me, and he shared my room and meals. By one o'clock we were both far too hungry to begin any elaborate cooking, so we lunched off sardines and bread, washed down with cocoa made over the alcohol stove. It was not a very inspiring meal, although we did our best to infuse into it a little seasonable gaiety. That afternoon, both somewhat depressed, we strolled to the mine. There was not a soul to be seen until we arrived at Gemio's house, of which the only occupant was his cook, who was lying on the floor in a drunken stupor. On our return home, we hoped to find Maria busily making amends in the cooking line for the trick she had played on us at lunch time. But the kitchen was empty and remained so, and our dinner was like unto our lunch. That meal was most gloomy; Hahn was in the grip of homesickness, and I was not feeling very cheery myself, so we lost but little time in eating, and betook ourselves early to bed.

The next morning brought the return of Maria—a most dilapidated-looking object. Her hair, as a rule fairly neatly braided, was dishevelled; her face was bloated and streaked with tearmarks. Maria had evidently been drunk, and when she began to speak, it was apparent that she was still drunk. She stammered out a long, disconnected story, from which I gathered that she had

met the man of her choice, and proposed to leave us forthwith in order to join him. My remonstrances were unavailing, and within an hour she had installed herself in the hut of one of the peons engaged in building our new staff quarters. We were now in a pretty pickle. There was no alternative but to feed at Gemio's table. My chief, on his previous visit to the mine, had promised to send an experienced cook from La Paz, but she did not arrive until a fortnight after Maria's departure.

Whether Maria lived happily ever afterwards is a question on which I can shed but little light, for I do not remember having seen her again, except once. I was awakened in the middle of the night, about six months later, by a loud knocking on my door, and an Indian's voice, in anguished tones, cried "Señor! Señor! They're murdering each other in Tiburcio Mamani's *ranchos*." "Good!" I replied, angry at being disturbed at this hour by the antics of Mamani, the head *albanil*, and his fellows, who were for ever having drunken brawls, which foretold another day's work lost on the construction of the Administration House and the new *ranchos* for the peons.

I dragged on some clothes, and found waiting for me at the door one of the *albaniles*, trembling with fright and drink. I cut short his moaning recital of the terrible deeds that were being done, and strode off down the hill to the scene of the disturbance. It was dark and bitterly cold. From the *ranchos* came a frightful din—the shouts of men and the screams of a woman. I pushed open the door of Mamani's quarters, and, by the dim light of a tallow lamp, I saw three men struggling with each other. In one corner, another Indian sat huddled, moaning miserably, whilst from the low mud platform that served as bedstead came shriek after shriek from a woman who was supporting the head of a man who lay motionless.

When I entered the *ranchos* the commotion ceased.

With three swift applications of the boot, the three Indians who were still more or less on the active list were precipitately ejected. The moans of the figure in the corner proved to be due more to acute alcoholic melancholy than to physical pain, so he followed his companions into the dark without. I then turned to the bed, and discovered that the woman was Maria, looking much battered and the worse for wear and drink. Incoherently, she endeavoured to explain that her man was dead—a statement which the Indian's heavy breathing and occasional groaning contradicted. From a big gash in his scalp blood had poured over his face and clothes, and he looked a horrid sight, as also did Maria, who had contrived to smear some of the gore over her own grimy face. When I had washed the wound and bandaged it, I left the man to the tender care of my ex-cook, and returned home, not, however, before I had searched the *ranchos* of all concerned, and had poured on the earthen floor the contents of three or four bottles I had found secreted, watched by eyes in which anger mingled with anguish caused by the loss of so much precious liquid.

Carnival is an orgy which lasts for at least five days. When Angel Gemio, who, after the purchase of his property by my Company, had been installed as mine foreman, told me that during that period, all work on the mine would cease completely, I protested vigorously. He replied that it was the custom, and that nothing would induce man, woman, or child to depart from it. Moreover, he informed me that it was customary for the proprietor of the mine to give his employees, on this occasion, an ox; also to each man a pound of coca leaves, and a bottle of alcohol, and to each woman a coloured handkerchief and a pound of cheap sweets. Accordingly, word was sent out that an ox was required, and, in due course, an Indian appeared with one for sale, which I purchased. Of coloured cotton handkerchiefs and coca leaves, there

was always a stock on hand in the mine's store ; there remained, therefore, only the sweets to be procured from Oruro.

On the morning of the first day of Carnival, I was at the store to be present at the distribution of the gifts. Then came the presentation of the ox. Girls came forward with garlands of yellow and red flowers, gathered in a distant, low-lying and sheltered valley. With these garlands, the bull was decorated until very little of him could be seen, bar his tail. I, likewise, was the recipient of similar embarrassing attention. Garlands were flung over my shoulders and piled on my hat until I much resembled a maypole. The ox was then led off in state by the two head miners, followed by the rest of the workers, laughing, jumping, and shouting. The entire procession proceeded to the village of Colquiri, three miles away, there to display their Carnival ox in the *plaza*. I had learned that, in previous years, the *plaza* of Colquiri was, on these occasions, usually the scene of a collision between the Oeavi peons and those of the neighbouring mine of "Chojnia Socabon," each procession boasting that it had the finer ox, an argument which generally resulted in a free-for-all fight. To avoid an encounter and its casualties, I had arranged with Herr Kempf, the owner of "Chojnia Socabon" that the rival processions should be held at different times—mine in the morning and his in the afternoon.

At mid-day my labourers returned, by this time in a boisterous condition of alcoholic origin. The procession came to a halt before the entrance to the main adit of the mine. Here the bull (which had spent a somewhat strenuous morning) was slaughtered, the coveted office of butcher being filled by the acknowledged head-miner—a big raw-boned, sandy-haired ruffian who used to do more work, chew more coca, and cause more trouble than anybody else in the place. I strongly suspect that this

fellow was a "footprint in the sands of time" of some adventurous Scot.

The killing of the ox was a messy business. The blood was caught in a bucket, and then smeared over the entrance to the mine—an offering to its presiding demon to induce him to refrain from frightening miners, and to keep the lode rich in ore during the ensuing year. The ox was then skinned and hacked into pieces, which were distributed, and borne off by the peons to their huts.

In the afternoon I rode down to Colquiri. The big village square was crowded with Indians, men and women, all more or less drunk. The scene was a nightmare of noise and colour. The men who were sober enough to do so were blowing their flutes or Pan's pipes, and banging drums with frantic energy. Drunken pipers and equally intoxicated women were dancing madly in a ring, the men with short, mincing steps, while the women spun round and round dizzily, their skirts flying out horizontally. The strident notes of the pipes, the violently-coloured skirts of the whirling women, and the general turmoil, made a combination which, for sheer madness, it would be difficult to surpass.

Presently, at one of the entrances to the *plaza* appeared a band of about twenty Indians, each of whom was wearing an enormous head-dress composed of South American ostrich plumes, dyed crimson, arranged horizontally like the spokes of a wheel of which the wearer's head was the hub. These men came dancing in single file, each playing a flute or a Pan's pipe, and proceeded to circle around the *plaza*, prancing madly the while. They then formed a ring, cutting extraordinary capers as they circled round, each movement accentuated by the bobbing feathers. By this time, the delirium of the rest of the myriads in the *plaza* had become intense, but, although I moved freely amongst them, taking snap-shots the while,

I did not receive a single hostile look or word—on the contrary, I had to endure the overpoweringly-respectful salutations of some of my own peons.

Easter, of course, is one of the major festivals—of at least three days' duration. On Good Friday morning, I noticed that many of my peons were wandering about on the hill sides, apparently searching for something, mostly under stones. Presently, a number of them gathered together in the gully at the foot of the hill, and, my curiosity being aroused, I walked down to see what they were about. I found them watching one of their number, who was tying together with string several live lizards and toads which another man was producing from a bag. When all the reptiles had been strung together, they were placed in a small hole in the ground in which lay half a stick of dynamite, with fuse attached. The hole was then sealed with a slab of stone, and the fuse was lighted. After the explosion had occurred, to the great glee of the onlookers, I asked one of them what their object was in blowing up these unfortunate creatures, for it seemed to me that cruelty was not the only motive. "Oh! Señor," replied the peon, "this is Good Friday, and, as toads and lizards are the representatives of the Devil, by killing them we cause him much pain and grief."

On the following Easter Sunday afternoon, I met one of my best workmen returning from the village in a state of blissful intoxication, and singing at the top of his voice. He stopped, and saluted me courteously. "You are very drunk, Choque," I said to him. "Yes, Señor," he replied, beaming with satisfaction. "You see," he went on, "to-day is Easter Day, and one must get drunk in honour of God."

Another recognised occasion for getting thoroughly intoxicated is a funeral, and the observance of this practice is by no means confined to the Indian population.

Drinking begins before the body leaves the house, and is resumed in the cemetery; long before the funeral party breaks up, everyone is beastly drunk, including—or, I may say, especially—the chief mourners. On the eighth day after the funeral, there is a repetition of the orgy, at the house of the late departed. In fact, in Bolivia, as in many other lands, a funeral is an occasion for all relations and friends of the deceased to have a thoroughly good time.

On the High Plateau no one is buried underground. The body is placed in a niche in a construction resembling a large dove-cote, made of adobe, and the opening is then plastered up with mud. On All Saints' Day, which is perhaps the most important *fiesta* of the year, and lasts about a week, before these sepulchres are placed tables laden with food, a special feature being figures of men made of bread. The meal is spread in the early morning, and remains there until the late afternoon. This is done for the benefit of the departed, who are supposed to enjoy a hearty meal. In the afternoon, when the souls have had their fill, the living consume the remainder of the food, there and then, without the walls of the cemetery, together, of course, with much liquid refreshment.

Except in important towns, such as La Paz and Oruro, no doctors are available. I had brought with me a small travelling medicine case, containing about a dozen drugs. The existence of this pocket pharmacy leaked out shortly after my arrival at the mine, and, by common consent, I was installed as medical officer to the district, although my qualifications for this post were practically nil. But, like the man who, being asked if he played the violin, replied that he didn't but was willing to try, I was quite prepared to experiment. I discovered that the nastier the medicine tasted, the more convinced was the patient of its efficacy. This principle I later proved to be true

of natives in other countries. Castor oil was a grand remedy, and of this I procured a large quantity, and ladled it out liberally, and, although it was not accompanied by any jam "to take the taste away," no patient ever balked at a second dose.

Pneumonia is the scourge of the High Plateau. The air is so rarefied that the only chance of saving the life of anyone suffering from this disease is to rush him down to the coast; otherwise, death in three days' time is a certainty. The victims of pneumonia among the Indians must number many thousands yearly. The Indian's power of resistance to the disease is very low, owing to his incessant chewing of coca and his drunkenness. Returning from a drunken bout, he will fall asleep by the roadside—perhaps, during a snowstorm—pneumonia will probably supervene, and the Indian will be no more.

The *fiesta* of San Juan was responsible for an accident to one of my miners. In Inca times, that day was devoted to ceremonials in connection with the worship of the sun. At night, large bonfires were lighted all over the country, in order that the sun should rise on the following morning and on each succeeding day for the remainder of the year. The survival of this practice exists on the mines, where, for several weeks previously, dynamite is stolen by the miners, and hoarded for this day. I was unaware of this custom until the night of San Juan, when, at about nine o'clock, I heard continuous explosions from the direction where lay the peon's quarters. Presently, an Indian boy appeared at my house in a state of great excitement, and told me that one of the men had been injured. I found the man, a young Indian, lying in his hut, his head resting on his wife's lap. He was in a deplorable condition; both hands were missing, and the sight of both eyes was destroyed. It transpired that he had been lighting the fuse attached to a stick of dynamite, and, to protect the lighted match from the

wind, he had made a sort of tent over the charge with the *poncho* he was wearing. As he could not see what he was doing, the explosion took place unexpectedly whilst he was stooping over the dynamite. There was little that I could do, except to give him an opiate. Mercifully for him, he died during the night; had he recovered, his existence, blinded and handless, would have been worse than the life of an Indian's dog, which is indeed miserable.

This death was the third that had occurred amongst the peons of Oeavi within the space of a month, and caused considerable panic. The peons believed that the anger of the demon of the mine had been aroused; it was necessary, therefore, that he should be appeased before further fatality took place. One night, two llamas—obtained from I don't know where—were sacrificed at the main entrance to the mine, and the blood of the animals was sprinkled in every part of the workings. In a niche in the wall of the main adit, a large piece of rich tin ore had been erected; this was the demon's shrine, and on this night, in addition to quantities of blood, a large offering of coca leaves was placed upon it, and many candles were lighted within the niche.

On the Puna a common complaint is a mysterious one called *aire*. A man describing some illness from which he had suffered would say "*Se me ha dado aire*"—that is to say, "I got air." I was much puzzled in regard to the nature of this malady, and eventually came to the conclusion that it denoted any complaint the nature of which was not obvious.

The Indian of the Puna does not appear to be well versed in native remedies—possibly because of the non-existence of medicinal herbs at that high altitude. There were only two remedies that I heard of as being used by these Indians, and their composition was revolting.

One day, there appeared at the mine two natives, who were peddling charms and quack remedies. They had come a long distance from the south-eastern region of Bolivia, and told me that they were travelling as far north as Ecuador—a considerable journey to accomplish on foot. They tried to sell some of their charms to me. One of these, they told me, I would find particularly profitable—a powder which, if sprinkled about the mine, would make the lode very rich in mineral. I examined this wonderful substance, which proved to be nothing but powdered mica! A little box they showed me contained yellow grease, which they said was tiger fat, and an invaluable remedy for rheumatism. Little images were charms against all other ailments. The remedies and charms were, of course, sold at high prices.

CHAPTER V
SUNDRY JOURNEYS

The Oruro Trail—An Enchanted Valley—By Mail-coach Express—
Malgarejo, the Dictator—The Height of Discipline—A Close
Shave.

THE money wherewith to pay the wages of the labour employed on the mine was drawn from a bank in Oruro, which lay fifty-five miles away. This job usually fell to the lot of Granelly, the accountant, but, on one occasion, I decided to fetch the money myself. I rode off in the early afternoon, along a trail unknown to me, intending to reach that night the village of Caracollo, half-way between the mine and Oruro. After several hours' riding, by which time I should have reached the plain, I was still following a track through the hills. At last I met an Indian, the first I had met since I set out, of whom I enquired the distance to Caracollo. He replied "A league" (three miles). I had not yet learned that an Indian has no idea of distance, and when asked "How far?" he will say the first thing that comes into his head. Usually he pouts his lips in the direction of the place in question, and replies "Just over there," which may mean anything from five to twenty miles. I rode the league, and yet another league, and then met another Indian. He informed me that I was on the wrong trail, but that I should now proceed further along it, and then strike off to the right. Just as the sun was setting, I found the track which he had described. By this time, I had travelled at least thirty miles, and my mule,

a borrowed animal and ancient, was getting weary. As night fell, I reached the plain, and trusted to luck and the mule to take me to Caracollo. I pushed on for three hours in pitch darkness, when suddenly I heard a dog barking. Never was the sound of a bark more welcome, for, by this time, my mule was played out, and I was leading it; I had not the least idea where I was, and it had looked most probable that I would have to camp out on the plain, and go supperless. A few minutes later, I arrived at a village which proved to be the one I sought.

When I had dismounted at the *tambo*, my first care was for my mule. As I watched an Indian bringing barley straw, I heard an English voice call out "Where's the gringo?" The owner of the voice turned out to be an English engineer from a tin mine in that region, of whom I had heard but never met. He also was bound for Oruro, so the next morning we set out together to cross the nine leagues of desert which lay before us, and glad I was of my countryman's company, as we joggled along over that monotonous, alkali-encrusted plain. Here and there on the plain stood curious structures, believed to be the ancient burial places of Indian chiefs. These tall, rectangular sepulchres constructed of adobe have small, triangular entrances to the roomy interiors, below the floors of which excavators have unearthed ornaments and pottery.

Oruro derives its name from the Uru-Uru tribe, which lived in that district, on the shores of Titicaca, in the long ago when the waters of the lake covered the plain which now stretches from Oruro to Guaqui. Legend has it that these Indians were a very ferocious lot, but in view of the characteristics of the region in which circumstances compelled them to have their being, I for one do not blame them for having been somewhat wild; the country is not conducive to mild-

ness. I knew a man—an Englishman—who, a few years previously, had come out to Bolivia as a lay missionary. Subsequently, he became an overseer for a mule transport firm. I came across him whilst he was directing the work of loading a large number of carts at a railway siding, and the language in which his orders and remarks to the Argentine muleteers were couched was very robust and in no wise reminiscent of his former calling.

Oruro is, commercially, perhaps, Bolivia's most important town, for it is the headquarters of the mining industry and in direct railway communication with the seaport of Antofagasta and with Cochabamba, an important agricultural centre. It is an unattractive place, and one lives there in an atmosphere of sand and street dust raised by the miniature sandstorms which continually sweep in from the plain. There are some good stores and a fairly comfortable hotel. My friend of Caracollo introduced me to several members of the English colony, who entertained me right royally during my short stay.

Timber props for the mine were required; these, in that timberless region, were difficult to procure, and had to be brought long distances. Gemio came to me one morning and said that an Indian *proprio* (messenger) had brought him a letter from the owner of a valley estate, offering to supply props. I decided to go that very day with Gemio to see this man, the messenger to act as our guide. The Indian told us that the estate lay about twenty-five miles away, and that we should arrive that evening. After a hurried meal, we rode off.

It was the rainy season, and that day it poured, when it did not snow. All the afternoon we rode, our guide jogging along in front of us, for an Indian can keep pace with any mule over mountain trails, and even on

the flat. By the vilest of tracks we clambered up the rocky sides of a mountain range, which we crossed in a blinding snowstorm, and led our animals down the difficult descent on the other side, slipping and scrambling down a veritable giant's staircase. Presently, it was dark, and we lit the lantern with which Gemio had thoughtfully provided our guide in case night should overtake us on the road. Without this dim light, it would have been difficult to follow him, as the darkness was intense. After a couple of hours of this, the Indian proposed that we should pass the remainder of the night in a neighbouring cave he knew of, but we bribed him to continue on his way. At the end of another hour, he again halted, and said that it was impossible to go any further, for the reason that the trail shortly crossed a dangerous bog which could not be negotiated in the dark. Bribes and threats were of no avail, and there was nothing for it but to camp on the spot. Our animals were turned loose, to pick up what forage they could find, whilst we, wet and hungry, hugged the lee side of the rock, which afforded but little protection from the continuous down-pour of icy rain. During the night, there was a terrific thunderstorm. Gemio and the Indian were in agonies of fright, for, according to the guide, many Indians had been struck by lightning whilst camping beside the rock which was our shelter.

Dawn broke at last, our animals were recaptured, and we set off again. The bog which had daunted our guide the night before was crossed, and after riding a few miles farther we passed through a narrow cleft, and emerged into what appeared, from where we stood, to be a gigantic bowl of which we were about half-way up the side. The edge of this bowl, which was several miles in diameter, was formed of gaunt crags, denuded of all vegetation. A little lower one could

note where grass began; at our level, shrubs were growing. Further down, the side of the bowl was covered with trees, while, at the bottom, lay a large tract green with sugar-cane, through which flowed a stream glistening like a band of polished silver in the bright sunshine, for the rain had now ceased, and a sky of wonderful texture roofed in this enchanted valley—a gorgeous jewel lying hid in the heart of a bleak and forbidding country.

We rode down the side of the valley, and passing through an orchard, arrived at the house of the man we had come to see, the owner of this vast estate. He took great pleasure in showing me his garden and fruit trees, and pressed me to spend a week with him, that we might go bear shooting. It was impossible to accept his invitation, much as I should have liked to do so, for I had to get back to the mine. We did not take long to fix up our deal, and, after an early lunch, Gemio and I set out on the return journey.

When in broad daylight I saw the path along which we had ridden in the dark the night before I was glad that I had then been unaware of its character. For the most part the trail was but two or three feet wide, over smooth rock rendered slippery by the rain; a vertical wall of rock stood on the one hand and a sheer drop of a thousand feet or more lay on the other. Without leaning out of my saddle I could see llamas grazing in the narrow valley below—mere specks they appeared from this height. Had one of our animals stumbled or lurched against the rock wall, both beast and rider would most probably have joined those llamas below. But the surefootedness of the mule is amazing, and many a time have I ridden over places where I would not have cared to walk.

I had been on the mine about a year when, one

Saturday morning, an Indian messenger arrived from Caracollo (which had a telegraph office) with a wire from my Chief, instructing me to report in La Paz in the shortest possible time. By hard riding I arrived at Caracollo in advance of the coach that carried the mails from Oruro to La Paz—this was before the completion of the railway that linked the two towns. A heavy bribe induced the conductor to disregard regulations and secured for me the doubtful privilege of being carried as a passenger. During the next thirty hours I sat wedged between driver and conductor on the high seat of the springless waggon which lurched and bumped across the roadless plain behind six galloping mules, halting only long enough to change teams every seven leagues or so, at some isolated *posada*. Long before that journey ended, I was wishing that the conductor had been made of sterner stuff and had refused to be bribed.

The next day I came across "Jimmie" Hutcheson, the owner of the passenger and mail transport plying between La Paz and Oruro, and, feeling still somewhat sore in body, I made some caustic comment on the comforts of travelling in his mail coaches, to which his only reply, when he learned that I had travelled as an excess passenger, was that I had had no right to induce the guard to take me.

Everybody on the High Plateau knew "Jimmie"—or "Don Santiago," as he was called by the natives. A young Scotsman from Aberdeen, sparing of speech, and with a jaw like a rat-trap, he was now the proprietor of the mule transport firm which he had joined as a lad, fresh from his native town, in the capacity of stage-coach driver. Shrewdness and hard work had in a few years enabled him to acquire the business. His marriage to a Scottish girl a few years previously was the first to be performed by a British Consul in Bolivia in many

years, for there had been a long period during which Britain had had no representative, diplomatic or consular, in the country.

Diplomatic relations with Bolivia had been broken off by the British Government in the 'sixties, in consequence of an indignity to which its Minister to that country had been subjected by the then President, the Dictator *Malgarejo*. At a reception given by the Dictator, to which the Diplomatic Corps had been invited, *Malgarejo* announced to the assembled company that he desired that they should render homage to his Indian mistress in a humiliating and objectionable manner, a request with which the British Minister indignantly refused to comply. *Malgarejo*, furious at being thwarted in his whim, gave orders that the offending diplomat should be tied on a donkey, facing the tail, and driven three times around the *plaza* of *La Paz*, and then forthwith expelled from the country, which instructions were rigidly carried out.

The story goes that when the Minister in question returned to England and made his report, the Queen was informed of the ignominy her representative had suffered. "Where is Bolivia?" her Majesty enquired. A map was brought, and it was pointed out that the geographical situation of Bolivia made it impracticable to demand redress under the guns of a British man-of-war. Whereupon, it is said, the Queen seized a pen, and making a few strokes across the map, exclaimed "So far as England is concerned, Bolivia no longer exists." It was not until about 1900 that there was again a British Consul in that Republic, and many years more elapsed before a Minister was appointed.

Of *Malgarejo*, there are numerous stories current. Though but an ignorant Indian, he was a born leader of men, and as a sergeant in the Bolivian army, he organised and led a revolution which ended in the defeat



WASHING TIN ORE ON A SMALL MINE.



A STAGE-COACH STATION.

Mules going to water.

To face p. 68.

of the Federal forces. Margarejo entered La Paz in triumph and proclaimed himself Dictator, a position which he held for many years, until his death. Although he tolerated no question of his supreme authority, he was astute enough to surround himself with the best advisers that he could command. The man whom he appointed Minister of Finance introduced many beneficial reforms, and to commemorate his services the Dictator caused a silver coin to be struck, bearing the effigies of himself and his Minister, with the inscription *Al valor y al talento* (To valour and to talent).

It is related of Margarejo that, in 1870, on hearing that war had been declared between France and Germany, he resolved to enlist his army on the side of France, and issued commands for the immediate mobilisation of the Government troops, at the head of whom he rode out one morning, to join his ally. The Bolivian army had marched up the side of the valley, and gained the plain above, when one of the Generals, greatly daring, ventured to enquire of his Chief what arrangements he had made for the conveyance of his troops across the ocean. "Ocean!" exclaimed Margarejo, "What ocean?" It was explained to him that thousands of leagues of water lay between South America and France. This information caused the Dictator much disappointment, and reluctantly he abandoned his plan, and marched his army down again.

On one occasion, Margarejo was receiving the French Minister, and the conversation turned to a discussion on the discipline obtaining in European armies. The Frenchman cited several instances to demonstrate the high sense of discipline of his country's soldiers, to which Margarejo listened very attentively. When the Minister paused, and looked to Margarejo for admiring comment, the latter said "Yes, that is very fine; now

I shall demonstrate to you the discipline of my soldiers." This conversation was taking place in Malgarejo's palace, a large, adobe building with an inner cobble-paved courtyard. The Dictator's apartments were on the first floor, each room opening on to a wide balcony, which ran around the four inner walls of the building. The only access to this balcony was by a flight of stairs from the courtyard, some twenty feet below.

Malgarejo summoned one of his officers, and gave orders to assemble the palace guard, and march them up to him in single file. He and the French Minister stood at the door of the reception room, and watched the soldiers climb the steps on the far side of the courtyard, and come marching towards them along the balcony. When the leading man reached him, Malgarejo gave the word of command "Left wheel! Quick march!" Without hesitation the soldier obeyed, and, on reaching the balustrade, leapt over it down on to the cobblestones below, followed by his fellows. They preferred the possibility of escaping with a broken limb or two, rather than the certainty of facing a firing squad within the hour were they to refuse or falter. When the last man had taken the leap, Malgarejo looked at the Frenchman contentedly, and asked him what he thought of that as an example of discipline.

Another story told of this Indian tyrant is that, on one occasion, he had some sores on his face which made the periodical shave too painful an operation to be indulged in. He caused it to be announced in the town that one thousand bolivianos (£80) would be paid to the man who shaved him without causing him the slightest inconvenience, with the proviso that, should the barber not fulfil the conditions, his life would be forfeit. The Dictator's playful habits and ruthlessness were well known, and there was no response to this

proclamation except from one young barber, who declared himself willing to accept the terms offered. Malgarejo was duly shaved and, expressing himself as perfectly satisfied, informed the barber that he had won the prize "But, tell me," he said, "how did you have the nerve to shave me so skilfully knowing that the slightest slip of your razor meant your death?" "Had your Excellency," replied the barber, "uttered the faintest squeak, I should have immediately cut your throat." "Splendid fellow!" exclaimed Malgarejo, "you are the sort of man I want in my army; I shall make you a Colonel at once." And he did!

CHAPTER VI

BY WAY OF DIVERSION

A Father of his Flock—"Jimmie" Brown, the Tropical Tramp—A Cold Swim—A Bolivian Version of a Roman Holiday.

WORD was received from the customs agent that the ten-stamp mill for the Oeavi mine, which had been ordered from England, had begun to arrive at Guaqui. All the timber for the construction of the buildings, as well as the machinery, had to be brought from home, as no timber grown in the jungle country east of the Andes could be used, owing to the impossibility of transporting it. To assure the ultimate arrival at the mine of the thousands of sections in which the mill was despatched, it was necessary that I should go to Guaqui to secure them myself as soon as they were unloaded from the steamer. The loss of any portion would have been serious, for in addition to the original cost and the high freight charges which would have been incurred by the time it arrived in Bolivia, considerable time would have elapsed before it could have been replaced. Timber was much too valuable a commodity to leave lying about on the quay, to take its chance of arriving eventually at its destination, for in Bolivia "God helps him who helps himself" is a motto religiously adhered to by many.

A ninety-mile ride from the mine brought me to Ayo-Ayo, a village with a station on the Oruro and La Paz railway; and the scene during the last revolution of a gruesome massacre previously described. It

was now famous throughout the countryside on account of the fact that the village priest was the father of eighty-two of its inhabitants. A few months later, I was again in Ayo-Ayo, to take delivery of a quantity of cement purchased from the railway, and was given a gang of about a dozen men to load the cement barrels on a railway truck. While the loading was in progress, the priest himself approached. "That's the *padre*," the foreman whispered to me; "he is the father of four of these men," he said, pointing to some members of the loading squad. "Isn't the *padre* your father?" went on the foreman, addressing one of these Indians. "Yes, he is," replied the Indian, smiling self-consciously, as though someone had asked him if he were not the son of the President. Just then the priest passed by, and all took off their hats reverently, receiving in return a salutation from the reverend gentleman. He was a benign-looking, white-haired, old man, of perhaps seventy years of age—a truly patriarchal figure. I was told that he was immensely proud of the fact that forty of his offspring had been engaged on the construction of the railway; he probably felt that the successful conclusion of the enterprise was largely due to his co-operation.

On arrival at Ayo-Ayo, I found the Indian whom I had sent on ahead from the mine, and turned over to him my mule, and then set out to discover what the chances were of getting down to Viacha that day. I learned that there was a construction train going down late in the evening; also that there was, at that very moment on the spot, the road-master of that section, who would probably be returning to Viacha immediately on his hand-car. I sought out this roadmaster, who proved to be a very genial young fellow, and he readily agreed to take me as a passenger. The hand-car was manned by four stalwart Indians, who, when once we

got under way, put their backs into the work, and we rolled along the rails at a good speed. It was to me a pleasant mode of travelling after covering ninety miles over goat-paths on a hard-trotting mule.

Viacha was the junction with the Guaqui and La Paz railway. Here I left my American friend, and went to await the train for Guaqui, which was shortly due.

When I landed at Guaqui on my arrival in the country, I had not been much impressed with it as a town, and I was much less enamoured of the place when I arrived the second time, intending to make it my headquarters for a little while to come. There are two Guaquis—the old town, which, in Spanish days, stood beside the lake whose waters have now receded for about two miles; and the new town, consisting, chiefly, of corrugated-iron custom-houses and customs agents' offices, clustered around the wharf—as uninviting a spot as one could possibly wish to avoid. I put up at the establishment which gloried in the name of “Hotel” painted in large letters across its façade—a dirty, tumble-down place, with bedrooms built anywhere about the *patio*, of which pigs, dogs, and a donkey or two, made their playground. Everything was very filthy, and the food was very bad. Here I lived for several months, until the last consignment of the mill had arrived and been dispatched. The life here was indescribably dull, the inhabitants, consisting chiefly of customs-house officers and agents, having no other recreation than drinking and throwing dice in the two local bars, one of which was at my hostelry.

It was at Guaqui that I met, and got to know, “Jimmie” Brown, who had driven locomotives on nearly every railway south of the Rio Grande. A Californian, born of English parents, he began driving engines in Northern Mexico some twenty years before. During that period he had only once, I believe, returned to

the “ States,” and had developed into a true “ tropical tramp,” going from railway to railway throughout Central America, Columbia, Ecuador, and Peru, and had now reached Bolivia, where he drove an engine on the Guaqui and La Paz line.

A “ tropical tramp,” I should explain for the benefit of the uninitiated, is one who has been in every drinking-saloon from Rio Grande to Cape Horn. Brown was rapidly qualifying for the position of Grand Master of that Ancient Company of Vagabonds—restless souls, for whom no place is large enough to contain them for more than a short while. The country over the horizon is, to them, always more enchanting and more promising than the one in which they happen to be. Good fellows, many of them, cursed with the restlessness which will never allow them to settle down as long as they live. Others, of course, are merely ruffianly ne'er-do-weels, who are compelled to move on as each place in turn becomes “ too hot ” for them.

My friend, Brown, was one of the former type. When sober, he was, in spite of his forty odd years, a light-hearted, laughing boy, who was everybody's friend. Bolivian men and women were, one and all, devoted to “ Don Juan,” as they called him, and the children were ever clamouring for his attention, which they never failed to receive, no matter how grubby they were or how much liquor he had “ on board.” Brown was one of those men who hadn't an enemy in the world except himself. He could not keep sober.

“ Jimmie ” Brown lodged at the same inn as myself in Guaqui. Every morning he set out, shaky but sober, to take his train up to La Paz, returning in the evening, more often than not, so drunk that he could barely stagger across the common which lay between the station and the inn. That a man in such a condition should have been driving an engine seemed pre-

posterous, but it was said of him that he drove better drunk than sober, and I learned from other members of his craft that no finer driver ever trod the footplate. I travelled several times between La Paz and Guaqui when Brown was at the throttle, hopelessly intoxicated, yet the movements of the train never gave the least cause for alarm.

When under the influence of drink, his pet topic of conversation was the "blankety-blankness" of Latin America, its people, and all its works. On this topic he would hold forth in the bar of the "hotel" to a large audience, which—as it listened—drank at his expense. He always began by ordering drinks all round before launching into one of his lurid tirades, which were, for the most part, in English, interspersed with a sprinkling of Spanish "cuss" words, for, in spite of long residence amongst Spanish-speaking peoples, he had, like many another Anglo-Saxon, acquired but a very meagre knowledge of their language. Brown was careful always to explain to his listeners that they themselves were not included in his remarks, and they, in turn, never protested against anything he said, but listened in amused silence. "It is only Don Juan; he is a good friend; and, besides, Don Juan is always ready to pay for a drink for anyone he meets in the neighbourhood of a bar." A cheerful, lovable soul was Brown when he was sober; in whom fever and alcohol, although they had shrunk his body and lined his face, had been unable to quench the happy lilt in his laughter or the twinkle in his blue eyes. I have often wondered what happened to him. He was becoming restless when I knew him, as he had then been working on the same railway for two years, and was meditating a move to Chile. I heard that the railway authorities were also becoming somewhat restless and perturbed because of his chronic drunkenness.

In an endeavour to keep him straight for a while, one evening I made a bet with him, for a small amount, that he would be unable to leave liquor alone for a week. He accepted the bet, and not only did he win it, but he remained teetotal for over a month, in spite of every temptation put in his way by the acquaintances he met in the various bars he continued to frequent during the period of abstinence. It was, of course, merely a matter of time for the crash to come, which it finally did on his birthday. That occasion he could not possibly allow to pass uncelebrated. All the money he had boasted to me of having saved during the previous weeks of sobriety speedily disappeared, and he returned to his normal state of genial intoxication.

One day, as I was on the pier with a gang of Indians, picking out from an assorted jumble of goods which had been brought by the last steamer such of them as belonged to me, there appeared on the scene another *gringo* an Australian mining engineer by the name of Reid. He told me that he had come to Guaqui for the same purpose as myself, and that he intended making the port his headquarters for a while. This was a great stroke of luck for me, as he proved to be a right good fellow, this young giant, and a first-rate companion, whose society helped to relieve the monotony of life, in that forsaken spot.

Bathing in the open in Bolivia is very dangerous, as, on emerging from the water, the rapid evaporation is likely to lower the temperature of the body to such a degree that pneumonia, with its fatal consequences, may be the result. And to bathe in the snow-fed waters of Lake Titicaca is regarded, even by the natives, as suicidal. Of this, however, Reid and I were not aware until later.

At Guaqui, a long, narrow, ship-canal had been dredged at the entrance to the wharf, bounded on

either side by a narrow spit of land. One day, Reid and I, having resolved to swim across this channel, took our towels down to the far end, undressed, and together plunged into the water. The shock of that ice-cold water nearly paralysed me, but I struck out for the opposite bank, which I reached shortly after Reid, who was a strong swimmer. When we got there, we neither of us had a liking for the return journey. Yet the water route back to our clothes was the only one open to us, for we were in our "birthday suits," and the land route would have compelled us to pass, in that condition, through the fairly populous wharf; our native modesty was also strongly supported by our aversion to running about half a mile barefoot over the stony ground. So we plunged back. Chattering with cold, we reached our clothes, and, scarcely waiting to dry ourselves, we dressed, and ran as fast as we could to the nearest bar. It was probably that run of about three-quarters of a mile, and the generous tot of brandy that followed it, which saved us from even a cold. But over our drinks we swore "Never again!" It was a foolish escapade; that we succeeded in getting off scot free was more than we deserved.

It was amusing and instructive to watch the customs inspectors at work. During an hour or two so spent, much light was shed on the complaint of importers that a considerable proportion of the goods received in every consignment from abroad was missing on arrival, I saw large cases opened and their contents examined with more than official interest by the inspectors. A man would pull off his coat, and try on a shirt, and, if it pleased him, he would gather up an armful of similar garments, and hand them to his Indian servant—apparently kept near at hand in readiness for such an eventuality—with instructions equivalent to "Home, John!" In the meantime, a colleague would be study-

ing the suitability to his type of beauty of various styles of hats. The perils through which anything in the drinking line had to pass were appalling. Small wonder, therefore, that a post in the Excise Department was a much-coveted plum.

In certain forms of sport the attendant element of danger lends added fascination to their pursuit; it is the dash of *tobasco* which gives zest to an otherwise, perhaps, insipid pastime. The risk involved, nevertheless, is usually inherent, and, in civilised countries is not, as a rule, added "just for the fun of the thing." It is doubtful whether the most intrepid and reckless sportsman would, for instance, find allurements in an invitation to a dance if it were announced that, as an added attraction, a wild-west "gunman" would take shots at the guests as they waltzed. Such an entertainment would, I feel sure, be foredoomed to utter failure, even though the hostess were fortunate enough to number a suicidal maniac or two among her acquaintances. Yet it is on similar, though more barbaric lines, that the Indian of the Puna occasionally seeks diversion and finds it. He likes red pepper in his soup by the ladleful, and is not averse to it in like proportions in his pastimes. A little inter-village war, or a bull-game now and then, are to his liking.

I never saw a battle between rival villages, although I was once on the fringe of one; but I did have the luck to see bull-baiting conducted according to Indian methods. The *fiestas* in which bulls play a leading part take place once a year, and only in two or three towns on the High Plateau, of which Oruro is one and Guaqui another. I had been away from the latter place for a few days, and, on my return, I was told that the following day—a Sunday—was the feast of "Our Lady of Carmen," the patron saint of Guaqui

and the occasion of the annual bull sports. So, armed with my camera, for which I had with difficulty obtained films during my recent visit to La Paz, I set off, early the next afternoon, on my two-mile walk to the old town, in the company of a customs official whose acquaintance I had made.

On our arrival we clambered over one of the stout barricades erected at each exit to the big *plaza*, and then scaled the high wall of the church enclosure which bounded it on one side. From the top of this wall I had a splendid view of a wonderful scene, bathed in the fierce glare of a tropical sun. Several hundred Indians, men and women, thronged the *plaza*, most of whom had formed groups each of about fifty dancers, who pranced and whirled giddily to the weird notes of bamboo pipes, the groups ever-circling around their respective musicians, who played with unmerciful vigour. The whole assemblage was drunk—very drunk—and filled with the ambition to become more so, if possible, by frequent pulls at the alcohol bottle which every dancer clutched in his or her hand. The brazenly hues, discordant, of the women's skirts, each now displayed to fullest advantage, together with the gaudy *ponchos* and feather head-dresses of the men, all moving in a ceaseless swirl, produced a remarkable spectacle, to which the shrieks of the pipes, like the wails of lost souls, and the throbbing boom of the tom-toms, made a fitting accompaniment.

Suddenly, the doors of a barn at one end of the *plaza* opened, and out trotted two gaily-decorated bulls; after a short advance, they paused to take stock of a situation that evidently bewildered them. Their advent had not the slightest effect on the throng, which, unheeding, continued its wild dance. Yet there was one old Indian, probably debarred by old age and much drink from joining in the antics of the others, who,

seeing that the bulls did not understand what was required of them, staggered towards one of the animals, took off his red *poncho* and waved it in the beast's face. Then the bull understood, and, having understood, signified his comprehension to his instructor by bowling him over. That sufficed to start the ball rolling in earnest. The bull charged the nearest ring of dancers, who were, apparently, quite indifferent to the presence of the now infuriated animal, whose companion, likewise aroused, devoted his attention to another group. It was not until the bulls were in their midst that the two groups dissolved, their members scurrying in all directions, whilst a couple of their number made short, bull-propelled flights through the air.

Meanwhile, the other merry-makers in the square went on with the dance, oblivious to all these happenings. Their indifference, however, was but short-lived. The bulls, delighted with the success of their first onslaught, had now got into their stride, and proceeded to enjoy themselves hugely. Circling the *plaza* in opposite directions, group after group they charged, each impact followed by the hurtling of a man or woman through the air, to the shrieks of his scattering companions. It was a veritable fireworks of human rockets, which fell to earth in red, green, yellow, and blue rain. As the bulls passed on, the groups re-formed and resumed their dancing as though nothing had occurred.

Presently, the bulls, tired by their exertions, were driven back to their sheds, to ruminate on the happenings of this wonderful day, while their places in the square were filled by two fresh animals. These required no encouragement, for they entered into the game with no loss of time and much relish.

This performance began at two o'clock, and lasted until sundown—about six o'clock—during which time

seven energetic bulls were let loose on the crowd, whose numbers were diminished only by the casualties which this strange form of amusement entails. Many men and women were seriously hurt, yet only one man was killed on the spot, though I heard that, later, several died of their injuries. Seeing that the horns of the bulls were long and sharp, the wonder was that the deaths were so few.

During the entire afternoon I sat on my wall, "snapping" incident after incident until all my films had been exposed. One scene I was particularly pleased to have caught with my camera. A bull charged a group dancing close to me, and caught in the stern an Indian woman built on the lines of a barge. She shot straight up into the air, feet foremost, and I clicked the shutter just as she reached her zenith. Beyond being somewhat flustered, the woman did not appear to be any the worse for her adventure—due, no doubt, to the padding afforded by her numberless skirts—so, although I laughed immoderately at the incident, I did not feel unduly callous for so doing. If it is true that a sense of humour may be defined as a keen appreciation of other people's misfortunes, then it is possible that many to whom my merriment now seems brutal would, had they been present that afternoon, have added their laughter to mine.

Another interested spectator was the priest of the community, an elderly man who sat in a special enclosure at one end of the *plaza*, in the shade of two ancient wild olive trees. These trees, remarkable in that they are, I believe, the only trees to be found between the lake and Oruro, probably owe their existence to the fact that here water is struck at a few feet below the level of the ground. The good *padre* was highly amused by the meteoric careers of his parishioners, and every successful effort on the bull's part to raise members of

his flock to higher levels met with his gleeful approbation.

My customs-house friend, who was a keen amateur photographer, had offered me the use of his dark room for the development of the photographs taken that afternoon. Immediately the show was over, I went to his house to do the developing, being eager to ascertain whether the results obtained would fulfil my expectations. As I passed my first roll of films through the developer, I anxiously watched for pictures to appear. But even after several minutes, the film remained as blank as though it had never been exposed. On examining the shutter of my camera, I found it to be in perfect working order, and there seemed to be no reason to account for the failure of the first dozen pictures. So I tried the next roll of films, with the same result. My disappointment was great, as I had reckoned on possessing a most interesting set of photographs. On unrolling my third and last film, I discovered the cause of the failure. The sensitized side of the film had been turned inwards—thus, on exposure, it was the celluloid which faced the lens. At that moment I would cheerfully have brained the author of this mishap. I had obtained the films from a photographer in La Paz, who, at the time, was out of stock of the particular rolls adapted to my camera. He told me, however, that he could supply my requirements by re-rolling on spools which fitted my apparatus films intended for another type of camera. In doing so, he had reversed the position of the sensitized side, and thus spoilt the pictorial record of a memorable day. Perhaps this was retribution for my laughter during the afternoon. The old lady whom I had snapped in an undignified attitude would, no doubt, have been delighted had she witnessed my wrath an hour or two later.

A variation of these bull sports occur in Oruro once

a year. A notable feature of Bolivian silver currency is that a very large proportion of the smaller coins, corresponding to our shillings and sixpences in size, are pierced in the centre. The explanation is to be found in the Oruro bull games. Every mine in the district—there is a silver-mine on the edge of the town—contributes, according to its prosperity, one or more strings of silver coins to this *fiesta*. These coin-collars are hung about the necks of several bulls, which are let loose in the *plaza* of the town. Anyone who succeeds in wrenching a collar from a bull's neck becomes its possessor. As may be easily imagined, the carnage which ensues during the scramble for these collars is considerable. It also invariably happens that an Indian who has obtained possession of a string of coins is immediately set upon by his less fortunate competitors, and his only hope of retaining possession of his prize lies in making good his escape, if the attentions of the bull have left him in a condition to do so.

The Oruro version of these sports has an intelligible attraction for those who take part in them, but I fail to see what possible object the Guaqui Indians have in allowing themselves to be made shuttlecocks of during their village celebrations—a performance which would appear to be solely for the amusement of the bulls and the few spectators. It is possible that these sports were devised in the early days of the Spanish occupation, by some ingenious Spaniard, for the distraction of himself and his companions, the co-operation of the Indians being secured by large supplies of free liquor. This, however, is merely my own theory, as I could find no one who could tell me anything concerning the origin of this custom.

CHAPTER VII
CRIME AND CONFETTI.

The Construction of a Railway—A "Hold-Up"—A Carnival in La Paz
—A Murder Mystery—A Public Execution.

MOST of the machinery had now arrived at Guaqui, and been despatched to the point of rails of the La Paz—Oruro railway, then under construction. Whenever I despatched several truckloads from Guaqui, I hurried to receive them at the other end, there to supervise their despatch to the mine by mule carts. As the construction of the railway progressed, I followed with it, in order that the haul by the carts should be as short as possible. The distance from the mine to the nearest point on the railway—which was Patacamaya—was forty-eight miles; it was some time, however, before the construction camp reached that village.

My stay in the various construction camps on this railway was rendered pleasant through the hospitality of the "camp-boss," who made me a member of the mess, and provided me with a bed in the staff sleeping tent. Life on the High Plateau, under canvas, is a very chilly one at night, especially during the dry season and the beginning and end of the wet season, when heavy snowfalls and hailstorms are frequent. The shaving water in the morning was invariably drawn from a bucket on which a thick crust of ice had formed during the night. The staff of engineers—all Americans—were, however, mostly cheery fellows, and the experience was good fun.

The greater part of the unskilled labour employed on the construction of this railway was Indian. To all intents and purposes, this Indian labour was forced, as every community on the *Altiplanicia* had to contribute its quota of peons, who, however, were paid a daily wage. The peons arrived in batches, to work for a fortnight, and were then replaced by fresh drafts, and allowed to return to their homes. I believe that the *corregidor* of each village received a bonus for every peon that he supplied to the railway; he, therefore, saw to it that every available Indian in his district was rounded up for the work. Indian labour, however, is not very efficient in this class of work, as the average peon is not accustomed to the pick and shovel, and trundling a wheelbarrow is completely beyond his powers. More than once, I have seen two Indians fill a wheelbarrow with earth, and then carry it between them, to the spot where the load was to be dumped. Also, since very few Indians understand any Spanish, all orders had to be given through the head man of each batch, who was more interested in receiving his pay than in getting any work out of his gang, with the result that, for every peon actually at work, there were usually three or four who stood around and watched him—for lack of foremen who understood both the work and the labourers.

A railway construction camp, particularly in a new country, as a rule harbours several men into whose past inspection is not invited by them, and the Patacamaya camp was no exception in this respect. There was one man in particular—a “gang-boss” and a particularly evil-looking individual—who was reputed to be the sole surviving member of the “Hole in the Wall” gang, which, at one time, had been infamous in the Western States of America for its many “hold-ups” and murders. The existence of the gang was finally terminated by the

sudden deaths of most of its members, either as the result of collisions with the sheriff's posse, or through the medium of a rope. This man, who went under the name of Grogan, had made good his escape from the States, and it was said that there was a price on his head of five thousand dollars. Grogan was a wonderful revolver shot. I was told, by those who had seen him do it, that, with a revolver in either hand, he could, almost unfailingly, hit coins the size of a florin, one after another, as fast as one could pitch them into the air. He, like every other American employed on the railway, invariably carried a "gun." This was a practice to which I had never been addicted—for two reasons; firstly, because I did not see the necessity for so doing; and, secondly, because the revolver I possessed was a huge .44 Colt, too heavy to carry except when on horseback—a weapon favoured by cowboys in the days of the "wild and woolly West," and known as the "frontier" model.

Grogan had somehow learned of the existence of this revolver, which I kept locked up with my clothes in a "uniform case." One afternoon, he came to me and said that he understood that I had a .44 Colt, and offered to do a deal with me by giving me, in exchange, his own .38 Colt and £4 to boot, which was more than my weapon had cost me new. I mistrusted the fellow's anxiety to obtain the revolver, and suggested to him that as I did not care to part with it, he might get one from La Paz. He replied that there was not one on sale in the country, and then made an even better offer, which I definitely refused. Grogan seemed very disgruntled, and walked away without another word.

Three days later the camp was startled by the news, that the paymaster of another construction camp some fifteen miles further up the line had been "held up" by four armed white men, and his safe had been rifled of about

ten thousand dollars. At the same time it was discovered that Grogan had disappeared from camp, with three other tough characters, employed on the construction work, and none of them was ever seen again in that region. It was rumoured that they had made for the hills on mules stolen from the railway, and had then parted company. Two of these bandits were discovered later in Cochabamba, a town which lies eighteen leagues to the north-east of Oruro. They were both shot dead in an affray with Bolivian soldiery who had attempted to arrest them. Grogan, however, was not one of these. No more was heard of him until, some years later, I chanced to meet him again—an incident which belongs to another period of this story.

Whilst I was at Patacamaya, I received a note from my Chief, suggesting that I should spend Carnival—then near at hand—in La Paz; so, nothing loath, I took the next construction train down. This was my first carnival in a South American town, and it proved to be a truly strenuous episode. All the foreign element in the town joined whole-heartedly in the festivities, which lasted uninterruptedly for five days and nights. During this period, apparently, people only rested in snatches—at any rate, I did not get much sleep. During the daytime, the streets were thronged with people, who pelted each other with confetti and eggshells filled with scented water, which were on sale at every street corner. The latter type of missile was popular with those who remained within doors and hurled them from their windows at the crowds in the streets, who returned the fire as long as the supply of ammunition held out. For these amusements, one should wear one's oldest clothes, as it is not long before they become soaked through and plastered with soggy confetti.

The merry-making throngs possessed a very picturesque



CHOLAS OF THE HIGH PLATEAU.



element in the *cholas*, dressed in all their finery. The *cholo* is the half-breed, who occupies the intermediate position between the peons and the *gente* in the social scale. The dress of the *cholo*, and of his female counterpart, the *chola*, is quaint. The costume of the man consists of a short, black jacket, somewhat resembling a Spanish bolero, beneath which he wears a waistcoat. His trousers, also black, are of a peculiar cut, being fairly baggy at the top, somewhat narrower at the knees, and widening out again lower down; a V-shaped slash from the knee reveals the white cotton pants worn beneath. The *chola*—or *cholita*, as she is usually called—wears a bright-coloured blouse, often of silk or satin, a much-embroidered shawl of white cashmere or silk, short, bunchy petticoats similar in colour and fashion to those worn by the humbler Indian women, and—crowning glory of all—light-coloured kid boots, reaching almost to the knee, with very high heels. Her long, glossy, black hair hangs in two thick tresses down her back, and on her head she wears a funny little white straw hat, hard, high of crown and narrow of brim, while from her ears dangle a pair of huge ear-rings. Many *cholitas*, when young and arrayed in full “war-paint,” are not unattractive, of which fact, needless to remark, they are quite aware. The *cholita* is usually the business man of the family, and owns and conducts practically every little shop and *chicharia*—the small drinking places frequented by Indians and *cholos*.

But to return to our Carnival. In the evening, everyone belonging to the *gente* world doffed his wet clothes, donned fancy dress, and hied him to one of the public balls, or to a private function, there to dance until daybreak. The largest public dance was held in the theatre, which was crowded with masked men and women in costume. As the night wore on, the proceedings became more and more lively. At one dance hall I visited during the early

morning hours, I witnessed a free fight between young "bloods" of the town. There were many Peruvians present, and someone made a remark which the other side considered derogatory to his nationality. From wordy warfare, the dispute became a battle of glasses, and then of bottles and chairs, and was in full swing when a body of police entered and marched off most of the participators in the affray.

One morning, I left the theatre ball in the company of another Englishman—familiarly known as "Sox"—and a young Dane, an ex-cavalry officer, who was a member of a business firm in the town. By this time, it was broad daylight. On emerging from the theatre, the Dane caught sight of a patrol of mounted police in the little square. All the policemen had left their horses, and were standing about talking amongst themselves. Without a word, the Dane, who was dressed in a white domino, went up to one of the horses, jumped on its back, and rode off, at a gallop, down a side street. The incident had occurred so quickly that the police were utterly dumbfounded, and stood open-mouthed, looking at the spot where the horse had been. It then occurred to their sergeant that it would be as well to give chase, so he gave the order to mount, and the troop dashed off in pursuit. The clatter of the horses' hoofs on the cobblestones grew fainter and fainter, and then we heard no more. "Sox" and I remained where we were, awaiting developments. About five minutes later the troop re-appeared, and at their head rode the Dane, in great glee. On reaching us, he dismounted, handed the reins to a trooper, and prepared to depart. At that moment, an officer of the police, who had evidently been summoned by one of the troopers, galloped up and insisted that the three of us should accompany him to the police station; to this we strongly objected on the ground that it was only a Carnival frolic in which no

arm had been done. The officer, however, would not agree. The Dane had made off with a police horse, and must, therefore, go before the superintendent of police, and "Sox" and I must do likewise because we were friends of the Dane. Then "Sox" saved the situation by inviting the officer of police to accompany us to his apartments, which were but a step away, and discuss the matter over a whisky and soda. This entirely changed the aspect of affairs, and we all proceeded to "Sox's" house, followed by the troopers. As soon as the policeman was comfortably settled in the sitting-room, he was handed a large glassful of a mixture composed, "Sox" told me later, of equal quantities of whisky and Chablis, which appeared to be thoroughly to the liking of our now cordial friend, who then gave permission for his troopers to receive a couple of bottles of whisky for their own consumption. After a second tumblerful of "Sox's" compound, the captain of police bade us a most effusive farewell. We escorted him to the door, and watched him ride off at the head of his patrol, the two leading troopers each carrying aloft, on the point of his sword, an empty whisky bottle.

It is customary, on the fifth and last day of Carnival, for the upper classes to withdraw from the festivities, which are then carried on entirely by the Indian and half-caste population. Four days of such a celebration is enough for the most robust of revellers. For my part, I was very glad to try to recover some of the sleep I had lost during that period, although I had to return to Patacamaya in order to do so, as the noise in the streets on the last night of Carnival rendered sleep almost impossible.

There was a gruesome incident connected with the public ball at the theatre, to which I have just alluded. Most of the danees were of the imported variety—the waltz, the two-step, and so on. Later in the evening,

however, the band played once or twice the music of the *cueca*—the famous Chilian national dance. On one of these occasions, a young couple attracted much attention by the grace and dexterity they displayed in executing the numerous figures of this dance. They were both masked and in costume, the girl's dress being very elaborate. It was discovered that the man was a young Chilian, a cashier in an important business house in La Paz, and his partner was his inamorata. This young man's firm had despatched, a week or so ago, a considerable sum of money to their branch in Coro-Coro, by an Indian *proprio* or messenger. The *proprio* had not been seen again since he left the La Paz office, and the townspeople were much intrigued by his mysterious disappearance.

Indian messengers have a reputation for executing their errands with the utmost fidelity. I have heard it said that there is no case on record in which an Indian *proprio* has embezzled the funds entrusted to him for delivery. It was taken for granted, therefore, that the Indian had been waylaid and robbed, and in all probability, killed; but there was no clue to where or by whom the deed had been committed. About a fortnight after Carnival, the mystery was solved.

The young cashier had obtained leave to go to Chile, which he had done, together with his fair charmer, soon after I had seen them at the ball. A few days later, his landlady in La Paz noticed a peculiar odour proceeding from the apartments rented by the couple. The police were called in, and, on searching the rooms, discovered a trunk in which was found the body of the missing Indian. It transpired that the *proprio* had received orders from the cashier to call at his house before proceeding to Coro-Coro. The unfortunate Indian was then murdered and robbed of the money he was carrying, with which the cashier had decamped. About a year later, the young

man and his mistress were extradited and convicted of the crime. In the man's case, the original sentence of death was commuted to one of life imprisonment, and his accomplice was also condemned to a long term in prison.

There appeared to be an unwonted animation in La Paz on one Sunday morning that I happened to be there. The citizens were all dressed up in extra "Sunday best," and one would have gathered, from the atmosphere of happy anticipation and excitement, that some especially pleasing event was about to take place. This was no other than the public execution of a criminal, in the Plaza San Pedro.

The steep, narrow streets leading up to the Square were thronged with people, high and low, old and young, hastening to obtain good vantage points from which to view such a dramatic performance. The huge *plaza* was an amazing sight. Three sides were lined deep with eager sight-seers, and every window and the flat roof of every house was crowded to capacity. All ranks of society were represented—those high in the social life of the town, with their wives and daughters; *cholas* decked in gayest holiday attire; children of all classes, struggling to obtain a good view; and thousands of Indian men and women—in fact, everyone in town who could do so had gone to the Plaza San Pedro that morning.

A firing party was lined up facing the prison walls, which bounded one side of the *plaza*, for in Bolivia executions are always carried out by soldiers. Presently, the condemned man—an Indian, who had been convicted of many highway robberies and brutal murders—was led out and stood facing the firing party. The officer in charge gave the signal, there was a volley, and the prisoner sank to his knees, wounded. The firing

squad advanced a few paces forward and fired again, but their aim, once more, was bad, and the wretched Indian, although riddled with bullets, was still alive. There was again an advance and another volley, and yet the man lived. Then one of the soldiers, a young Indian, dashed up to the wounded man, and fired a shot which put an end to this ghastly business. The young soldier who had so far forgotten himself as to take matters into his own hands was immediately placed under arrest, for subsequent court-martial. The body was borne off, and the crowd streamed away, headed by a military band, playing the gayest of marches. For the ensuing week, the local photographers did a roaring trade in views of the execution taken at the moment the first volley was fired.

CHAPTER VIII

OVER THE DIVIDE

A Change of Scene—Across the Andes into Tropical Country—The Yungas
—A Jungle Trail—Coroico, an Ancient Spanish Stronghold—A
Miracle—Don Domingo—Mule Teams.

I HAD been for two years in Bolivia when I left the employ of the tin-mining company, which was about to transfer its property to a French syndicate. I received an offer to enter the service of an English company, recently formed to exploit a gold-dredging concession on the Kaka river—a tributary of the Beni, one of the mighty rivers that form the Rio Madeira, a tributary of the Amazon.

The first difficulty which this dredging company had to meet was the transport of the sections of a steel dredger, constructed on the Clyde, across the Andes and down rivers to the spot where it was to operate. This was a task of no small magnitude, for pack mules were the only means of carrying the 350 tons of hull, machinery, and accessories, over the rough and steep trails which led across the gigantic mountain barrier, to the east of which is the low-lying interior of Bolivia—a region of difficult accessibility. There were but two trails to the upper waters of the Beni, both of which started from Sorata and crossed the Cordillera at an altitude of about 17,000 feet, and were so rough and steep as to preclude the possibility of transporting over them the heavier parts of the dredger.

It so happened that at this time the Bolivian Govern-

ment had, for military reasons, a scheme on foot to connect the High Plateau with the Rio Beni by carrying through the comparatively good mule trail which linked La Paz with Coroico, a town on the eastern foot-hills of the Cordillera, to a point on the Beni river called Puerto Pando, which as yet, existed only on the map. From Puerto Pando the transport of troops to the forts on the Peruvian and Brazilian frontiers could have been effected in the large canoe-like boats of the lower Beni, where the water flows smooth and deep. My Company obtained the contract to build the first section of this new road, to a spot on the Coroico river whence the dredge parts could be floated down stream on rafts to the construction camp. This entailed the making of sixty miles of road across very broken country, through dense tropical jungle. The first section had been constructed the previous year, but there still remained much work to be done—bridges to be built, and repairs to be made where landslides during the last rainy season had carried away the trail. The first duty that was assigned to me was to put this road in order.

I left La Paz one morning in August, accompanied by an Indian who served as guide and drove the pack-mule which carried my kit. The first stage of the journey lay through wild country, to the head of a long, narrow gorge from which the trail scrambled up to the pass, and crossed the Andes at about 16,000 feet. The pass itself was a desolate place, overhung by black crags that stood out menacingly, in sharp contrast to the snow-peaks behind them. It is small wonder that the eeriness of the spot should have rendered it of ill repute. It was said to be the haunt of a band of Indian outlaws, who robbed and murdered the lonely traveller, whose body they threw into the dark depths of one of the several ponds in the pass. When I crossed, however, there was no sign of any human being, either traveller or robber.

The trail then zig-zagged sharply down to a rocky gulch, through which ran a snow-fed stream of crystal-clear water. As we descended into the warmer regions below, vegetation began to appear. At about 14,000 feet, to the spiky bunch-grass of the higher altitude were added scraggy shrubs, which, in turn, were succeeded by larger bushes; then came tree ferns and myrtles, rooted in soil that was carpeted with thick moss. Now, trees of considerable size flanked the trail on either side, and presently, in the late afternoon, we rounded a point and arrived at a *posada* (inn), where we halted for the night. The inn—a wooden structure—the first I had seen for many a day—was no better than a rickety barn, and offered little more in the way of hospitality than could be found in the *tambos* of the High Plateau, except in that good coffee was obtainable, the bean being a product of the fertile region which lay a day's march from here.

From the *posada*, the rugged mule track climbed up the steep slopes of a high spur, of which towards noon, next day, we gained the crest, and then descended into the deep ravine on the other side. We were on the threshold of the Quebrada—the broken country—the semi-tropical and tropical regions where the eastern slopes of the Cordillera merge into vast *llanos* or plains; here is the birthplace of mighty streams that flow into the Amazon.

The smooth rocks that paved the path were slippery with water that trickled over them from innumerable little springs, and riding was difficult and slow; but that was forgotten in the wonder of the luxuriant vegetation through which we were passing. Giant trees and lofty palms covered the almost precipitous sides of the ravine, from the bottom of which—many hundreds of feet below—came the murmur of a mountain torrent. Birds of brilliant plumage and gaudy butterflies flitted through the trees, among whose branches monkeys leaped

and chattered. In a deep embrasure in the rocky wall that bounded one side of the trail was a cascade of much beauty. The water poured in considerable volume over the edge of a lofty cliff, to fall at its foot in a cloud of silver spray, in which rainbows hovered above a carpet of pink-flowering begonias and ferns of wonderful delicacy and size. The sights and sounds, the warm, moist smell of a semi-tropical forest were a marvel and a delight to one who had spent two years in the arid country of the High Plateau.

Towards evening, the ravine opened out into a wider valley, and I arrived at the toll-gate and rest-house which was my destination that day.

It was down this valley that I rode on the following day, the road winding through orange and cocoa groves, past coca plantations and vegetable gardens hedged by coffee trees gay with their scarlet berries, to the hill on whose crest was perched the town of Coroico—the chief place of this region known as the Yungas. The new road of which I had charge began at the foot of this hill, and fifteen miles farther, down the valley of the Coroico river, was Challa, where I was to make my headquarters.

Challa was an abandoned plantation in a small clearing, high up the side of the valley and tucked away in a fold of the hill, where stood one long and rather dilapidated hut, thatched with palm leaves. This was the only building. Here I found a young Peruvian—Rodriguez—who had been sent out to receive consignments of machinery, some of which lay piled around the camp. It was a delightful spot in many ways. Close to the camp-house was a bathing-pool, fed by a small mountain stream, whose cool water, on leaving the pool, fell in a high cascade as it raced to the river below. A practically uninterrupted view of the valley and of the hills on the other side could be had from within the hut,



A STREET IN COROICO.



THE CHURCH AND PLAZA, COROICO.
Market-Day.



not only through its doorless entrance, but also through the flimsy walls constructed of upright canes bound together with thongs of bark. This roofed enclosure did duty as kitchen, living-room, and sleeping quarters for Rodriguez and myself and for the two Indian servants. The furniture, though scanty, was substantial. On four wooden stakes driven into the earthen floor, rested a six-foot steel plate belonging to the hull of the dredge. This was the table, flanked by benches made from packing-case boards. At one end of the hut, four stakes supported a rough wooden frame, with sacking stretched over it. This was my bed. There was a similar contrivance for Rodriguez's use, and that completed the list of furniture, unless the pole on two forked sticks from which hung the cooking pot over the wood fire in the "kitchen" should also figure in the inventory.

If the quarters and the food were rough, nevertheless, life at Challa would have been very pleasant, but for the insect pests, of which the worst was the *tavano*, a large horse-fly, against whose bite clothes were no protection. If one sat down for a minute, the *tavanos* alighted in swarms and jabbed their long lances through coat and shirt, goading one to seek protection in movement or under the mosquito curtain, until the setting of the sun compelled these winged Huns to cease hostilities and to retire. One afternoon, with a home-made "fly-swatter," I killed fifty-two *tavanos* in ten minutes, "swatting" those only which alighted on me. The bite of this fly irritates for days, and, after a while, one's system becomes so charged with the poison it injects that painful sores, called *carachas* by the natives, develop on legs and feet. Fortunately, the rainy season brings deliverance from this, the worst of the many insect pests which are the bane of these regions.

The day after my arrival at Challa, I set out on foot,

accompanied by a young Indian, who carried my blankets and the food required for the trip, to survey the state of the remaining forty-five miles of road, and incidentally, to discharge an employee of the Company, who was then at Naranja Cala, the camp on the Coroico river where the new trail terminated. It had transpired that this man—an American named Lewis—was a bad lot—a horse-thief, and a dangerous character, who had made Peru “too hot” for himself.

The trail to Naranja Cala crossed densely-wooded and hilly country, zig-zagged down the almost precipitous sides of mountain spurs to valleys two thousand feet or more below, to climb equally high and steep ridges on the other side. Two such deep gorges had to be negotiated before the trail gained the crest of a ridge which it followed, with many a sharp dip and rise, until it finally descended to the Coroico river, which had been racing through rock-bound chasms from the point where the trail had left it some forty miles back.

Although the trail was sheltered from the broiling sun by the dense foliage of the jungle through which it had been tunnelled, nevertheless the heat was great, and the pent-in atmosphere, heavily charged with vapour, resembled that of a Russian bath. And yet that tramp was delightful, as were also its many successors, for the trail had charms which neither heat nor weariness, hunger nor wetness, could dispel. Of ever-changing character, the road at each turn gave something new to please and to admire—a deep and cool glen, filled with the tinkling murmur of a leaping brook spanned by a wooden bridge; a glimpse through an opening in the forest, the tree-strewn path of a tornado, of a valley below and a palm-covered ridge beyond; or the wonderful perfume of some hidden flower clutched you for an instant in its fragrance.

The forest was full of bird life—screaming parrots and parroquets flew overhead; humming birds of iridescent hues buzzed and darted here and there. A colony of weaver birds fluttered about some dead giant of the jungle, from whose gaunt limbs swung the long nests cunningly constructed to foil egg-thieving monkeys. One particularly gorgeous, though rare bird, about the size of a pigeon, was bright crimson from its beak to the tip of its tail. On every side, that ridiculous bird, the toucan, emitted its yet more ridiculous note, a combination of the yelp of a puppy and the squeak of a rusty-hinged gate. Monkeys, large and small, chattered and whistled as they scampered through the tree-tops, and marvellously-coloured butterflies of enormous size hovered where the sun shone through the palms. An added interest was given by the possibility of chancing on some of the larger denizens of the forest—peccary, deer or panther—whose tracks could be seen in the damp earth of the trail.

At night, I camped under some more-or-less tumble-down palm-leaf shelter, erected by the gangs that had been engaged on the construction of the road. Over a wood fire, my Indian "boy" prepared coffee and the thick rice and *chalonga* soup which is the staple dish of the Quebrada. *Chalonga* is dried, or "jerked," mutton, a product of the High Plateau, where the carcass of the sheep is hung out of doors for many days, until by the combined action of hot sun, dry wind, and salt, it becomes hard and stringy and of a dark-brown colour—in short, mummified meat. In flavour, cooked *chalonga* is strong, and at first, far from agreeable, yet after a while one gets to like it—at least, I did, perforce, for during the next four years *chalonga* and rice twice a day was my principal food.

In the morning of my third day's tramp, I reached the clearing on the bank of the Coroico river, where

stood the bungalow which was Naranja Cala, the end of the road.

Naranja Cala (Orange Rock) so-called because of a few bitter orange trees that grew there, was a delightful spot in a small cup formed by the hills. At some former time, a little colony of river Indians lived there, but they had long since disappeared, and the jungle had engulfed the clearings in which their homes and plantations stood, and obliterated all trace of man. The bungalow was large and better constructed than the shanty at Challa; a more durable and commodious dwelling was required here, as this was the point from which the dredge parts were to be despatched down the river on rafts. It stood on a bit of high ground, overlooking the river, which wound through the wooded flats at the bottom of the hollow. Other habitations there were none, except a tiny hut a mile up river, where lived a half-breed who had formerly worked on the road and had now settled here, subsisting on the produce of his little plantation and the game his muzzle-loader secured for him. This half-breed was of more than average intelligence—a born “sea lawyer”—but he was a villainous-looking fellow, and it seemed more than possible that, in his native town of Coroico, he had been over-intelligent at someone else’s expense, and had, in consequence, found this lonely spot to be more salubrious.

In the bungalow I found Lewis, who was living alone, except for his Indian *mozo* (servant). His appearance belied his reputation, for, instead of the fierce-looking, “eat-em-alive-oh” bandit I had pictured, I was greeted by a mild-looking, blue-eyed man, whom fever had evidently wasted. I broke it to him gently that the Company had no further use for his services, and that he must prepare to accompany me on my return journey in two days’ time, an announcement which apparently,

left him unmoved, and he merely remarked that he supposed headquarters had heard some of the lies that were being circulated about him.

After a day spent in Naranja Cala, I set out on the return journey, accompanied by Lewis, who had accepted the latest change in his fortunes good-humouredly. The first night, we camped on a spot known by the high-sounding name of "San Miguel," where a small clearing had been made in the forest for the sowing of fodder for mule-teams. When, after supper, we had smoked one more pipe beside the camp fire, we turned in to sleep under the little lean-to roof of palm leaves that sheltered a low platform of split palm-trunks. Such a couch, with but the thickness of a blanket between oneself and its hard corrugations, is not of the downiest; nevertheless, I was soon asleep.

In the middle of the night, I awoke with a start—a blood-curdling sound ringing in my ears like the laughter of a demented woman. Again it came from the depths of the jungle, peal after peal of hysterical mirth. "What is it?" I asked Lewis, who was muttering a sleepy curse on this disturber of his slumbers. "The Indians call it '*gallinazo del noche*'" (night hawk) he replied, "but I call it . . ." and here followed a short, but lurid description of the creature—which done, he rolled over. By the fire, now a heap of glowing embers, the two Indians were snoring loudly. With a jerk of my thumb towards the now slumbering Lewis, I remarked to the jungle bird "Then's my sentiments!" and, selecting another trough in the palmwood divan, I sought oblivion.

When two days later, we reached Challa, Lewis rode off, whither he professed not to know, and I heard no more of him. I pushed on to Coroico, there to recruit the workmen required to make the needed repairs to the road, and to plant, in the clearings that had been

cut at intervals along the road, the Indian corn that was to serve as fodder for the mule-teams, there being no grass in the forest.

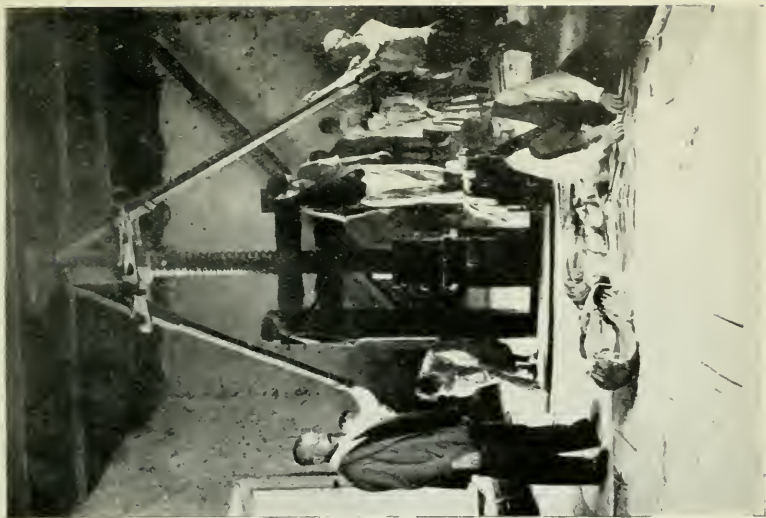
Coroico is a quaint old town, which, in former days, was a stronghold of the Spaniards when they were exploiting the gold mines for which the region was famed, as denoted by its name, which means, in Aymar^a, "the place of gold." Built on the crest of a grassy ridge, it overlooks the valley more than two thousand feet below, up which winds the trail to La Paz. The climb to Coroico, in the full glare of the noon-day sun, by a path fit only for goats and Indians, over which the mule had, for the most part, to be led, had only one redeeming feature—the prospect of quenching the thirst it engendered with a bottle of the Pilsener beer brewed by a German firm in La Paz, of which a supply was always to be found at the end of this journey.

At Coroico I lodged in the house of Se[~]nor Moises Monje, a leading citizen of the town, who, in addition to being its biggest trader in coffee and coca, kept a grocery shop, and was the town schoolmaster, all of which activities he seemed able to conduct simultaneously. The school was held in a room on one side of the inner courtyard of the Monje domicile, and the hum of the schoolboys, as they gabbled aloud, altogether, the various lessons that had been assigned them to learn, filled the building. By this sign, their instructor, no matter on what other business he may have been engaged elsewhere, was able to satisfy himself that his pupils were "carrying-on."

Coffee, cocoa and coca—more particularly the last—are the principal products of this fertile Yungas country. Beautifully-tended coca plantations, with their long rows of low shrubs interspaced with deep furrows, covered the lower slopes of every hill. Three times a year, the leaves of the coca shrub are gathered and dried in the



YUNGAS INDIANS, COROICO.



PACKING COCA LEAVES, COROICO.

sun, and then sold to a factor, such as Monje, who packs them for shipment to the High Plateau. The Bolivian coca, I understand, contains a larger proportion of cocaine than the Peruvian-grown leaf, which is the commercial source of the drug. The demand for the leaf in Bolivia, for chewing purposes, is so great, however, that there remains no surplus for export.

I chanced, the following year, to be in Coroico during the celebrations of the tercentenary of the miraculous deliverance of the town through the intervention of Our Lady of Coroico, of which this is the story as related to me.

The natives of the region had risen in revolt against their Spanish masters, and a large force of Indians, mustered without its adobe walls, was besieging the town, which, at that time, was destitute of the garrison of Spanish soldiery. The inhabitants were not in the position to make any but the feeblest resistance when the hourly-expected moment arrived in which the Indians, mad with drink and blood-lust, would scale the walls. The unspeakable torture and death of every man, woman and child seemed inevitable. Surrounded as they were, it was not possible to send a messenger, with a request for help, to La Paz, the nearest garrison town; and, had it been possible, aid would have arrived too late to avert the massacre.

Devoid of all hope of deliverance through human agency, the panic-stricken inhabitants assembled in the little church which fronts the *plaza*. A solemn mass was celebrated, and, on its conclusion, the figure of the Virgin, followed by a tragic procession, was carried three times around the *plaza*. At that moment, the men on guard by the town wall saw the flashing of the armour of a body of horsemen far up the valley, advancing along the trail which led from La Paz. The besiegers likewise saw the soldiers, and, with Spanish cavalry

so near at hand, they hastily decided that discretion was the better part of valour, and the Indian horde melted away. When the last Indian had decamped, the anxious watchers in the beleaguered town were astonished to see the troop, which had been fast riding towards them, vanish into thin air as suddenly as it had appeared. There had been no Spanish cavalry, only phantom horsemen who had appeared through the intervention of Our Lady of Coroico, and thus had saved the town.

The Indians of the Yungas are of a different type from those of the High Plateau, though they are of the same race and speak the same language—the modifications being doubtless due to a warm climate and an abundance of food. The men wear their hair plaited in long, thick tresses, which, together with their rounded faces and small features, give them a very feminine appearance. Did the women possess their brothers' faces, many of them would be good-looking, but, things being as they are, they are decidedly ugly. The men wear a most comical hat, with an absurdly small, pill-box crown, and a flat brim, and is kept in place by a band passing under the chin. The story goes that, in olden days, these Indians wore hats of immense proportions—four or five feet in diameter—to which a certain Spanish Governor of Coroico took strong exception, and issued an order that any peon wearing a hat of excessive size would be severely flogged. The poor Indians, therefore, in order to be well within the required limits, went to the other extreme, and adopted their present clownish headgear.

At Challa my only neighbour was a queer individual, named Don Domingo S., a member of a well-known Peruvian family of Spanish ancestry. He had wandered to these parts when a young man, and had become a *quina* gatherer, in the days when the wild Peruvian bark was the only source of quinine. The *quina* tree grows

on ridges in the wildest and most inaccessible country, and those who sought its bark had to endure great privations; many of them died of hunger and fever during their quest. Perhaps, these experiences had had their effect on Don Domingo. A man of about forty-five years of age, tall and gaunt, with haggard and sallow face, unkempt reddish hair and beard, and wild blue eyes set in deep sockets, Don Domingo was undoubtedly mad, but a harmless lunatic, except in that he was an interminable talker. He lived with his little boy in a miserable shack about a quarter of a mile from my camp, where he subsisted on the produce of his garden.

Don Domingo had two pet manias—the one was a wonderful gold mine which he had discovered during one of his bark-hunting expeditions, and the other was tobacco growing. A friend of mine had been taken in by his gold-mine story, and had made a rather costly expedition to the place, where, at the end of three days' difficult journey from Coroico, he found some old Spanish workings, in examining which he very nearly lost his life. The mine he pronounced to be worthless. Don Domingo, nothing daunted, wanted him to investigate another wonderful gold deposit he knew of, but my friend had had enough, and consigned him and his mines to other and infinitely more ancient underground workings.

When I arrived on the scene, the old man was delighted with the opportunity of spinning afresh his yarns of the "El Dorado" he knew of, until he found that I had no intention of going to seek it. Then it was he plagued me with his second hobby. He had planted a considerable amount of tobacco, grown, so he assured me, from the finest Havana seed. The leaves he had rolled, quite deftly, into cigars which he insisted on selling to me. He hinted to me that there was untold

wealth for myself if I would but buy his entire production, for sale to my friends in La Paz, which they would doubtless be glad to purchase at very high prices. To smoke these "weeds" was out of the question, for it was like inhaling the smoke of a garden bonfire; yet I used to buy them from the unfortunate fellow to enable him to purchase some necessities for himself and his half-starved boy, a puny, fever-ridden lad.

Whenever I returned to Challa after one of my frequent trips to Naranja Cala, Don Domingo was immediately on my track. He constantly came up to the camp to see me on some flimsy pretext, which furnished an opportunity of airing one of his schemes whereby we twain were to acquire fabulous riches. From early morning until late evening I was ever liable to be attacked. A mosquito net did afford a refuge from the assaults of the *tavano*, but from Don Domingo escape was not so easily effected. I was always careful not to offend the poor fellow, who was the soul of courtesy, and resembled Don Quixote not a little in more than face and figure. At last, in self-defence, I painted and nailed over the door of my hut a sign-board on which was displayed in large letters *Se Prohibe la Entrada* (No admittance). This stratagem had the desired effect. Though the notice was ostensibly for the information of the world in general, yet Don Domingo knew better. He told Rodriguez, that same day, that it was meant for him. Thereafter, he used to waylay Rodriguez instead, whilst I revelled in the security of the sanctuary I had made me.

No strangers ever travelled the road to Challa, for it led to nowhere. Though the Bolivian Government had intended to carry it through from Naranja Cala to Puerto Pando, a distance of about eighty miles, the scheme was eventually shelved. When, a few years later, my Company ceased to have any further use for the

section of the road they had made, it speedily reverted to its original state of jungle.

It was, therefore, quite an event in the life of little Rodriguez when the tinkle of a mule bell in the distance heralded the approach of a mule team, bringing machinery. Presently, the old white horse, whose only duty was to carry a bell and lead the pack mules, rounded the far end of the horse-shoe bend in which Challa lay. The team followed in single file, harried by the Argentine muleteers, hot with riding under a broiling sun in their heavy clothes and with urging and cursing their weary animals. The arrival was always followed by a tremendous commotion—squealing mules and swearing muleteers, and the clank of the heavy hull-plates as they were thrown on the ground. Whenever possible, I avoided Challa when a team was expected, for it usually halted there for the night, and the odour from two hundred and fifty pack saddles, made of untanned sheepskins which had lain on perspiring animals for the better part of a week, was one not easily forgotten.

More than half my time was spent tramping backwards and forwards the long stretch of road that lay between Challa and Naranja Cala. Though I had a mule, I preferred to make these journeys on foot, for, even though the fodder difficulty had not to be considered, it was better to stride along through the jungle, gun in hand, at liberty to examine anything of interest which met the eye, rather than sit, hour after hour, astride a sweating and grunting mule. So I kept the animal at Challa, where it roamed at large, and regarded itself as a household pet. More than once I awoke in the night with a start, to find it standing beside my cot, seeking within the house a refuge from the attacks of biting flies, which swarmed on moonlit nights.

This mule was the bane of the peons working about the camp. They were in the habit of tying the bandanna

handkerchiefs containing their provisions on the branches of trees, to protect the contents from the attentions of ants, which made short work of any such store when discovered by them. Unfortunately, the mule, likewise, was very partial to the salty *chalona*; rice, also, she did not disdain; and sugar she loved. A mule is a cunning animal, and this one, in particular, was no fool; she knew what the coloured handkerchiefs concealed. Carefully removing a bundle from the twig from which it hung, she would trot off with it to some secluded spot, tear off the covering, and eat the provender at her leisure, careless of the execrations of the peon she had robbed, when, at the end of the day, he returned to find the wherewithal for his evening meal gone.

No stock of provisions could be kept at Naranja Cala, for lack of someone to safeguard it, so the food I required for every trip had to be brought from Challa, packed on the broad back of José, my Indian "boy." If I anticipated an unusually long absence, another *muchacho* shared his burden; but I never travelled with more retainers than absolutely necessary, for there is much truth in the Spanish saying "one boy—good boy; two boys—bad boy; three boys—no boy at all." Sometimes I was fortunate enough to add a bird or a peccary to our necessarily slender larder, but game was very shy, and one had to be very alert and quick to shoot ere the potential supper disappeared like a flash into the dense undergrowth.

On one occasion, I was taking a small squad of peons with me to carry out some work at the far end of the road. At mid-day, we halted on a hillside, where the trail zig-zagged through a grove of palm trees, the trunks of many of which, felled when the road was in the making, lay beside the track; these some of the Indians began to examine attentively, and, now and again, they split one open, and explored the interior

with much interest. Curious to learn the object of their search, I strolled over to one little group which appeared to have "struck ile." With the points of their cutlasses, the Indians were digging in the fibrous centre of the trunk, and picking out of it fat white grubs which they carefully garnered in an old tin. This grub, the peons told me, was the *tutuyo*—a great delicacy. "*Muy rico es, Señor*" (it is delicious), they assured me. That evening, when we had made camp, a wriggling mass was emptied on to a battered sheet of tin, and the *tutuyos* were fried over the fire till crisp and brown, frizzling in the thick oil that had exuded from them during the cooking. The odour, I confess, was not unpleasant, resembling the smell of frying sausages, yet I declined the proffered dish when my "boy" brought me some on a plate, "*para probar*" (to try).

One evening, I returned to camp at Naranja Cala, after an afternoon spent in following game trails in the hope of "bagging" something in the shape of fresh meat; for I had been on the road rather longer than I had expected to be, and the stock of provisions was uncommonly low. Ill luck had attended me, however, and there was not even a pigeon to add to the pot. The return trip to Challa, therefore, was going to be made on short rations.

To my astonishment, I found a stranger—a white man—seated on the ground in front of the bungalow, his back resting against one of the props on which the house was built; beside him lay a small bundle and a Winchester rifle. At my approach, the stranger rose, in sections—a long, lanky, middle-aged individual, unshaven and unwashed. He was a "tropical tramp," undoubtedly, but how he came to be in this remote place puzzled me. I asked him what brought him here, and he replied, speaking with an American accent, that he was on his way to the interior, to work on a railway

that was being built across the Brazilian frontier. "Indeed!" I said, "and how do you propose to go on from here, for this is the end of the trail, you know." "Yes," answered the stranger, "but I reckon to make me a raft here, and float down river." Untying his bundle, he produced from the folds of a dirty-looking blanket, a hatchet. "I've brought an axe with me," he continued, showing the hatchet; "I'll just cut down a few trees, and in a couple of days I shall have made a tidy little raft. There's plenty of timber hereabouts," he went on, indicating with a sweep of his arm the surrounding jungle, evidently in support of the reasonableness of his scheme. There was no denying the accuracy of his last remark, for there was nothing but timber. Further questioning elicited that he had had no experience in making rafts or in navigating rapid rivers; nevertheless, he "guessed" that this particular river would present no difficulty to him. Of food, he was entirely destitute, likewise money. "But," said he, tapping his Winchester with a confident smile, "I've plenty of ammunition for this, and when I need grub I'll just hop off my raft and shoot something." As I listened to him, I was asking myself whether I had to do with a fool or a hero, and compromised by deciding that he was a good deal of both. "Well," I said, when his flow of talk had ceased for an instant, "don't let anything which I may say dissuade you from carrying out your plan; nevertheless, it is only fair to tell you that, in all probability, you will be drowned within half-an-hour of embarking on your raft. Furthermore, your chances of shooting anything—rapids included—are very small; so that even if, by some miracle, you should manage to avoid drowning, you will most likely die of starvation. Your prospects, therefore, are not altogether rosy." He seemed about to argue the point, so I changed the conversation by asking him whether he had had



EARLY MORNING, RIO COROICO.
View at Naranja Cala.



THE BUNGALOW, NARANJA CALA.

To face p. 112.

anything to eat lately. I put this question with my heart in my boots, for I was thinking that the prospect seemed bright of having another mouth to feed during the next two-and-a-half days' tramp before Challa was reached, and this man was of that gaunt, slab-sided breed, with an unlimited capacity for food, whose appearance is never any credit to their "vittles." "They gave me some grub at your camp, back at the other end of the road," he replied, showing much interest, "and they gave me a bunch of pancakes to take away with me, but I finished them yesterday."

I saw to it that the boys, much to their disgust, gave the stranger a fair share of the evening's soup, made with the last of the *chalonga* and almost the last of the rice, which, with a few boiled plantains, formed our evening meal. When I had shown him a place where he could sleep, I told the man (who gave his name as Summers) that I was leaving next morning early, and that he might accompany me should he decide to give up his river trip.

When, shortly after dawn the next day, I set out on the return journey, I found Summers waiting for me, pack on back and rifle in hand; he had changed his mind, he said. I swung off at a good pace in the cool of the morning, closely followed by Summers, the two boys bringing up the rear. From the moment we left the house, the Yankee kept up a steady flow of reminiscences. Everything that he and every one of his numerous relatives had said, or done, or been, was minutely related. Mile after mile and hour after hour, the stream of talk continued uninterrupted. By mid-day, I was blaming myself bitterly for having discouraged Summers from proceeding down river, and thereby manifestly interfered with the designs of Providence.

The next day's journey was mostly uphill, and, in spite of the torrid heat, I tried to reduce him to breathless

quiescence by spurting up steep gradients; but his wind was excessively good, and there was never a pause in the monologue as he dogged my footsteps. It was not till after our frugal supper of a couple of sardines and a boiled plantain apiece had been eaten, and we had rolled up in our blankets, that his tongue ceased to wag.

The next day, I bided my time till we reached a place where the trail zigzagged steeply downwards for about three miles. I had gained a few yards on him when I rounded a sharp corner, then dashed full speed ahead, hoping to reach the next turn before he came into view. Just as I was slipping round, I heard a too-well-known voice, shouting "Hey!" but I continued at break-neck speed, and as I ran I heard the footsteps of a man also running. At last, panting and bathed in perspiration, I reached the deep valley below, where I paused to rest and have a quiet smoke, thinking that my Old Man of the Sea had probably given up the chase and that I had gained a quarter of an hour's respite. But I had barely lighted my pipe when Summers appeared at a trot. "Gee! I thought I had lost you," he exclaimed. "It can't be done," I muttered resignedly. And that was my last attempt to escape.

The next day, arrived at Challa, Summers asked me if there was any work I could give him whereby he could earn a few dollars before going on to La Paz. There was really nothing for him to do, but I devised a small job for him. He had said that he was something of a carpenter, so I told him he could build a door for the shanty. No door was necessary, for there was nothing to keep in and nothing to keep out, except the flies, and they could enter through the walls. I myself intended spending the next two or three days in Coroico, so I did not mind his presence about the camp for that length of time, at the end of which I supposed the door would

be finished and Summers gone. He was provided with the necessary tools, and when he asked me out of what timber he was to construct the door, I pointed to the forest. "There is plenty of wood there," I said—which remark seemed to take him aback somewhat, though it was only an echo of his own words at Naranja Cala.

When, three days later, I returned to Challa, Summers asked me to inspect his handiwork, with the complacent air of one about to show a masterpiece. On the ground lay a frame made of heavy, rough-hewn timbers—a gigantic affair which, by more stout beams, had been divided up into squares through which any man could have passed easily. Its outstanding feature was its massiveness, and it would have served admirably to barricade the exit to an elephant-corral. Had any attempt, however, been made to put it into the position for which it had been constructed, its weight would have pulled down the shanty.

"I want hinges," said Summers. I replied that we had none, and that it would take a long time before any could be obtained from La Paz. So I paid him off and the next morning, with thankful heart, I saw him disappear down the road towards Coroico.

Years afterwards, when I revisited Challa, the shanty had fallen to the ground, but the gate was there, and no doubt is there to this day, and will be for many more to come—imperishable and immovable.

The advent of the rainy season, in late November, brought to a halt all further transport, because the trails became too soft and slippery to be negotiated by heavily-burdened animals. Even during the dry season, more than one mule had, where the trail was narrow, bumped its bulky load against the wall of rock, lost its balance, and fallen over the cliff on the other side. Such an accident almost invariably resulted in the death of the mule and considerable difficulty in the recovery

of the load. The muleteers, who were responsible for delivering intact each consignment, always kept such incidents dark, in the hope that the loss of the particular part—which only careful checking would reveal—might pass unnoticed, and they would, therefore, be saved the trouble of recovering it.

During the wet season, from early December till early April, it would have been a waste of labour to endeavour to repair the ravages to the road caused by landslides, to keep it clear of fallen timber, or to enter into the race with tropical vegetation, which, during these months, springs up, as by enchantment, a tall and tangled growth, on any cleared spot. There was nothing to do, therefore, but to await the abatement of the rains.

When, in late February, I made my first trip of the year to Naranja Cala, I was unprepared to find that so much havoc had been wrought in so short a space of time. Whole stretches of the road had disappeared; bridges were down, fallen trees of enormous dimensions formed barricades; and on every spot unsheltered by heavy foliage, the growth on the road was so thick and monstrous that a passage had to be hacked through with cutlasses. Large gangs of men, however, speedily restored the trail to its former condition, and in May I received instructions to return to La Paz, preparatory to proceeding to the dredging claim of which I was to take charge.

CHAPTER IX
ON THE RIO COROICO

A Bridge and a Biscuit Tin—At Odds with the Law—A Jungle Homestead
—Down River by Raft—An Outlaw State—Shooting the Rapids.

AT the end of a fortnight's leave in La Paz, I was about to depart for the interior, via the Sorata route, when word arrived that Puente Armas, a long suspension bridge across the Coroico river, near Challa, was down, so I had to return to reconstruct it. I took with me about £1,000 in Bolivian notes, destined for the construction camp at Maquiqui, whither I was proceeding as soon as the bridge had been repaired. The notes had been packed in an empty Huntley & Palmer's biscuit tin, the lid of which had been soldered on, that it might float in the event of a wreck occurring whilst travelling down river. The tin was then sewn up in hessian, a method usually adopted in the case of packages consigned to the interior, to prevent theft of the contents. This parcel I entrusted to my Indian "boy," José, who, quite unaware of its value, slung it, together with his own goods and chattels, in his carrying-shawl, across his shoulders, and together we set out for Challa one afternoon, as various circumstances had made an early start from La Paz impossible.

Night overtook us long before we reached the ill-famed pass; moon there was none, so progress was slow. It was about nine o'clock when we reached the summit of the pass. I was becoming heartily sick of that day's ride, and José, who was also tired, suggested

that we should stay the night in a little hut which lay a short distance off the trail. In front of the hut we found a number of Indians encamped, who, with a team of donkeys carrying barley-straw, were on their way to Coroico. Fodder for my animal was thus assured, and the next problem was to obtain admittance to the hut, which, my "boy" told me, was inhabited by a solitary, old, Indian woman. Repeated rapping at the door brought no response. José then used strategy, and ordered the door to be opened for the *Intendente*, a person to be feared in Bolivia, for he is the head of the military police of the district. With that, the door opened, and the light of a tallow lamp held in a claw-like hand revealed a wizened, old, Indian woman, who, to judge by the wrinkles on her face, must have belonged to a pre-historic age. With the customary greeting to me, the supposed *Intendente*, she unlocked—muttering the while imprecations under her breath—another door, which gave admittance to a tiny room used as a barn, where I found protection from the bitter cold without. It was not a comfortable night, for I was cold and hungry, in spite of a tin of preserved stew which I had shared with José, who afterwards snored through the night in care-free oblivion, with the biscuit tin beside his head. Had he been aware of its contents, I doubt whether anything would have induced him to spend the night on the robber-haunted pass.

On arrival at Puente Armas, I found that the suspension bridge, which was about 120 feet long, would have to be entirely re-constructed. The anchor holding the cables at one end had been uprooted by the weight of a mule-team which had been crossing it, probably at a run, when the accident occurred. This meant that there was a considerable amount of work to be done before I could continue on my journey to the interior. The problem was what to do with my biscuit tin, as

there was no place for its safe keeping. I decided that the safest method was to leave it about as though it were of no particular value. For a fortnight it lay, unguarded, on the top of a pile of cases of foodstuffs destined for Maquiqui, which had been deposited there, pending the re-opening of the bridge.

Finally, the bridge was finished and, followed by José, bearing the biscuit tin—which was now to me what the albatross had been to the Ancient Mariner—I rode into Coroico, there to pay off the men who had been employed on this job. Whilst in Coroico, I received a summons to see the *sub-prefecto*, an official who is almost almighty in his district. Wondering what he might want of me, I called at his house, where, after a little affable conversation, he enquired whether a certain man called Braun, and his wife, had not arrived at Challa. On my disclaiming all knowledge of Braun's whereabouts, he informed me that he had received telegraphic advice from the police at La Paz that Braun had left for Challa two days before, in the employ of my Company. I replied that I thought he must be mistaken, but he insisted that his information was correct, and that Braun must be delivered up to him, as he was wanted by the La Paz police; to which I answered that I would put no obstacle in his way if he wished to go to Challa and arrest the man. This, however, did not seem to suit the *sub-prefecto's* book. He asked me to return to Challa, with a body of soldiers, who would remain concealed in some spot to which I should lure Braun, where they might take him prisoner unawares, without running the danger of being shot by him. At the same time, he told me he understood that I had in my employ another fugitive from justice—a half-breed named Pedro Ibañez, who had murdered his wife—and he proposed to kill two birds with one stone, and effect this man's arrest

as well, by employing the same tactics, with my co-operation.

Naturally, I flatly refused to have anything to do with the scheme, and expressed quite plainly my opinion of the part in it which he proposed that I should play. My attitude not only seemed to cause him much annoyance, but also considerable surprise. Without more ado, I bade him "Good-day," and left him. A little later in the day, Monje told me that the *sub-prefecto* was so indignant at my refusal to assist the authorities that he contemplated arresting me as well—which information, however, worried me not in the slightest.

I was well aware that the half-breed the *sub-prefecto* spoke of was wanted for murder, as the man himself had told me so, but that was none of my business, and I employed him in making a vegetable garden at Challa. Curiously enough, this man, Ibañez—a wicked-looking scoundrel—often went to Coroico at night, where he walked openly about the streets in holiday attire, visited his friends, and slept in his own house, leaving town before dawn. I wondered at his temerity until I learned that an arrest cannot legally be effected between the hours of sundown and sunrise; in spite of which, I thought he was taking a considerable risk of being detained in some convenient spot by the police, and then formally arrested after daybreak.

On my return to Challa that evening, I found, sitting in my hut, smoking unconcernedly, the man Braun, whom the *sub-prefecto* had been so anxious to secure. With him were his wife and child. I recognised the man, whom I had seen when he was a "gang-boss" during the construction of the La Paz-Oruro railway. He told me that he had been sent down by my office in La Paz, to enable him to escape imprisonment for debt, sentence of which was hanging over him unless he made payment within a given time, during which

period he was forbidden to leave La Paz. I had no great fancy for Braun, a German who, according to his own story, had been a sailor, and had deserted his ship at Antofagasta, nevertheless, he was a *gringo*, down on his luck, and his young Chilian wife, with a little baby in her arms, looked so forlorn that I promised to help him, and to give him a job at Maquiqui. To forestall any further action by the *sub-prefecto*, I bundled them off, bag and baggage, the following morning, to Naranja Cala, there to await my arrival.

When I got to Naranja Cala, the difficulty of transport down the river presented itself. About four miles down the river, on the opposite bank, lived a negro, Isidoro Aparicio, a good-natured ruffian and an expert raftsman, as were also his three sons. Crossing the river on a little raft, I went down the jungle path to Aparicio's house, to seek out that worthy, and persuade him to undertake my transport down river.

The Aparicio homestead was one that did considerable credit to its owner, who had built himself a large and well-constructed house, made of the usual building materials of this river country—cane and palm-leaf. A flock of chickens and ducks wandered about the large courtyard, beyond which, in an extensive clearing, grew all manner of garden produce. From the sugar-cane plantation by the river was derived not only the raw, brown sugar (*chancaca*) commonly used by the natives of the interior, but also the white rum usually drunk in these parts, in the distilling of which Aparicio was a past master.

The native method of making rum is primitive. A wooden apparatus resembling an antediluvian mangle constructed on a design by Heath Robinson, squeezes the juice out of the sugar-cane. This juice is collected in large troughs hollowed out of tree-trunks, where it is allowed to ferment for four or five days. The cider-

like liquid is then distilled. The body of the still (*trapiche*) is a hollow tree-trunk, about four feet long, fitted with an iron or copper bottom, and caulked with clay. The still, when partially filled with the fermented liquor, is closed with a wooden top, the joints being sealed with mud. The vapour, after the fire is lighted under the still, is carried off by a length of tin pipe lying for the most part in the hollow of a palm-trunk, split in half to form a gutter, down which runs water from some neighbouring spring. This is the condenser. After the first distillation, the liquor is redistilled, and when the operation has been carried out by an expert, such as Aparicio, the resultant rum—known as *cañaso*—is an excellent drink. Aparicio boasted that there was not a headache in a hogshead of his brew, and there could certainly have been no better judge of the correctness of that statement than himself, for he was usually more or less intoxicated.

By the time that the terms of payment for the journey to Maquiqui had been haggled over and finally agreed to, it was too late for me to return to Naranja Cala, much to the delight of Aparicio and his wife—a jolly, old negress, of immense proportions, who immediately set about making arrangements for my entertainment on a scale that befitted the occasion. That morning, one of the sons had shot a peccary, or wild pig, droves of which abounded in the jungle. The table that night groaned under a huge tureenful of peccary stew—an excellent dish—followed by grilled chicken, boiled mandioca root (*yuca*)—the substitute for potatoes in these parts—boiled rice, and boiled green plantains—the *puti* of the river Indian, which takes the place of bread; and for drink there was wonderful black coffee. All these things were the product of Aparicio's plantation. Rendered self-supporting by his farm and his gun—an old-fashioned muzzle-loader—the negro lived in his

little domain in the jungle, and laughed at the outside world, with which the only communication, until recently, was by a narrow and difficult path across the forest, used in former times by quinine-bark gatherers.

When I left next day, Aparicio had agreed to appear at Naranja Cala on the following morning, with a double raft and crew. Rafts offered the only means of navigating rivers like the Coroico, which, although when it reached Naranja Cala had become a stream of considerable size, yet presented many dangers from rapids, whirlpools, and abrupt turnings where cliffs sharply diverted the course of the stream. The rafts (or *balsas*) used on those rivers are all made on the same model, ingenious in design. The stout poles used in their construction are the trunks of *balsa* trees, the wood of which is extraordinarily light and pithy. These poles (ten in number) are nailed together by long skewers of palm-wood, whereby the completed raft is given flexibility, a factor of much importance when negotiating boulder-strewn rapids, where a more rigid craft would be broken.

When proceeding down river with cargo, three such *balsas* are usually bound side by side by means of two saplings laid crosswise, lashed on with the fresh bark of the *balsa* tree. This triple raft is called a *callapo*, the average carrying capacity of which, in addition to its crew of five men, is about one and a-quarter tons.

Aparicio was as good as his word, and, early the next morning, he appeared round a bend of the river, with his three sons and a river Indian, towing the two *balsas* for which I had contracted. When a *callapo* had been made of the rafts, baggage and passengers were piled on the two small platforms of cane, supported by palm-wood legs piked in to the poles of the raft; for, the upper surface of a loaded *callapo* is almost awash, even in smooth water.

We pushed off about noon. It was all plain sailing

for the first half-mile of smooth, deep water, and the crew of five—two in the bows and three in the stern—stood at ease, resting on their long-handled, big-bladed paddles of cedar wood. Presently, they jumped into activity as we approached the first *malpaso* (bad spot), where the river, impinging on a rock wall, was thrown off violently at right angles, such a place being aptly described as a *choque* (bump). From here onwards the crew had little rest; they were either paddling hard to keep the raft clear of some rock jutting out from the river bed, or averting with long poles impact with the face of a cliff against which the raft would, otherwise, have been dashed and broken. The skill displayed by the *balseros* (raftsmen) was wonderful, as they steered their craft down narrow, rock-bound gorges, through which the river raced at terrific speed, avoiding one danger by inches only, to rush on to seemingly certain disaster a short distance beyond, as, bumping over smooth boulders, we were hurled down cataracts where the water boiled. Hair-raising though I then considered this experience, it was tame compared to the same trip I made later, when the river was in full flood.

That night we camped on a sandy beach, rolled up in our blankets by the driftwood fire damped down by green branches, the smoke of which warded off the mosquitoes which infested the place.

The last forty miles of the Coroico river, from Songo-Chorro to its junction with the Mapiri, was the eastern boundary of the little outlaw state of Challana that lay between the left bank of the river and the Andes, its impassable western frontier. This region of broken country and thick jungle was peopled by a band of outlaws, fugitives from justice and deserters, who here found a sanctuary from which no power had, hitherto, been able to extract them; to all intents and purposes, it was an independent state. These outlaws, ruled by

a chief who achieved and maintained his position by force, and invariably met with a violent death at the hands of a rival to his power, maintained themselves by collecting the wild rubber, which the forest afforded in considerable quantities, and exchanging it against arms, ammunition, clothing, and salt, with certain licensed traders who alone were permitted to enter this domain. Any unauthorised person who attempted to penetrate into this region was captured ere he had gone very far, taken before the chief and his council, and, unless he could prove that he sought refuge from the arm of the law, his career was terminated by a bullet with the least possible delay.

Several attempts had been made by the military to exterminate this band of outlaws, whose existence, fifty miles as the crow flies, from the seat of government, was a thorn in the flesh of Authority, which was made to look ridiculous. These raids, however, had invariably resulted in the discomfiture of the Government's troops. A withering fire from an unseen foe, concealed in the dense undergrowth on either side of the narrow tracks through the forest, was more than the soldiers could stand, and the survivors were glad to withdraw with more haste than dignity.

Aparicio was one of the traders allowed to enter the Challana region, and he had many tales to tell of violent deeds committed there, and of rich gold and tin deposits to be found in that country. He told me that the previous headman of Challana had, by his physical strength and ruthlessness, kept his position for a considerable period—some six or seven years—during which he had amassed much wealth in the form of gold nuggets kept buried under the floor of his hut. A couple of years ago, an aspirer to the chieftainship, who coveted his hoard as well, shot him one night through the walls of the hut, where he lay sleeping. The murderer, there-

upon, promptly proclaimed himself chief in his stead, annexed his gold, and was now chief of Challana.

At dawn, after a hasty breakfast of coffee and boiled rice, the *callapo*, which had been drawn up as far as possible out of the river to prevent the porous wood from becoming water-logged, was refloated, and we pushed off into mid-stream. About three hours later we arrived at the meeting-place of the Coroico and Mapiri rivers, which form the Rio Kaka, a stream of very respectable size even at this its birthplace.

The valley of the Kaka was broader, and for the most part more open than that through which the Coroico flowed, the latter being nothing more than a gorge, whose steep and densely-wooded sides ran down to the banks of the river. The Mapiri river was part of the highway that linked the High Plateau with the Interior. About fifty miles up-stream from the river junction lay the village of Mapiri, where terminated the main trail from the town of Sorata that lay on the far side of the Andes.

Our progress was now less rapid, for this was the height of the dry season, and the waters of the parent rivers, freed from the restraint of narrow channels, were content to dawdle awhile. Under a sky of brilliant blue, and bathed in dazzling sunshine, we drifted slowly past broad flats, overgrown with tall, broad-leaved *charros*, canes that resembled eastern fans of state. At rare intervals, half-hidden by a plantain grove, stood the hut of some river Indian. Occasionally the river narrowed where it flowed between high walls of rock, then opened out again into shallows where the water ran thinly over its boulder-strewn bed. So low was the water at one such spot—known as *Mal-agua* (bad water)—that a pole of the *callapo* broke as we slid and bumped over the rocks.

I had heard Aparicio and his sons discussing at inter-

vals, since we set out from Naranja Cala, the probable condition of a *malpaso* they called Retama. This place I gathered from their remarks to be the most dangerous spot on the river, especially during low water. We had entered a calm stretch of deep, broad water, flowing between two low ridges. The *balseros* now lashed our luggage more firmly to the platforms on which it rested, and divested themselves of their cotton shirts, and hid them away amongst the baggage. This done, they stood at their respective stations, paddle in hand, prepared for the coming contest, their black skins gleaming in the sunshine.

The two ridges that confined the river now drew close together, to form a narrow portal of perpendicular rock. There was a roar of waters, a sort of war-whoop from the *balseros*, who were now paddling furiously, and our raft, caught in the rapid current, shot between one cliff face and a black, jagged rock, which jutted up in mid-stream, scraping the outer pole of our raft as we passed, and we dropped a sheer twelve feet into the boiling waters of the rapids below. Huge waves surged upwards, and masses of seething water swept over us. We passengers clung to the ropes that bound our luggage to the raft, and the *balseros*, kneeling to retain their positions, were battling to keep the raft in mid-stream. It was a thrilling moment. The sensation was like a combination of riding on a switchback railway and "shooting the chutes," which pastimes, however, can give but a feeble imitation of the exhilaration produced by shooting the rapids of Retama.

A quarter of a mile of turmoil and we rushed, breathless, past a bend in the river into calm water. A couple of hundred yards further another danger awaited us, where the stream was once more abruptly swerved aside by a cliff, at the foot of which the huge whirlpool of Nuve swirled and sucked. Our raft was comparatively

narrow, and, hugging the far shore, we were able to pass on the outer fringe of the whirlpool, which checked our progress for a moment only. It was as though some water monster, lying in wait in that deep pool, had clutched at us as we passed, and, forced to release its hold, had sunk back into its lair with a sucking noise of baffled rage.

The hills between which we were gliding—spurs thrown out from the Andes chain—had now become considerably lower, and a wider expanse of sky was visible between the palm-fringed ridges. The sun beat down with terrific force, and I, for one, was not sorry for the wetting received whilst passing through Retama.

As I lay on the top of the baggage, dozing in the sun, I heard a shout from Aparicio, standing in the bow, of *chancho!* (pig). Seizing my rifle, which lay beside me, I sprang up and saw a drove of peccaries burst through the tangled growth on the river bank, plunge into the water, and swim towards the other side. One after the other, they came, of all sizes—old boars, and sows with little ones but a few days old, which they supported against the current as they swam beside them. I had but time to shoot two ere we were into the thick of them, our raft having been guided to the bank at the spot where the drove was emerging from the jungle. The *balseros* jumped ashore, and with paddle and cutlass laid about them. In the excitement, I also jumped overboard into four feet of water, and seized by the hind legs a fine, half-grown porker, which I held until Aparicio put an end to its violent struggles by a dexterous knife-thrust.

Our raft, now laden with the carcasses of five peccaries, was well awash as we drifted off, but the river from here on flowed smoothly, except for the small rapids just below the mouth of a small stream, the Incahuara (Inca river), a name derived from two peculiar, dark



A MOUTH REACH, RIO KAKA.



RETAMA, RIO KAKA.

Bringing a raft upstream through the rapids.

stains in the sandstone cliff overhanging the river, stains that suggested to the native mind representations of the sun and moon, the former being the symbol of the Inca—"Child of the Sun."

Another mile, and our raft was paddled alongside a bank, a short distance back from which stood a large, two-storied house, in an open space enclosed by *balsa* trees. We had arrived at Maquiqui, the camp where the dredge was to be constructed.

CHAPTER X

CONSEQUENCES

A Camp on a Tributary of the Amazon—Maloney, a Drama of the Quebrada—A House by the River—River Indians—Wild Rubber Estates—Transport Troubles—A Black Britisher.

Two foremen had been sent out by the Clyde shipyard where the dredge parts had been made, to superintend the erection. These two men—Black, the fitter, and Smith, the rivetter—had arrived at Maquiqui about a month previously, and by this time—true to their British traditions—had formulated many grievances (chiefly connected with food) which they lost no time in airing when I appeared on the scene. The prospect of fresh pig-meat during the next few days cheered them somewhat. I soon discovered that their mess-bills—paid, of course, by the Company—averaged nearly £1 per head per day, chiefly for tinned food, of which one consignment bought by them of some up-river trader, at outrageous prices, consisted largely of such items as *pâté de foie gras*, fancy cakes, and French asparagus! When I pointed out to them that such delicacies did not properly belong to the fare which the Company was called upon to provide, Smith grumblingly replied that “a chap must have a bite of summat to eat.” Had there been more work for them to do, they might not have developed such luxurious tastes, but, as yet, practically no machinery had arrived, and the small squad of labourers then in the camp were employed on odd jobs.

Maquiqui, but a few years ago, had been the site of

a large plantation, owned by a man named Maloney, the son of an Irishman by an Indian mother—a man of great physical strength, and a fighter.

Maloney had prospered in rubber trading and other commercial ventures, and was, in his day, perhaps, the most important man in the region. He had a feud with a Bolivian trader, whom he promised to shoot, should his enemy ever set foot in Maquiqui. This, however, the trader did. He stole down river one night, intending to kill the unsuspecting Maloney and, under cover of darkness, to escape into the jungle. Unfortunately for him, his plan miscarried. Someone had given his intended victim timely warning. Thus it came about that the hunter, all unknowing, became the hunted. Maloney lay in wait for his enemy, and shot him dead as he slunk along the path that led from the river to the house. The relatives of the dead man thereupon charged Maloney with murder, and obtained a decree for his arrest. The difficulty that presented itself was that of effecting the arrest, for it was well known that Maloney was not the man to permit himself to be taken prisoner without a fight, which would certainly result in the death of one or more of his would-be captors. Strategy was resorted to.

Maloney was known to have gone up river to the village on a tributary of the Mapiri, the Tipuani river, which lends its name to the village, and also forms the northern frontier of the rebel state, Chalana. The *corregidor* (magistrate) of the village, with a party of armed men, planned to take Maloney by surprise one evening, by gaining entrance to the house where he was lodging, in the guise of friends who had come to spend a convivial evening. This scheme was betrayed to Maloney by a woman. He did not, however, attempt to escape from Tipuani—which he could easily have done—but waited until the appointed night, and then hid in a

clump of trees near the house. When the *corregidor* and his band knocked at the door, they were greeted with a hail of bullets, which wounded several and caused such a panic that they beat a hasty retreat. That was the one and only attempt by the local authorities to capture Maloney.

But one day, a year or two later, a new *Intendente* arrived, whose duty it was to police the region from Mapiri to Rurrenabaque—some 150 miles of river. This was Cusicanqui, a pure-bred Indian and a Colonel in the Bolivian army, whom in spite of his diminutive size—he was less than five feet in height—had gained fame by his efforts to combat the activities of the bands of smugglers on the Peruvian-Bolivian frontier. Brave as a lion, the little man had also proved himself to be so wily and ruthless that he was regarded with terror by the *contrabandistas*—men of a type not easily cowed. It was for these qualities that Cusicanqui was chosen to restore some semblance of law and order in the region of the Upper Beni, where, at that time, highway robbery and murder were rife.

Cusicanqui set about his new task with a heavy hand. Those who were guilty of robbery were flogged in the public squares; those accused of murder were captured and sent to Sorata, prisoners, or, if they attempted to escape, were shot. It was not long ere the *Intendente*, by his ruthless methods, had the entire region under his thumb. A verbal message from him to a man whom he had heard had committed extortion or theft was sufficient to bring about immediate restitution, no matter how unwillingly made, the perpetrator being only too thankful to escape with a whole skin, for a flogging at the hands of Cusicanqui's soldiers reduced the victim to a pulp, bleeding from as many wounds as he had received lashes.

The one thing that marred, in Cusicanqui's eyes, his

cleansing of the Beni region was his failure to effect the capture of Maloney, who, in his jungle home at Maquiqui, laughed contemptuously at plans to arrest him, all of which he could bring to naught by the simple expedient of walking out of his back door into the forest for a few yards, where it would have been impossible to find him. But Cusicanqui was not to be baulked in this, his pet ambition, and fair means being unavailing, he resorted to others.

Travelling up-stream one evening, the *Intendente* halted for the night at the river island that lay opposite to Maloney's house at Maquiqui, and sent a *balsero* across, with a message to Maloney, inviting him to come over and share his evening meal. This invitation Maloney, vain-glorious and confident in his own strength, accepted, despite the warnings and entreaties of his household. As he sat beside the camp fire with Cusicanqui that evening, engaged in friendly conversation and smoking a cigarette, at a given signal his ever-ready rifle was snatched away, a dozen men pounced on him and, in spite of his violent struggles, he was bound hand and foot. There on the beach he lay that night, trussed like a fowl, cursing the impassive Cusicanqui, who, next morning, proceeded, with his captive, up-river to Guanay, where Maloney was confined in the village goal under a strong guard, pending his removal to Sorata for trial.

One night, Maloney was, seemingly, asleep, and his guards drowsy and unwatchful. With a sudden leap, he fell on the nearest soldier, and seizing his rifle made a desperate attempt to fight his way through to the door. Once outside, but a few steps would have brought him to the edge of the forest, and his safety—for a time at least—would have been assured. But it was not to be. One of the guards fired at him at close range, and Maloney fell dead. He was buried in Tipuani, where I saw his grave, marked only by a little mound, over-

grown by rank weeds, for the wooden cross had long since rotted away. But Maloney lives to this day fresh in the memory of those who knew him, or of him, as one who, whatever else he may have been, was a man. And now, of his rich plantation the remorseless jungle has obliterated all traces, with the exception of a big lemon-tree, annually laden with masses of fruit, that grows near to the hardwood stumps of the pillars which formerly supported his house.

The house in which I lived at Maquiqui had been built by the former manager of the extensive wild-rubber estate which surrounded it for many miles on either side, a property now owned by an American syndicate. This house—a large one, being nearly a hundred feet long—was remarkable in that it was the only two-storied building to be found on the Beni river or its tributaries. No nails had been used in its construction other than those which held in place the flooring of split-palm. The joists rested in the forks of hardwood uprights, and the rafters and struts supporting the steep palm-thatched roof were secured by strips of bark. All the walls and partitions were of cane, and kept out neither light nor air. This is the style of construction used in the river region, except that, in all other cases, there is but one floor—an earthen one.

A dwelling that was such a bold departure from customary local architecture as this two-storied building was, in its proud creator's estimation, worthy of some better name than its native designation. So he named it *Nueva Venecia* (New Venice), for was there not an island on the opposite side of the river? At least it was an island during the flood season, and many a suburban villa at home is described as "The Laburnums" or "Bellevue" by an even greater stretch of imagination.

The chief item of expense in the construction of a house in the Beni region is the roof, which is composed



CAMP MAQUIQUI.



HEADQUARTERS, CAMP MAQUIQUI.

The Mess.

To face p 184.

—if, as at Maquiqui, it is of considerable size—of a vast number of palm leaves. The leaves of two species of palm, known locally as *unutu* and *wito*, only are used for this purpose, because of their lasting qualities. These leaves, resembling huge ostrich feathers, are dragged through the jungle along little paths cut for the purpose, to the building site, where the stems are split, and are then piled up in the sun, that the stems may shrink before thatching is commenced, so that they may be laid as closely as possible to one another, the overlapping leaves being bound to the roof skeleton by strips of bark. The life of such a roof is between five and seven years.

Rubber is the life of the region of the Beni, as also of the other head waters of the Amazon. On the price of this raw material in the European markets depends the fortune of everyone living in these parts. The centre of the rubber industry on the Upper Beni was Rurrenabaque. The requirements from the outside world of that town and of the region which it supplied were not inconsiderable in such goods as tinned foods, textiles, arms and ammunition, refined sugar, and salt—not to mention alcoholic liquors of every description. For such merchandise the Upper Beni was entirely dependent on supplies obtained from La Paz or Sorata on the High Plateau, the goods being transported by mules to Mapiri village, whence they were rafted down river, there being no other means of communication. Transport by river from Mapiri to Rurrenabaque was virtually the monopoly of two concerns, Reyes, Lopez y Compania, a Bolivian Syndicate, and Carlos Schmidt, a Chilian of German parentage. Their control of the river transport lay in that they, between them, possessed practically every river Indian in the region for the manning of their rafts. These Indians are of the Leco tribe, and speak a language

entirely different from that of the Aymará Indian of the *Altiplanicia*. The Leeos, who, but a few years previously, numbered about one thousand men, are now reduced to about one-fifth of that number, owing to an epidemic of smallpox which nearly exterminated the tribe. The men are almost amphibious, and their dexterity in the handling of the unwieldy rafts in swift and dangerous waters is marvellous.

Unlike the natives of the High Plateau, the River Indian is clean in his person and in his habits; his hut is kept swept and neat, and his clothes are washed frequently. The men are clad in a short, sack-like smock, much embroidered around the neck, and cotton trousers tied at the ankles. They seldom wear a hat, but when on the river, or hunting, a bandana handkerchief folded into a narrow band is bound around the head. The single garment worn by the women—the *tipoy*—is an ankle-long chemise, red, blue, yellow or green.

The Leco is a child, careless and irresponsible, and for ever laughing; and he laughs heartiest on occasions when one would think he had least cause to do so. If, when towing, his foot slips, and he falls on the slippery boulders, he laughs whole-heartedly, and the harder his fall the greater his merriment, in which, of course, his companions join. It would seem to be a point of honour with him that he should greet any misfortune as a huge joke—a code for which much may be said in its favour.

There is a quaint custom observed by these people when a child is born. As soon as the "little stranger" arrives its mother takes it down to the river to bathe. This done, the woman kills a fowl and puts it in a pot to boil. In the meantime, "father" retires to bed and plays the invalid, and it is he who is fed, by a solicitous wife, with the nourishing chicken soup.

Every Leco on the river has a *patron* whose chattel he is, bound to him hand and foot by the debt he owes

him. When a Leco youth is old enough to become a useful *balsero*, he is, without delay, inveigled into contracting a debt with one or the other of the principal river transport firms. He is taken into the *pulperia* (store), and invited to help himself to what he pleases—a muzzle-loading shot gun, some coloured handkerchiefs, or, perhaps, a tin or two of salmon, which, to the Leco mind, is the acme of delicious fare, notwithstanding that the rivers abound with excellent fish. From the moment he accepts these goods, which are charged to his account at exorbitant prices, which he does not even trouble to ascertain, the young Leco is no longer a free man. By custom and by law, he is obliged to work for his *patron* until this debt is paid—an eventuality which is never likely to occur, for, with the years, his indebtedness increases rather than diminishes. Should a *balsero* seek service with another employer, the latter must either return him to his master or pay the Indian's debt. To the River Indian, who is a happy-go-lucky individual, careless of what to-morrow may bring, provided that he has sufficient to eat to-day, this bondage is no hardship. It is possible that the system is beneficial in so far as the Leco is concerned, for, if left to his own devices, it would never occur to him to work in order to obtain the wherewithal to buy those things which the little plot of ground he cultivates does not produce—his cotton clothes, the gun and ammunition which provide him with fresh meat from time to time, and salt, which was unknown to him until it was introduced by traders from the other side of the Andes, in comparatively recent years.

The *balsero* is paid according to the length of his trip, though he rarely, if ever, sees the money he earns, it being credited to him in his master's books, against which amount he can draw goods from the store. The crew of a raft is also supplied with free rations sufficient

for the trip, consisting of *chalonga*, rice, green plantains, salt, *chancaca* (raw sugar), a tin or two of sardines, which the Leco's soul loves, and cigarettes.

On the rubber estates of the Lower Beni, the remoteness of which from the outside world render their owners a law unto themselves, the peonage system is often harshly enforced according to common report. A strapping young Indian by chance arrives at the headquarters of one of these *gomales* (rubber estates), is lured into the *pulperia*, and is urged to take all manner of articles, many of them useless to him, including several bottles of poisonous compounds labelled "cognac" or "gin." He is allowed a couple of days to recover from the effects of the fire-water, and is then handed a cutlass, a nest of tin cups for collecting rubber milk, and a milk-can, and is ordered off to a camp in the jungle, to collect wild rubber. Should he protest, the fact that he is no longer a free agent is quickly demonstrated to him by means of stick or lash. Moreover, he is made to understand that he is expected to produce a given weight of rubber monthly, and, should he fail to deliver that quantity at headquarters, his back would pay the penalty. Escape for him there is none. He is never allowed to receive any money; therefore, should he venture to make his way up or down river, hunger will drive him to apply for work at some other *gomal*, where, unless he can produce a certificate from his previous employer, stating that his debt has been cancelled, he will be held a prisoner and returned to the estate to which he belongs. This is a custom to which each *gomal* owner rigidly adheres—not so much out of consideration for the proprietors of neighbouring estates as for fear of reprisals should he not do so.

The most notorious maltreater of peons on the Beni was a Frenchman named Mouton, who, some twenty years previously, had managed a rubber forest owned



INDIAN GIRLS.
Rurrenabaque, Rio Beni.

To face p. 138.

by a French company. Tales are told to this day of the savage cruelties inflicted on his workers by this monster. Many a poor wretch died under the lash for failing to produce the stipulated amount of rubber. Mouton employed "agents provocateurs" to induce peons to attempt to escape. Whenever a man, rendered desperate by inhuman treatment, rose to the bait of freedom cunningly dangled before his eyes, the spy made all the arrangements for a joint flight by night down river. At the last moment, as they were about to float off on a raft constructed in secret, they would be captured and brought before Mouton. The penalty for an attempted escape was death. The wretched prisoner was compelled to dig a grave, and ordered to stand in it; then Mouton drew his revolver, and shot him. Such an execution was always carried out in the presence of as many fellow rubber-collectors as possible — "*pour encourager les autres.*"

Mouton's regime of violence, which lasted for several years, came to an abrupt end in the following manner, according to the story current on the Beni. A young Frenchman who, with his wife, had just arrived in La Paz, was offered by the representatives of Mouton's Company in that town the post of storekeeper on the estate, at a good salary, which offer he accepted. Accompanied by his wife, he proceeded to the Beni, to take up his duties. On his arrival at the *gomal*, however, he found that Mouton had other ideas in regard to suitable employment for him. He was forcibly removed to the furthest camp in the jungle, there to collect rubber, and his wife was installed as Mouton's mistress. This arrangement was a fatal error on Mouton's part. One night, the young Frenchman, rifle in hand, arrived unobserved at Mouton's headquarters beside the river, and, peering through a window of the house, he saw his wife sitting on her lover's knee, drinking champagne,

The Winchester barked twice, and Mouton and the woman pitched forward, dead. In the pandemonium that ensued, the avenger escaped down the river ; whither, no one troubled to enquire.

Stories of instances of cruelty on other isolated rubber estates reached one from time to time. There was one act of savagery, which, it was reported, had been committed a short while previous to my arrival in the region, by the *administrador* (superintendent) of a *gomal*. The man in question possessed a cow, an animal which is practically non-existent between the Cordillera and the great *pampa* district of Reyes, there being no grass in the hilly jungle region to support any cattle. In this up-river *gomal*, however, there was a certain amount of open country, producing fodder enough for this cow, which, being unique, was the pride of its owner. One night, the animal got loose, and broke into the little garden of a peon belonging to the estate. The noise made by the beast as it blundered about aroused the peon, who grasped his rifle, and seeing, in the dim light, the form of what he took to be a deer, fired. The animal stumbled and fell, and, with a shout of glee, the peon ran to view the provider of many a hearty meal to come. His amazement and horror when he discovered that he had shot his *patron's* cow may easily be imagined. Terror-stricken by the thought of the consequences which would assuredly follow, he fled into the jungle, leaving behind him his wife and children.

On the following morning, a search for the missing cow resulted in the discovery of its carcase and of the bullet wound. This dreadful news speedily reached the ears of the *administrador* who, consumed with anger, went to investigate the matter himself. From the trembling wife of the perpetrator of this outrage, he wrung the story of the fatal shot. When he learned that the peon had sought refuge in the jungle, he vented

his fury on the unfortunate Indian woman. First he set fire to the little cabin; then, with a cutlass, he hacked off her breasts, and caused her to be thrown, screaming, into the river, where she drowned. Cusi-canqui was no longer *Intendente* in the land, and this barbarity went unpunished.

The price of rubber, in the year I arrived at Maquiqui, was very high, and there was a boom in river transport. Down-river merchants, anxious to obtain their merchandise, were willing to pay higher freight rates on their goods. The *balsa* owners, who believed in making hay while the sun shone, devoted their activities almost entirely to this more remunerative business, to the detriment of the transport of the dredge sections, knowing full well that the latter could not be conveyed to the construction camp except by their agency, and could, therefore, wait until some time more convenient to themselves. The contract which bound them to deliver a certain number of tons by a given date was conveniently ignored. The consequences to my Company were very serious, entailing the expense of maintaining in the camp a large number of workmen insufficiently employed, and delaying the completion of the dredge by at least a year, because of the fast-approaching season of high floods, when navigation was impracticable.

In the meantime, the workmen were receiving instruction in the art of rivetting and caulking, of which they were, on arrival, woefully ignorant. Under Smith's expert teaching, however, most of them attained a fair degree of proficiency. The greater number had been imported from Peru, where they had been employed in railway bridge construction and similar ironwork. The dredge material on the site was soon rivetted together in so far as possible. Further consignments arrived in dribblets only, and it became a daily problem how to keep the

men usefully employed, of which timber-sawing was as a rule, the solution.

The trees of the jungle were of almost countless species—monster cotton-wood trees, whose trunks, in some instances, six men with outstretched arms could not encircle; trees of wood so hard that it could not be sawn; cedar, mahogany, many-hued acaranda and other valuable timber. There was one curious point to be observed when felling a tree of which the wood was required for constructional purposes, viz., that it should be done only during the first quarter of the moon. If cut when the moon was full, the timber would, within a few months, be riddled by a tiny wood-borer, known locally as *polillo*. Timber into which *polillo* has entered, no matter how strong originally, will, within the space of a year or less, be rendered useless. When this was first told me, I regarded it as one of the many native superstitions, but eventually I was convinced of its truth. To test it, I cut two branches off the same tree—the one, during the new moon, and the other a fortnight later—which I marked, to distinguish them, and suspended, under cover, from the same beam. In a month or so, there was evidence of *polillo* in the full-moon stick, and, at the end of another six months, it had become friable and easily broken; the other stick, however, remained sound and free from *polillo*. This test, and many other instances which came under my observation during the next three years, all tended to confirm the accuracy of this bit of native lore.

The selection of the timber suitable for launching ways and planks was one for which no one in the camp was qualified, with the exception of a Jamaican negro, named Bentley, whose long residence in this region had made him familiar with the qualities of every tree that grew in the jungle. Bentley, in many ways, was invaluable; not only was he a good woodsman, but he was a first-

class man on a plantation, and knew how to construct the type of house peculiar to the river region. He had drifted in to the Beni region many years ago from Callao, where he had probably deserted his ship, and had turned up at Maquiqui in the first days of its existence as a construction camp, in search of employment.

Bentley was to me a source of perpetual amusement, even if I did have to threaten him, from time to time, with severe corporal punishment for conduct conducive to a breach of the peace. He was a most ardent Britisher, and his attitude of slightly contemptuous superiority towards his Latin-American fellow-workmen was often hotly and noisily resented by them.

“Bentley,” I would ask him, “of what nationality are you—Bolivian?” “No, sah,” he would emphatically reply, “I’m an Englishman.” “But, Bentley, you have never been in England.” “That makes no difference, sah; I was born under the English flag.”

One morning—I believe it was Christmas Day—Bentley appeared in the courtyard of my house, carrying, at the end of a long pole, a flag the like of which I had never seen before. By the triumphant grin on the darkey’s face, I concluded that it was something of which he was very proud, and asked him what it was. “It is the Union Jack, sah!” Out of pieces of coloured calico, he had constructed the British flag as he remembered it. “I made this flag, sah,” said Bentley, “to show these heah Bolivians and Peruvians what the English flag is like. They’re a very ignorant lot, sah, and I want to give them to understand that I’m an Englishman, sah.” Whereupon, he marched around the courtyard once again and returned to the men’s quarters, which were located about a quarter of a mile away, on the far side of the construction site. For months this quaint emblem fluttered over Bentley’s little hut where he lived with his “wife,” Eliodora, a huge Colum-

bian negress. One day he confided to me—"You know, sah, Eliodora is not my real wife; she is only my woman. My real wife is in Callao." And there it would appear that Bentley was content to leave her, as he had not seen her for at least ten years. But he was, none the less, proud of the fact that he had a legal wife existing somewhere, to the best of his knowledge and belief!

Two of the Peruvian rivetters had brought with them their *queridas*—"wives" pro tem. The presence of these two women in the camp was the cause of many disturbances. On one occasion, the "husband" of one of them came to see me in regard to a revolver duel to which he had been challenged by a rival to the affections of the fair Rosa. The fellow had no desire to fight a duel, so he came to me with his trouble. He almost tearfully contended that, since Rosa was his—for the time being—there was no necessity for resorting to such a dangerous proceeding in order to afford his rival a chance of wresting her from him. His argument seemed sound enough, so I had the fire-eating swain brought before me, and cautioned him to refrain from resorting to such violent methods, and to leave this man's lady-love alone.

A Bolivian law forbids the selling of alcoholic liquors to workmen within the confines of the property where they are employed, except by permission of their employer. But the arm of the law does not reach far in the river region. I used every endeavour to stop the selling of liquor to my workmen by up-country traders on their way down river, but it was almost impossible to prevent small barrels of white rum from being landed at some point above the camp, whence they would be brought down by night, resulting in the absence from roll-call on the following morning of several men who would be found lying incapacitated in their huts. Though stringent orders had been issued against buying rum from casual

traders, every man was, on Saturday afternoon, able to purchase at the camp store, a half-bottle of rum issued to him at cost price; for to have entirely cut off the liquor supply would not only have been unjust, but would have resulted in a great increase in the smuggling industry. The men, therefore, could make merry on Saturday night, recover on Sunday, and be fit for work on Monday morning. This system worked very well, although it did not entirely eliminate occasional orgies taking place in the camp during the week. Late one night, Bentley came down to my house and presented himself at the door of my office, where I sat, writing. "What is it, Bentley?" I asked. "If you please, sah," he said, in the high-pitched voice of an excited negro, "that thar Rosa woman is down at my house, and she is tolerably drunk, sah." He received, however, but little sympathy from me, for it transpired that he had been having a convivial party, and, as a result of undue attentions paid by him to Rosa, he had incurred the displeasure of the formidable Eliodora, who stood at least a head higher than he.

CHAPTER XI

MUDDY WATERS

A Journey Up-river—"Rogues Unlimited"—A River in Spate—A
"Gunman's" Return and his Exit.

ONE day, when the machinery situation had become intolerable, I hailed a passing *balsa*, which was returning up-river to Guanay, and arranged with the Leco crew to take me, as a passenger, to that village, a journey of thirty miles, taking about a day and a half to accomplish when the river was low.

Travelling up-stream is very different from the downward journey. Each *balsa* is manned by three Leos, of whom two tow, with long ropes of rattan, wherever the river bank permits it, while the third man stands in the prow, and poles. A tow, which is seldom of long duration, terminates when the bank no longer affords a foothold. The towmen scramble on board and then pole and paddle vigorously across stream, to make a bank where towing may be resumed for a short distance. At every bend in the river these tactics have to be resorted to. For the most part, the rôle played by the passenger is one of passive ease. I lay on a little platform, basking in the sun, watching the forward man who, with one foot on the prow of the *balsa*, where it tapered to a single pole, swung his body out over the water, as he leaned on the long, light pole wherewith he kept the raft off the bank; whilst the two others, bent double as they ran along a stretch of sandy beach, or scrambled, with cat-



A RIVER INDIAN'S HOUSE.



LECO INDIANS.

A mid-day halt, Rio Kaka.

like agility, over the smooth boulders which lined the bank, towed at wondrous speed.

The crossing of the river, wherever the current ran swift and deep, was always the occasion for shouts of excited glee on the part of the Lecos, who, using their poles as far as the depth permitted, shot the raft out into mid-stream, and then, taking up their paddles, dug into the water with strong and rapid strokes. Progress was most difficult wherever the river flowed between smooth and vertical cliffs. In such places, the towmen, standing up to their armpits in water, advanced laboriously, the poler taking advantage of every little cranny in the rock. Progress, though comparatively slow, was continuous, as, except for a halt to eat their mid-day meal of boiled plantains and a little cold *chalone* and rice left over from the previous night, the *balseros* toiled uninterruptedly from daybreak until shortly before sundown, when camp was made on some sandy beach, on to which the *balsa* was hauled.

In the afternoon of the second day I arrived at the village of Guanay—or, rather, at “Wito Ponte” (Wito-palm beach), on the opposite bank—where lived Carlos Schmidt, who, unfortunately, was then absent in La Paz. But I was given a cordial welcome by his Italian manager, one Bollati, who insisted that I should stay there as a guest. Indeed, no other resource was open to me, for Guanay boasted of no travellers’ rest-house. The wayfarer, therefore, was forced to seek a hospitality which, I must say, I always found to be cordially extended.

Guanay was an unattractive village straggling over a sandy flat. The principal articles for sale in the few little shops it possessed were various forms of liquor, the drinking of which seemed to be the principal industry of the place. My object in going to Guanay had been to bring pressure to bear on the two *balsa* companies to expedite the transport of the machinery. Schmidt being

away, there was not much to be done in that quarter. I then visited the firm of Reyes, Lopez, the four members of which deserve description.

There was Reyes, big, fat and jovial, whose real home was in Sorata, where lived his wife and family, whom, however, he seldom saw, as he spent most of his time in Guanay. He was the senior partner, and, perhaps, the most respectable, as he was certainly the most intelligent of the four. His respectability was merely comparative, as it was well known that he was the father of his sister's two children, who also lived in Sorata.

Lopez, a year or two previously, had brutally kicked to death his wife. Her relatives had obtained an order for his arrest, to escape which he lived in hiding on a plantation a few miles up the Mapiri river.

The third partner—Gutierrez—was the *corregidor*, and a sot, whose drinking bouts, lasting without a sober interval for many months on end, afforded him but little opportunity to indulge in much rascality.

The fourth member of this precious quartette was, in my opinion, the biggest scoundrel of them all—Enrique Quispe, a thick-set, brutal-looking half-breed, who had once been flogged, by Cusicanqui's orders, for robbery. He was also suspected of murder.

Each member of the firm, on very good grounds, strongly suspected the honesty of the other three, and they watched one another closely. Quispe owned a small shop, which was conducted by his wife, a *chola*, whose bitter tongue was feared by all Guanay, even by Quispe himself. Quispe, a year or two before, had had a mistress—a good-looking *chola* named Serafina, on whose account his wife had, more than once, attempted to "knife" him. One day Serafina abandoned her savage friend for the more genial Reyes, who was also a much richer man. Quispe was infuriated by Serafina's faithlessness, but he said nothing, and remained on seemingly friendly terms with his success-

ful rival, until one day the two of them were alone in the company's store. Seizing an opportunity when Reyes was bending over a ledger, Quispe drew his revolver, pushed the muzzle against his partner's back, and, pulling the trigger, cried "*Muera, perro!*" (Die, dog!) There was a click, but no report. Instantly Quispe pulled the trigger once more, with the same result. Two misfires! With an oath, the would-be assassin returned the revolver to his pocket, and started to leave the store; but Reyes, who by this time had realized Quispe's intention, seized him by the throat and pummelled him unmercifully. Quispe, though strong, was a coward, and Reyes was powerfully built. At last the battered Quispe, sobbing with pain and rage, escaped to his own house, where he related his misadventure to his wife, whose fury at the maltreatment that her man had received knew no bounds. It would have been but natural had this incident resulted in the retirement of one or other of these men from the partnership; yet no such thing occurred. For several years, until Reyes' death, they lived on apparently friendly terms, though hating each other beyond measure.

There was a sequel to this tale three years later, when Reyes died suddenly in Guanay. There was no shadow of doubt that his death was due to a taste for rum, combined with apoplexy. But it gave Quispe and his wife a splendid opportunity to vent their long-stored-up malice. They lost no time in circulating the story that Reyes had been poisoned by Serafina, and sent word to this effect to his widow in Sorata, who, acting on this information, obtained an order for an autopsy to be performed on her late husband's body. This task was carried out by the village schoolmaster, a drunken old vagabond, who had drifted in to the village some years before, and, on the strength of a very small amount of knowledge, had been installed as preceptor to the

youth of Guanay, at the magnificent salary of one-and-eightpence per day, which procured him just the wherewithal to live.

The autopsy was performed in the public square in the presence of the assembled inhabitants, and in the most gruesome manner, by the schoolmaster, who revelled in his task. The stomach and intestines were removed and placed in a jar, and then the liver was extracted and held up to view by the operator. A groan of horror went up from the crowd. It was nearly black!—as was but natural in the circumstances. But its appearance convinced many of the truth of Quispe's accusation. It, also, was placed in the jar, which was then sealed and despatched to Sorata, for analysis. No traces of poison were discovered. This negative result, however, was entirely inconclusive to those who were convinced of Serafina's guilt, and Reyes' widow, urged by Quispe, who had made a special journey to Sorata for the purpose, insisted on obtaining an order for the *chola's* arrest. With this order in his pocket Quispe returned to Guanay, where it was immediately obeyed by the then *corregidor*, and Serafina was despatched, under guard, to Sorata, there to remain in gaol, awaiting her trial. There were many in Guanay, however, who were convinced of the woman's innocence, and a collection was made amongst these for her benefit, as she was penniless. I happened to be in Guanay at the time, on my way home, and was glad to have an opportunity of contributing to the fund. It was not until recently that I learnt of the fate of Serafina. The unfortunate woman spent nearly a year in the noisome Sorata gaol, was tried and acquitted, and then returned to Guanay, where she died a short time afterwards.

Such was the composition of the firm that had made itself responsible for the transport down river of a large proportion of the dredge material. Severally and col-

lectively I saw the partners, remonstrated with them for their failure to live up to their agreement, and demanded that they should amend their ways in this respect. Excuses profuse, explanations diverse and inconsistent, were proffered by these worthies. Each in turn hinted darkly that the blame for non-adherence to the terms of the contract in the past was due to the dishonesty or incompetence of the other partners; and as to the future, "*no hay cuidado*" (there is no need for worry) "I myself shall see that all is done as it should be"—all of which, though diverting, was scarcely satisfactory. I had lived long enough in Bolivia to know that when a man said "*no hay cuidado*," the worst might safely be expected. It was, therefore, with grave doubts regarding the success of my mission that I returned to Maquiqui the following day on a *callapo* which some independent trader was sending down river.

My worst fears in this respect were realized, for there was little improvement in the situation. The rainy season began in November, and ushered in the period when river transport was practically at an end until, in April, the subsidence of the floods rendered the rivers once more navigable. During that space of four months, Maquiqui was cut off from the outside world except for a narrow jungle path, difficult to traverse, which linked the camp with Guanay. It was, therefore, essential that a stock of foodstuffs should exist in the camp store sufficient to maintain the colony until the re-opening of the river transport. This was barely brought about in time—in fact, the last *callapo*, loaded with foodstuffs, arrived on a river so high that the return trip was out of the question, and the crew, having hauled their *balsas* out of the water, and propped them up on a high bank, for service the following year, returned to their homes by the forest trail.

The first really high water of the season is an extra-

ordinary spectacle. The river at Maquiqui flowed between high banks, and was about two hundred and fifty yards across, with an average depth in very low water of about twelve feet. The rain had descended in an uninterrupted deluge for several days, during which the river had risen but slightly, when one morning I awoke to the realization of the sound of roaring water. When I looked from my balcony I saw a river, formerly smooth and crystal-clear, now risen ten feet and a mass of turgid red-brown water, tearing past at a terrific rate, its surface broken by big waves, on which tree-trunks bobbed as they were swept along. Five hours later the water had risen another six feet, and was flush with the top of the bank on which stood the house, only fifty yards from the edge. From one side to the other the river was strewn with trunks of trees, many of them giants, centuries old, whose roots and branches dragged over the bed of the stream. Nothing could withstand the force of those waters, and, great and small, the trees were hurried along until, in some channel below, the larger of them stranded, often to form a danger to navigation. The bank was eaten away with disconcerting rapidity, and many yards of the *patio* between the river and the house had disappeared before, in the late afternoon, the *avenida* (flood) subsided some six or seven feet, a level which the river maintained for several months to come, except on the many occasions when it was again in full flood.

As the workmen had insufficient work to do, it was but natural that they should become troublesome. They found a grievance which was carefully nursed by a born agitator, a Peruvian named Thompson, of mixed Scotch and Indian blood, who was one of the best blacksmiths I have ever seen. A mass delegation which waited upon me one evening stated the grievance—which, by the way, was ill-founded—coupled with the ultimatum that, in



THE DREDGE NEARING COMPLETION.



UNLOADING "CALLAPOS."
Maquiqui, Rio Kaka



the event of the demand not being acceded to, they would leave in a body; to which my answer was that every man would, if he so desired, be paid off in full in the morning. This attitude, instead of the "climb-down" they had anticipated, had a sobering effect on most of the men, all of whom were earning far higher wages than they could obtain elsewhere. Nevertheless, urged forward by the ringleaders of the strike, they presented themselves, with few exceptions, on the following day to claim their wages, having received which they set off on their long, wet tramp through the forest, over a difficult trail crossed by many a swiftly running stream before it emerged at Guanay. With them went the cause of many a disturbance in the camp—the two *cholas*, leaving Eliodora thenceforth without a rival, for Bentley remained, together with several others, in numbers sufficient for the carrying on of the work.

The remaining months of the wet season were rather dreary. Day after day the rain descended from a leaden sky, through which never a glimpse of blue was to be had or a ray of sunshine to be seen. No raft ever came down the river, whose swollen and muddy waters gave off an offensive odour, due to the decayed vegetation swept from the forest.

Towards the end of February the storekeeper told me that a Leco Indian who lived on the opposite side of the river about a mile higher up wanted to buy a packet of candles. Now, owing to the state of the river, no further supplies were likely to be received within the next two months, and as the stock of candles on hand was low they were not for sale to anyone unconnected with the camp. The Leco does not need artificial light, for he goes to bed when it is dark; wondering, therefore, what reason had induced the Indian to brave the perilous crossing for the sake of a few candles, I sent for him. On questioning the man, I learnt that his baby was very

ill, and the candles were to be lighted around its corpse. It had not occurred to him to bring the *hua-hua* (baby) to see if anything could be done for it, so I sent him off to fetch it. Within an hour he returned with the sick child, a few-months-old baby, which, clad only in its little cotton shift, lay blue and lifeless in the arms of its mother. With a couple of buckets full of hot water I prepared a mustard bath, in which the infant was soaked until it breathed more freely and had regained a more normal colour. Then, wrapped in an old flannel shirt of mine and a blanket, it was restored to its mother. Next day when she brought it to me the child had practically recovered, and in two days' time the family was allowed to return home, the mother delighted that her child had been saved, but the father somewhat disgruntled. The worthy fellow had doubtless anticipated enjoying a good wake, the requisites for which—namely, ample supplies of rum—he probably held in readiness. And now all his hopes of an eight-day carousal had been dashed to the ground by my interference. He had good reason for regarding me as a meddling busybody!

There was a large tract of rubber-producing forest in this region managed by a young German named Otto Schneider, who had acquired American citizenship during a few years' residence in one of the Western States. Schneider, whose headquarters were at Chichiponte, a few hours journey down river, had called on me once or twice when passing the camp. He had made himself very unpopular with the employers in the district by the attitude he adopted in regard to the labour employed on his estate. Any *picador de goma* (rubber-collector) or *balsero* who applied to him for work always found ready employment, no matter to what extent he was indebted elsewhere—a debt which, according to the custom of the country, should either have been worked off by the debtor, or else liquidated by whoever subsequently re-

tained the man's services, a practice to which Schneider refused to conform. The result was that the other employers of labour were up in arms against him, as they claimed that he stole their men.

Schneider had on one occasion put himself in the power of his enemies by demolishing a *trapichi* (rum-still) belonging to a Leco whose plantation lay within the boundaries of Schneider's rubber estate. This incident nearly cost the German his life, for he was only saved from the bullet of the indignant Leco whose property he had destroyed through the action of the Indian's wife who, doubtless fearing the consequences of such a deed to her man and herself, had placed herself between Schneider and the levelled gun.

In destroying the still Schneider had transgressed the law, and those who wished him ill induced the Leco in question to obtain a decree for his arrest for the malicious destruction of property. On the strength of this warrant, the *corregidor* of Guanay had gone to Chichiponte once or twice to take him prisoner. Schneider, however, had somehow always received warning of these visits, and had taken to the woods until all danger was past; nevertheless, the village of Guanay remained forbidden ground to him. He lived in constant dread of assassination, and himself told me that he never slept in the same room on two consecutive nights. His house was an arsenal containing every known weapon, from an elephant-gun to an automatic pistol.

I had just sat down to lunch one day when Schneider appeared through the opening in the floor as he mounted the steps which led to the second story of the Maquiqui house. As I rose to welcome him I noticed another man following close behind him, in whom I recognized, to my surprise, my former acquaintance, Grogan, the hero of the "hold-up" at the railway construction camp. He looked at me very keenly, but I made no sign of

recognition, and greeted him as a complete stranger when Schneider introduced him as "Mr. MacVeagh," who, he told me, was now in the employ of his rubber company, and was accompanying him to Chichiponte. After lunch, when alone with Schneider, I asked him whether he knew what manner of man "MacVeagh" was, to which he replied that he did, and it was for that very reason that he was bringing him to Chichiponte, there to act as his bodyguard.

A few days later Braun, whom I had installed as storekeeper, told me that he had received a letter from Schneider, offering him a job as storekeeper, at the same wage that he was now receiving, and guaranteeing that nothing would be deducted from his pay towards the cancellation of the debt to avoid imprisonment for which he had escaped from La Paz with the aid of my Company. The La Paz authorities, on learning of Braun's present employment, had insisted on the deduction of a certain sum monthly from his wages in payment of this debt, to which the officials of my Company in that town were compelled by law to agree. To this, however, Braun strongly objected, and now asked permission to accept Schneider's offer. I told him that he was at liberty to do so—although considerable expense had been incurred in bringing himself and his family into the interior—provided he repaid the advances which he had received from my company in money and in goods. This stipulation he agreed to be fair, and I heard no more about the matter.

Early one morning, a few days later, I was called to the balcony overlooking the river by the shouts of one of my "boys." Looking out I saw, but a few yards from the bank, a *callapo* manned by Chichiponte *balseros* on which sat Braun, smoking placidly, surrounded by his family and luggage. Had it not been for the presence of the woman, I should have been sorely tempted to

give him the benefit of a load of birdshot as a parting gift.

The answer to my letter of protest to Schneider was that Braun was perfectly justified in his unwillingness to repay the debt he had contracted in La Paz, and in regard to the money he owed to my company, that was a matter in which he could not interfere, as it concerned Braun alone. Small wonder that Schneider believed that there were many who thirsted for his gore, and that, in consequence, he had enlisted the services of a notorious "gun-man" to protect him from their vengeance.

"MacVeagh," however, did not remain long in his new job. It appeared that when Braun arrived at Chichiponte, Schneider was at some distant rubber-gatherers camp. "MacVeagh" had remained in charge, and had promptly laid hands on all available liquor supplies, which he proceeded to absorb. From the garrulous Braun, who had access to the books, he learned that there existed about £800 in my cash-box, whereupon "MacVeagh" announced his intention of proceeding to Maquiqui by raft, there to "put the sign of the Cross," as he expressed it, on me and the two Scotch foremen, annex the cash, and then drift down river to Rurrenabaque. Schneider told me this story later, and, with the air of one who wished to convey that he had saved my life, he informed me that he had returned to Chichiponte in time to give orders to the *balseros* whom "MacVeagh" had singled out to be his crew, not to take him up-river on any account, but to go straight to Rurrenabaque.

Later I heard that "MacVeagh" had arrived at that river town, and there had taken passage to Riveralta on a boat going down the Beni laden with rubber. "MacVeagh's" destination was the Madeira river, where a railway was being constructed. He did not succeed in carrying out his intention, however, for on the trip

down river some brutality he committed so enraged one of the crew that he shot "MacVeagh" in the back—a fate he had always dreaded. He used to say that he feared no man face to face, as he was quicker "on the draw" than any one he had yet encountered.

CHAPTER XII

STUNG !

Creatures of the Jungle—A Freight War—Exorcising a Devil—Undesirable *Gringos*—Pete, the Finn—Justice and Bootlaces—A Garden Rampant.

IN the story of "David Harum," that Yankee philosopher, on one occasion observed, "They say that a reasonable amount o' fleas is good for a dog—keeps him from brooding over *bein'* a dog, mebbe." It is, perhaps, on this principle that Providence designed the various forms of insect torture to which the newcomer to the Beni region must become inured before existence for him becomes tolerable. If this theory is correct, then I must respectfully say that, in my opinion, Providence considerably overdid it. Though the *tavanos* which, during a portion of the year, had been troublesome at Challa, were practically absent on the Kaka river, they were replaced by several other winged beasts of prey infinitely more numerous and equally bloodthirsty, though smaller, from whose attentions there was no respite during the twenty-four hours of the day and every day of the year.

The chief aggressor during the daytime was a small sand-fly, the *marrahui*, no larger than a raspberry seed ; yet what it lacked in size it made up for in viciousness and activity. A cloud of these *marrahuis* hovered about one from dawn to dark, settling in swarms on face and hands, leaving, when they had drunk their fill, a small red mark, which turned black as the blood dried. At night, the mosquito came into his own, though he was not entirely

absent during the day. Moonlight nights were made specially uncomfortable by a tiny fly—the *jumi*, which, though much smaller than the *marrahui*, felt larger because of the painfulness of its bite. These little tormentors even burrowed into one's hair, and bit the scalp.

Another fly which, indirectly, aided in keeping the mind of the dweller in those parts from brooding too much on the hardness of his lot was one whose contributions to the pleasures of tropical life consisted in laying its eggs on underclothing when hung up to dry. When next the garment was worn, a minute grub hatched out of the egg, and burrowed into the skin of the wearer. There it grew until one day it made its presence felt by a sharp stab, like that of a needle. An examination of the painful spot revealed a red lump, in the centre of which was a small hole. The extraction of this *sututo* grub is difficult, especially when it is still very small, by reason of its girdle of bristles, and unless skilfully performed a painful sore results. The method adopted by the natives—which I found to be very successful—was to cover the orifice in the skin with nicotine; the *sututo* was thereby stupified, its bristles relaxed, and it could then be removed by gentle pressure. These grubs, if allowed to remain in the body, attain a large size. I have taken out of men and dogs *sututos*, more than an inch in length and thicker than a lead pencil.

Bloodsuckers of another kind were vampire bats. He who neglected to sleep under the protection of a mosquito net would most probably awake in the morning to find himself smeared with blood oozing from the tip of his nose or the end of a finger or toe, from which a circular bit of flesh had been bitten out by the bat, preparatory to drinking his fill of blood. Domestic animals, birds included, suffer greatly from the attacks of vampires. I had a number of hens at Maquiqui, which were housed at night in a bat-proof shed. Occasionally, however,

a bat found an entrance between some loosened canes, as shown by the blood-smearred perches on the following morning; for the vampire bites birds between the toes.

Though the insects I have mentioned were those chiefly responsible for making camp life a burden, there were many others to be met with in the jungle itself. There was the *isti*, or bull-ant, a black terror about an inch in length, whose sting caused excruciating pain for twenty-four hours; huge, hairy tarantulas, which, when angered, would attack a man; scorpions, and poisonous centipedes. There was also the *burro del monte* (jungle donkey), a caterpillar with a thick coat of long, silky hairs, at the end of each of which was a poison sac. The lightest contact of bare skin with this creature caused a burning sensation so severe that, more than once, natives have come to me, in tears, to ask for relief. My remedy was so simple and efficacious that it was surprising that they had not discovered it for themselves—namely, a poultice of moistened clay.

Another insect peril for the unwary in the jungle was the *palo santo* (holy stick). This was a tree the bark of which was perforated with numerous small holes. It needed but the lightest tap on the stem, and from every hole issued scores of little red ants, furious and eager to attack. Whenever it was desired to descend a steep bank, almost invariably it was a *palo santo* that offered the most convenient means of lowering oneself. If the nature of the proffered support was unnoticed till one grasped it, the pain—as of a hundred red-hot pincers on hand and arm—brought instantaneous realization of one's error; and long after the treacherous plant's ferocious inhabitants had been brushed off, the burning of their stings remained. There were savage tribes farther down the river where the penalty for unfaithfulness on the part of a wife was to tie her to a *palo santo*—a torture which,

I was told, usually produced madness in the victim. This torture was also inflicted on prisoners of war.

There were, of course, hundreds of species of less objectionable insects, marvellous in construction and strange of habit, fascinating to watch and study, even to one who was no entomologist. There was the soldier ant, whose legions, marshalled by big-headed generals and captains, took hours to pass a given point. From time to time an army invested the house. On these occasions it was best to leave them in possession for a couple of hours, during which they devoured every living creature, as well as any food that lay unprotected. The invasion terminated as rapidly as it began, the ants marching off in a narrow column in search of more enemies to conquer and devour.

Another wonderful ant was the umbrella ant, which cut large discs out of the leaves of certain trees and carried them, clutched in its powerful nippers, to its nest deep down in the ground. The leaves were to make into mushroom beds, and the fungus that grew on them was fed to the ant's larvæ. When a colony of umbrella ants were working on a certain tree, numberless leaves appeared to be moving, unaided, down the trunk and along the ground to the ant-heap.

There was an absurd caterpillar which, when disturbed, pretended that it was a snake. Its narrow head was withdrawn into its body, the end of which was painted to resemble the head of a snake, and raised as if about to strike. I often wondered whether this pantomime ever fooled a hungry bird.

Whilst on the subject of mimicry, there were marvellous "leaf" insects, of which the wings and body so exactly resembled leaves on a stem as to defy detection, even on close examination.

To tell of all the wonders of insect life in the Bolivian jungle—of exquisitely-beautiful butterflies and moths,

of uncouth creatures of fantastic shape—would be impossible here. There was a creature, however, of which I only met with one specimen and which I cannot but mention. I discovered it one night in the front of my house. For a moment there was a glow on the ground. I searched for the cause, and found an insect resembling a caterpillar, about two and a half inches long. I touched it; on each side glowed a line of green lights and on its head a large red one—resembling the lighting of a hospital ship during the Great War. The glow continued for less than half a minute, and then went out, but immediately re-appeared when the insect was stroked.

Snakes of every kind abounded in the jungle—great boa-constrictors; rattle snakes, beautiful pink, white and black coral snakes; thick, stumpy snakes, of deadly bite; equally poisonous snakes, whose green, whip-like bodies, suspended, head downwards from tree branches, as they lay in wait for their prey, were indistinguishable from the lianes or “bush-ropes” with which every tree was entangled.

Poisonous lizards there were also, one species of which frequented houses, and was greatly dreaded by the natives.

Snake's flesh is eaten by the Lecos, who consider it as good as fish, which it is supposed to resemble. The iguana, a huge lizard, which can travel at express speed, is considered superior to chicken, but I did not sample either of these two delicacies, though I have eaten almost every other item on the native bill of fare, from monkeys to land tortoises. Here, in their home land, snakes are not esteemed for their medicinal properties. By the dwellers on the High Plateau, on the other hand, dried snake flesh is considered to be a sovereign remedy for barrenness in women, and every chemist stocks it and retails it at about two shillings for a chunk about an inch long, which is pulverised and taken, mixed with port.

Whatever the efficacy of the remedy, it may be taken for granted that, in its preparation, no wine was spoilt. No port sold in Bolivia could possibly be damaged.

Game of every kind was plentiful, but hunting was a matter of considerable difficulty, for, in the thick undergrowth of the forest, one could rarely see further than a few feet on either side, and the only hope of success lay in walking along game trails so silently and warily that a shot might be had at any animal met with before it was aware of the hunter's presence. The chances were all on the side of the hunted; the crackling of a twig or the rustling of a leaf was sufficient to send it scurrying off into the tangled brushwood, out of sight and beyond pursuit. Such hunting requires a stealthy tread and a quick eye, qualities which the Leco Indian possesses in a high degree. He can approach so stealthily a herd of peccaries engaged in rooting up young plants or eating perfumed palm fruit that he can almost touch one of the pigs with the muzzle of his gas-barrel shotgun before he fires. I have known a Leco bring down a peccary—an animal which requires a lot of killing—with a twenty-two bore, single-barrelled shotgun. The Leco is a very bad shot, and unless he is very close to the animal, the chances are that he will miss it.

Besides peccaries, which roam in droves numbering from four or five to as many hundreds, the gnashing of their tusks as they feed resembling the click of a thousand castanets, there are deer, seldom to be seen except when they came down to the river to drink, at dawn or in the evening, and the tapir, the largest beast in the forest. The tapir or *anta*—to give it its native name—is rarely encountered in the jungle, being shy and wary and possessing an exquisite sense of smell and hearing. I have spent a night perched in a tree, a prey to millions of mosquitoes, on the edge of a *colpaña*, or salt-lick, frequented by tapirs, in the hope of getting a shot at one

at dawn, when it came for its morning draught of brackish, muddy water, previous to retiring to its lair for the day. For the *anta* feeds at night, lying in some recess in the jungle during the daytime, unless driven by the bites of *tavano* flies to seek refuge in the river.

Among the denizens of the jungle, the cat tribe is well represented, the jaguar and puma being the largest of them.

It was almost invariably my luck, when meeting one of these big cats, to be armed with a shotgun only. On one of these occasions, I was foolhardy enough, on suddenly meeting a magnificent jaguar in a dry water-course, to fire two loads of buckshot at him, as he, with great deliberation, turned aside to avoid meeting me. Both shots took effect, but did not kill him. Why he did not attack me is a mystery, for a wounded jaguar is a thing to be dreaded. Fortunately for me, he made a bound into the brushwood. I was much tempted to pursue him, but I had only cartridges loaded with bird-shot left. I was minded of the story of the stranger who was standing one day on the platform of a small railway station when the Northern express—the pride of that line—flashed past. Into the whirl of dust raised by the train leapt the station-master's dog, and tore madly up the track in pursuit. "Does your dog often do that?" asked the stranger of the station-master, who happened to be standing near, watching the incident. "Yes, sir, every time the express passes that dog is after it like a hare." "That's queer," commented the stranger, "why does he do it?" "I don't know why he does it," replied the dog's owner, scratching his head thoughtfully, "but what worries me is, what is he going to do with it when he's got it?"

I saw a black jaguar once only. I was walking along a wide beach one evening, shooting pigeons, when suddenly I was aware of an animal a few yards away,

slinking through the sparse brush. It was a black jaguar. He paid no heed to me and, in the circumstances, I was quite content to mind my own business, for it is unhealthy to meddle with this sooty demon unless one can be reasonably certain of killing him at the first shot.

There is an extraordinary-looking animal to be occasionally seen asleep in the sun on the river bank—the aguti, known here as the *conejo-del-agua* (water rabbit)—a rodent as large as a pig, with a head shaped like a rabbit's. It rarely wanders far from the river's edge, and, on the slightest alarm, plunges into the water with a flop and disappears.

In early April, rifts in the leaden sky, showing patches of brilliant blue beyond, foreshadowed the advent of the dry season, and in spite of the still frequent and heavy showers, a change seemed to come over the face of nature, which, water-logged, bedraggled and dejected during many months of deluge, preened itself in the glorious sunlight, and burst into song. The waters of the Kaka subsided somewhat, and one day there passed several rafts, laden with Lecos on their way down river to cut *balsa* trees wherewith to construct rafts for use during the coming season. Yearly, the country for many miles around is ransacked for these trees, found only beside the rivers. The *balsa* tree is readily grown in plantations, and is fit for use at the end of four or five years; but these plantations or *ccallpas*, unless well guarded, are robbed by all and sundry. River freighters are, therefore, loath to go to the expense and trouble of making a *ccallpa* which will probably furnish much-needed material to a business rival.

Three weeks later, these raft-constructing parties returned, with new *balsas* laden down with poles for the making of yet others. The two firms which had contracted for the transport of the dredge parts assured me that



A LOADED "CALLAPO," RIO MAPIRI.



"BALSAS" DRYING, GUANAY.

they would now devote all their activities to the completion of this work, and their first efforts seemed to prove the genuineness of this statement. Big consignments of machinery began to arrive at Maquiqui, and if they had continued to be received during the next few months in like quantities, the launching of the dredge that year would have been assured. Smith, who had been sent out to La Paz to recruit another gang of riveters, returned with his men, among them many of those who had gone on strike a few months previously, and work was vigorously resumed. But our friends of the *balsa* monopoly had flattered early merely to deceive. Having received part payment for the work they had done, they had procured the funds necessary to enable them to begin operations elsewhere. The down-river rubber trade was still booming, and the Rurrenabaque merchants were offering any price for the shipment of their merchandise. So the river freighters went after the money, and again left my Company in the lurch.

The aid of the Government was now invoked by my manager in La Paz. He succeeded in obtaining the appointment of an *Intendente* to Guanay, who was instructed to see that the freighters lived up to their contracts, a certain proportion of *callapos* only to be allowed to transport goods to Rurrenabaque. This naturally caused much opposition among the merchants in that town, who were unable to obtain supplies to the extent they required. The result was a little river-freight war.

Allured by the high rewards offered by these merchants, every Tom, Dick, and Harry who could scrape together *balsas* sufficient to form a *callapo* did so, manning them with *balseros* stolen from his neighbours by money bribes. The consequence of these "pull devil, pull baker" tactics was that nobody benefited except the small filibusters, and it was not until the following year

that the dredge parts were delivered, complete, at Maquiqui.

An unlooked-for obstacle to the completion of the transport arose during the course of operations. There had been many wrecks of rafts laden with machinery, which had resulted in the death, by drowning, of three or four men. A rumour was then started, and fostered in certain quarters, that the dredge was possessed of a devil of great malignity, and anyone engaged in work connected with it was liable to die. The superstitious fears of the natives were easily aroused, and a panic prevailed among the Indians of the region, the Lecos showing great reluctance to man the rafts loaded with machinery. Many of them, on receiving the order to proceed to Naranja Cala, escaped into the jungle, where they remained hidden, rather than run the risk of incurring the displeasure of the demon.

The situation thus created was of considerable gravity, so immediate steps had to be taken to kill the superstition, through the medium of the Church. There was a community of a religious order in Sorata, and one of the friars consented—for a consideration—to come to Maquiqui and baptize the dredge. The President of the Republic had agreed to be godfather to the dredge, which was to be named after him.

One afternoon a *callapo* arrived from which stepped the friar, Padre Vicencio, clad in his white gown; the *Intendente* of Guanay, a major in the Bolivian army, who was to be the President's proxy, together with his lieutenant and four soldiers; and several of the notabilities of Guanay, who had been invited to attend the function. That night, when the others retired, the *padre*—a young and not unagreeable fellow—evinced a strong disinclination to follow their example, and challenged me to a game of casino. This is the only card game, according to my experience, played in Bolivia with our style of

playing cards, the Spanish playing cards being in general use. I suspected that the good *fraile's* desire for a game was not uninfluenced by the presence on the table of a bottle of whisky more than three parts full. He had done his duty—and more—by the liquid refreshment, which had been plentiful and varied, during the evening, although he showed no signs of it, nor gave any indication of going to bed until the whisky bottle had been emptied.

At three o'clock on the following afternoon, all and sundry assembled to witness the baptism of the dredge. The hull, now rapidly approaching completion, rested high on the wooden blocks on which it had been constructed. At one end of the deck, on a table covered with a coloured cloth, stood two vessels, the one containing water and the other salt. I had been unable to discover anything more suitable than a vegetable dish for the water and an enamelled iron soup-plate for the salt. The *padre* had also expressed a desire for something wherewith to besprinkle the dredge during the ceremony. I had asked whether a large, flat, paint-brush would answer the purpose, and he had replied that it would meet all requirements. Attired in his full vestments, the *padre* now arrived, and standing in front of the improvised altar recited several Latin prayers, during which he added the salt to the water, and then proceeded, vegetable dish in one hand and paint-brush in the other, to walk around the deck three times, scattering water, with the aid of the brush, as he went.

The ceremony, which lasted about twenty minutes, over, the company returned to the house, and a case of champagne, specially obtained from Sorata for the occasion, was opened. Of all the bad champagne I have ever tasted, I think it was easily the worst, and its effect, instead of being exhilarating, was very much the reverse—in fact, after the sixth bottle, as everybody seemed to be on the verge of tears, I had hastily introduced another

and sounder drink in the shape of *cañaso* cocktails, under the benign influence of which the gloom induced by the tinny grape-juice was dispelled.

A little incident now occurred, however, that somewhat marred the baptismal festivities for one of the participators. The *Intendente*, representative of the dredge's august godfather, was stung by a hornet. The roof of the Maquiqui house was plastered on the inside with hundreds of nests of a species of hornet which is fond of taking up its abode in the habitation of man. Unless provoked, these hornets do not molest their human co-lodgers; they have, however, an unpleasant habit of quarrelling amongst themselves, and in the fighting which ensues the peaceful bystander—as so often happens—suffers most damage.

The *Intendente* was blissfully sipping his cocktail when a pair of battling hornets dropped from their nest overhead on to his bald pate, and promptly stung him viciously. Now, the sting of one of these is painful enough, but when duplicated it is agonising. Our poor *Intendente* was in a sorry plight! A swelling the size of a duck's egg rapidly formed where he had been stung, and then did a curious thing—it travelled! The lump slowly crept down his face, and by dinner-time his left eye was closed. Although the representative of the Chief Magistrate bore his misfortune with commendable fortitude, his ludicrous appearance sadly undermined the pedestal of official dignity on which he had stood in appropriate postures since his arrival, and he was now the butt of the many jests of his fellow-guests.

Of all the workers employed on the construction of the dredge it was the *gringos* who had been engaged in Bolivia who gave the most trouble. This was, perhaps, not to be wondered at, considering that a European seeking employment in such a country frequently belongs to the genus "tropical tramp." The first batch of five

gringos who had been taken on in La Paz to work on the dredge included a Scotsman, a Channel Islander, and a swaggering little cockney, who, on the strength of a year or two spent in mining camps in the Western States of America, always went about armed to the teeth with dirks and revolvers hung about his person in profusion. On their arrival at Maquiqui, these fellows were not long in discovering that the native *cañaso* was not only a palatable drink, but also cheap and plentiful, and they lost no time in obtaining a considerable quantity of this from some passing trader. The result was that the next morning all five were missing at roll-call, with the exception of the Scot, who, however, was having much difficulty in controlling his legs, which were acting not only independently of him but also of each other. The other four men were discovered in their camp hopelessly intoxicated. The moral effect of such an incident on the Bolivian and Peruvian workmen was naturally very harmful and injurious to discipline. Consequently, when, a few days later, the same thing re-occurred, I got rid of them without delay. The Scot took his dismissal philosophically, admitting cheerfully that he deserved it. On the other hand, his companions were very truculent, especially "Cockney Bill," who promptly added another knife or two to his armoury, stuck a couple of macaw feathers in his hat, and breathed fire in approved Wild West style. They drifted down river, bound for the Madeira-Marmoré railway on the Brazilian frontier, whither the high scale of pay attracted many men of this type, despite the high mortality from fever, amongst those who worked there.

The next batch of undesirables were three Britishers, who, on arrival, drew from the Company's store a considerable quantity of provisions and also some clothing, such as a pair of boots each, the value of which was to be deducted from their wages. The following day they made

an unsuccessful effort to borrow a rifle and a gun from me, their object being made clear next morning, when I received word that they had decamped, bag and baggage, presumably shortly after dawn, on a *balsa* stolen from a native foreman. The news that they had gone would have pleased me rather than otherwise, had it not been apparent that they had obtained money advances in La Paz, free transport, food, and clothing, without any intention of working for them, but solely to aid them on their journey to the Madeira-Marmoré railway. Their attempt to steal my guns added insult to injury, and I decided to overtake them, if possible, and teach the fellows a lesson.

One of my Indian houseboys had learned to handle a *balsa* fairly creditably, and with him and a Finn, named Pete Linquist, I pushed off on a small raft down river. We scanned every backwater, paddling hard to accelerate our progress, until at last we reached Chichiponte, Otto Schnieder's headquarters, where we were informed that the fugitives had left an hour before, after engaging two Lecos to pilot them through the rapids which lay between Chichiponte and Rurrenabaque.

To continue the pursuit it would have been necessary to obtain a couple of Lecos, not only to navigate the raft through the several *malpasos* that lay before us, but also to assist in the towing of the raft up-stream on the return journey. Schneider being away, I did not care to engage any of his men for this purpose, and regretfully I gave up the idea of overtaking my thievish countrymen. So Pete, the Indian boy and myself started on our homeward journey, towing and poling the raft for a few miles until we reached an isolated plantation where lived a river Indian, who, having been in the service of two or three masters and being in the debt of each, now refused service to any of them. Him I induced to assist us in completing the return journey, and we reached Maquiqui late that

night, without further incident. But I despatched a note, at the first opportunity, to headquarters in La Paz, insisting that no more *gringos* be picked up to work in the camp.

There were two exceptions to the otherwise uniformly unsatisfactory results given by foreign labour hired locally. These were Pete Linquist, the Finn, and Perello, an Italian. I cannot hope to meet a better workman than Pete Linquist; strong as an ox and quaint of speech, he had a sailorman's knack of being able to turn his hand to any job. He had abandoned the sea a few years before and was now inoculated with the gold fever, hoarding up his earnings until they had reached a sufficient amount to fit him out for an expedition to some El Dorado of which he had heard in the foothills of the Andes. A recent experience of this kind, during which he had not only lost all his money but very nearly his life as well, from fever and privations, had not marred for him the glamour of the pursuit of that will-o'-the-wisp, the "lucky strike." The gold-hunter is a gambler ever willing to stake his all—health, comfort, and life itself—in that great game of chance, undaunted by the scurvy tricks Fortune delights to play him.

One day, whilst hunting, I came across a giant cedar lying prone on the ground, which probably some hurricane had uprooted many years before. On my return to camp I asked Pete if he understood boat-making, and he replied that, at one time, it had been his job. So I took him down to view the cedar, and asked him whether, with adze and axe, he could hew me a canoe out of the trunk, which, near the base, was five feet in diameter. "Vy not, zur?" he replied, "shure I can." So Pete chopped and hacked for about three weeks until, at last, grinning with pride, he showed me a wonderful canoe, which we hauled out to the river and paddled up-stream to the camp.

It was shortly after the completion of the canoe that

Pete told me that he now possessed sufficient funds to finance his next search for gold, and that he would shortly be leaving my employ. I was very sorry to hear this, as I was attached to Pete. He sought to break the blow by adding that if he failed in his new venture he would most certainly return to me. But, alas! it was on a very different voyage of discovery that poor Pete embarked.

I had had staying with me for a few weeks an Englishman, an employee of the Company, who wished to return to La Paz without delay. It was in the middle of the rainy season; the river was swollen and communication with the outside world was cut off except by the jungle trail to Guanay, which no one in camp knew except Pete Linguist. It was a Sunday, and Pete, that morning, had borrowed an old shotgun of mine and gone hunting. In the evening he returned and proudly displayed a dove, the sole reward of the day's endeavour. "Did you shoot it sitting?" I asked him. "No, zur," he answered, indignantly. "I shoot him on de—*flew*." I then asked him if he would set out next morning to Guanay, to act as guide to R. and received his usual reply, "Shure, zur, vy not?" He was at that time engaged in making a cross of cedar wood, to mark the grave of my Swiss storeman who had just died of fever.

The next morning, R. and a couple of Indian porters left camp, guided by Pete through the jungle. It was on the following Sunday that I was seated at my table, writing, looking up every now and again to watch the river roaring past in tremendous spate. The *avenida* was bringing down a prodigious amount of timber—trees great and small, so numerous that one might almost have walked across the wide stream on them. They raced past—old and blackened trunks and trees in full leaf. Presently my attention was attracted by a curious white object among the debris near the far shore. It resembled

a tree-stump with roots which had been stripped of their bark. Idly I watched it as it was borne by the flood, bobbing and twisting on the surface of the turbulent water, until, presently, it disappeared from sight around a bend in the river about a mile further down. It was then that I heard someone excitedly calling me from below. I stepped out on the balcony and saw one of my native foremen, who declared that one of his men, on going down to the river to draw water, had just seen the body of a fair-haired *gringo* float past, which the current had then carried with it to the opposite shore. In such a river it would have been useless to attempt to set out in search of the body. The drowned man, doubtless, had been one of those lured by the tales of the wealth to be gained on the Madeira-Marmoré railway construction, and had attempted to navigate the river by himself.

A few days later, however, the identity of the drowned *gringo* was revealed when the porters who had accompanied R. to Guanay returned with a letter from him. He told me that Pete, whilst crossing the Mapiri river, had been dragged off the *balsa* in an attempt to wrest his paddle from the grip of a whirlpool. He had been instantly sucked under, and but for a glimpse of a hand which emerged for a moment, no more was seen of him until that Sunday morning when his body floated past Maquiqui.

I have mentioned that there was another exception to the fecklessness that, in my experience, characterised the average "white" man out of a job in this country. This was Perello, a fair-haired Italian from Turin, who took a childlike delight in giving demonstrations of his immense strength. It was about eleven o'clock at night, one New Year's Eve, when a man arrived, breathless, at my house and declared, between gasps, that murder was being done in the men's camp, situated about a quarter of a mile away. I had just turned in, and,

although I had learned to discount very largely any statement made by a native, I thought it would be as well to see for myself what was going forward. So, pulling on my boots, I took a lantern, and clad as I was in my pyjamas, I strode along the path through the stretch of jungle that lay between my house and the clearing where the workmen's huts had been erected, on reaching which I heard a tremendous hubbub. In the darkness it was difficult to see what was happening. The centre of commotion seemed to be a knot of men heaving backwards and forwards and shouting, and, above the uproar, I heard Perello's voice bellowing "Let me get at him!" By the light of my lantern, I distinguished the Italian's burly form, to which clung, desperately, a dozen of his Peruvian fellow-workmen. From the excited answers to my enquiry in regard to the cause of this turmoil, I learned that Perello had, on entering his own little house, found a Peruvian youth—Sanchez by name—in the act of abstracting a bottle of rum—probably contraband—from under the bedding where the Italian had secreted it. Perello had seized the youth, who, finding himself caught red-handed, drew a sheath knife and drove it into the hand which gripped his other arm. This had caused Perello to loosen his hold, and Sanchez had not been slow in making good his escape. Perello, thirsting for his life, was now uttering the most terrible threats. He promised that, should he lay his hands on the "thief and assassin," he would break every bone in his body, twist his neck off, and throw what remained into the river. In his then condition—half drunk and blind mad with anger—he would certainly have carried out his threats, given the opportunity. I ordered a search to be made for the boy, who was found hiding under the bunk of one of his compatriots, whence he was hauled out and brought, sullen and frightened, to me. I tried to appease the furious Italian with promises that justice would be done



THE KAKA RIVER AT MAQUIUI.



THE GAOL, GUANAY.
The Intendente and police.

To face p. 178.

on the morrow ; but he begged me to spare myself the trouble, and to allow him to be his own judge and executioner forthwith. Ordering the wretched Sanchez to walk ahead of me, I left the men's encampment with all the dignity of which an appalling green-and-purple striped suit of pyjamas would permit, with Perello's entreaties ringing in my ears. On reaching the house, I locked the boy up in a tool store for the remainder of the night.

The next morning, being New Year's Day, a court was held, witnesses were called, and the boy's guilt was proved—which, moreover, he himself admitted. The offender was then given the option of either being sent up to Guanay, to be dealt with by the *Intendente*, or of accepting the punishment which I would award him. Sensibly enough, he accepted the latter proposition ; whereupon sentence of ten lashes, to be followed by immediate dismissal from the Company's service, was pronounced.

So far, so good. The next matter was the selection of the executioner and of the instrument of justice. I did not want any of the culprit's fellow-workmen to carry out the sentence, so José, the cook-boy, a stoutly-built fellow, was detailed to this duty, and I made a cat-o'-nine-tails out of knotted raw hide boot-laces, tied to a short hammer handle. Armed with this weapon, José proceeded to execute the sentence, Sanchez howling dismally at each stroke ; he could scarcely have made more noise were he being murdered. In the circumstances, however, his yells were to be expected, and were no measure of his anguish. The allotted number of lashes administered, executioner and prisoner disappeared into the cookhouse, where, five minutes later, through the open door I saw José giving his late victim an ample meal, which was being attacked with great vigour, all traces of agony having vanished from the now-smiling countenance of Sanchez. The smart of the flogging had,

presumably, also abated, for he was sitting down seemingly without discomfort. It was fortunate that Perello was not present when the whipping was carried out ; somewhat mollified by the apparent severity of the sentence, he had departed after the " court-martial," his hand, which I had dressed, in a sling, for the wound he had received was deep.

It is on Perello that I lay the blame for my present distaste for cigars, which came about in this wise. I had procured from La Paz an assortment of English vegetable seeds, and Bentley had planted them in a small clearing near the house. My knowledge of gardening was rudimentary ; otherwise, I might have foreseen the outcome of this experiment. In that region of rich soil and damp heat, banana " trees " bore fruit ripe for cutting in ten months from the time the shoots were planted. My vegetable seeds sprouted, and the plants shot up with astounding rapidity. The lettuces and cabbages soon were several feet high, with three or four leaves attached to the stems at great intervals. The radishes, before one could say " knife," were the size of turnips and of the consistency of cotton wool. Tomato vines covered in luxuriant profusion the trellis work which had been erected for them ; but there was only one tomato, which was devoured by the birds long before it commenced to change colour. In this, however, I was not so disappointed as in the case of the other vegetables, for excellent wild tomatoes, the size of walnuts, were plentiful along the river bank.

Next season I gave up vegetable gardening, and planted instead a quantity of tobacco seed that had been presented to me as " best Havana." The tobacco plants grew splendidly, and when, in the opinion of Bentley, the expert in matters horticultural, the time had arrived, the leaves were picked and hung in a shed to cure. One day, Perello told me that he understood the rolling of

cigars, and, if I desired, he would make these leaves, which he now considered to be properly cured, into cheroots for me. Somewhat dubiously, remembering the "weeds" which Don Domingo had induced me to purchase from him at Challa, I allowed him to make the experiment. It was some time before I tested the result of his labours, and only when compelled to do so by a grave tobacco shortage that occurred toward the end of the rainy season. They were, if possible worse than Don Domingo's brand; but, for about two or three weeks, it was Hobson's choice. So I smoked them, since when—to misquote the advertisement—"I have smoked no other."

CHAPTER XIII

MAQUIQUI

A Day and a Night of Camp Life—A Tornado—A Tramp through the Jungle—Roast Monkey and a "Knock-out."

ISOLATED though Maquiqui was, yet camp life was never dull. I used to begin the day with a plunge into the river, unless a spate rendered it too swift to be safe and too muddy to be pleasant. Dressing was not a lengthy affair, for all the clothes I wore were a cotton shirt and drill trousers, and, when in camp, *polcas*—home-made moccasins—to save shoe-leather; decent boots were hard to come by, and there was no cobbler worthy of the name among the workmen. When tramping about the jungle I preferred not to wear *polcas*, for they were heel-less and made it not too easy to retain a foothold when the ground was wet and slippery.

Breakfast, in accordance with the custom of the country, was a light meal of coffee, home-made bread, and tinned butter, which was usually in a fluid state. I know of no better coffee than the Bolivian. Though plentiful in the Yungas country, where it grew, it was only occasionally that a supply of the raw bean was procurable from some up-river trader. The native way of roasting the bean was in a frying pan or on a piece of sheet-iron; but as my cook-boy usually succeeded in burning it, I had a proper coffee roaster made by the blacksmith, Thompson, similar to those that can be seen in use in any French village. The coffee was freshly roasted every day and ground between

two stones. I must say this much for that cook—though his cooking, on the whole, was vile, yet he could brew good coffee.

At half-past seven a gong clanged in the construction camp yard, to summon the men to work. Then followed sick parade. Those who were able brought their ailments down to my house, and for the next hour or two I was busy doctoring them. Their complaints were varied and sometimes obscure, but they always received treatment which, though, perhaps, somewhat vigorous, usually brought them satisfaction and a more or less speedy cure, attributable, doubtless, in no small degree, to their unfounded confidence in my ability as a doctor. One man would have an aching tooth, from which he had to be parted midst much moaning and groaning; the next, perhaps, had hacked his foot with an adze; the pains that forced such despairing sighs and groans from the third were probably due to over-eating, and he was treated accordingly. Then there were the others, suffering from the prevalent malarial fever, who had to be visited in their quarters. Though the treatment of the sick took up a lot of my time daily—for the bad cases received attention in the evening as well—I rather liked the work, except when it was prolonged by having to dress the leg of one or other of my house-boys, who had got himself bitten by “Francisco,” for the wounds invariably festered and were slow in healing and the boy had always brought the trouble on himself by teasing the pig.

Two or three *callapos* laden with machinery or stores, perhaps arrived during the course of the morning, necessitating the careful checking of the items on the *conocimiento* (despatch note)—not always an easy matter, for although every plate and every angle iron belonging to the dredge had been carefully marked before it left the Glasgow shipyard, yet those marks were not always

decipherable when the pieces ultimately arrived at Maquiqui. Then, again, the *callapo* may have had some misadventure on its journey down and lost part, if not all, of its load in some rapid or whirlpool, and the exact location of where the loss had occurred had to be extracted from the Leco crew, in order that efforts to salvage the missing parts might be made. Many of the parts lost through shipwreck were ultimately recovered by diving operations; others were irretrievably lost and had to be re-ordered from Scotland.

From noon until two o'clock all work ceased. The thermometer, which had been steadily climbing all the morning, at one o'clock in the dry season usually marked 95° Fh. in the shade. Such a temperature in that moisture-laden atmosphere was much more oppressive than the thermometer reading indicated.

This was the *siesta* hour, when man and beast snoozed awhile, with the exception of the ever-busy *marrahui* (sand fly), which knew no rest until sundown. Another exception, perhaps, was "Togo," as "Pete," the dog knew to his cost. Stretched out in the shade of the veranda, the hound lay dozing, oblivious to the monkey's request that he should come out and play. Bored with the lethargy of his boon companion, Togo would set about making sleep as difficult a proposition for him as he could contrive. There would be a minute inspection of Pete's mouth; his heavy lips were lifted and pulled about, and his eyes and nostrils probed. Then followed an exploration of his ears, Togo's hand burrowing down as far as it could go. These tactics having failed to arouse Pete, Togo's last resource would be to seize the dog's tail and bite it viciously. With a grunt of disgust, Pete would then move off to seek peaceful slumber elsewhere, leaving Togo to meditate guile by himself.

Nothing delighted the monkey more than to hurl

himself off the high veranda into space, to be brought up with a jerk by his long chain, a foot or so above the head of some passer-by. The fright that this unexpected descent invariably caused the victim of his practical joke gave the monkey great amusement. He would continue to hang suspended by the belt round his waist, head downward, both hands in his mouth, and swing himself to and fro, until, tired of this position, he would clamber up his chain to his observation post.

The *callapos* that arrived that morning brought, perchance, a mail and a batch of newspapers, the latter never less than two months old. That the news was ancient, however, did not matter much, for, being no longer part of the big world without, one's attitude in regard to its doings became that of an unimpassioned, though interested, bystander. Reading the papers, therefore, was much like reading history—an occupation for which the *siesta* hour was eminently suited.

The rhythmic rap-rap of steel upon steel rang out anew as the sweating rivetting squads hammered home the rivets in hull plates which the sun had rendered too hot for the naked hand to touch. In the forest men were at work sawing big logs for launching ways and for the superstructure of the dredge.

For the heating of the rivets a considerable quantity of charcoal was required. One day, when work on the dredge had but just begun, five Transylvanians arrived at the camp. These men had been engaged in La Paz to burn charcoal on contract, work in which they claimed to have become expert in their native country. They set to work with great ardour. Early and late, they were hewing and hacking the hard wood which had been found to make the best charcoal—wood so tough that their sharp axes, though skilfully used, could bite

into it with difficulty. They piled high the billets, and plastered the mounds with a thick layer of clay; then, having set light to the interior, they set about the cutting of more wood. They were receiving a good price for the charcoal, and they confidently expected, within a few weeks, to have earned sufficient to pay for the provisions and other stores they had drawn and leave them a handsome balance wherewith to continue their way down river to the Madeira-Marmoré Railway construction camps.

But blow after blow befell them. On opening the first mound, which had cost them so much toil, instead of several hundredweights of charcoal, there was nothing but a heap of grey ashes. The heat generated in the interior had cracked the clay covering; air had thus been admitted, and complete combustion had taken place. When the next mound was opened, flames shot up, and that stack of charcoal was likewise speedily reduced to ashes. The Transylvanians were heart-broken, but they still persevered. I suggested to them that they should try burning their wood in trenches, but they replied that that was not the method in vogue in their own country, and claimed that their way was the right and only one.

For three weeks they worked like Trojans, and never an ounce of charcoal did they deliver. Then their leader—a pleasant-spoken, hefty fellow—put their case before me. He and his companions owed me £50 for money advances and stores; they had worked hard for three weeks to fulfil their contract, and had failed, their methods being evidently unsuited to this country; they were willing to work at anything except charcoal burning. In the circumstances, it was cheaper to cry “Quits!” and, as I did not require their labour for any other purpose, to let them go without delay, to seek better fortune elsewhere.



CAMP MAQUIQUI.

Site on which the dredge pontoons were constructed.



ERECTING THE DREDGE SUPERSTRUCTURE.

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At five-thirty the day's work was done. Twice a week, at this hour, the Company's *pulperia* (store) was opened, and the men came to draw their provisions—chiefly *chalonga*, rice, sugar, flour, condensed milk, and cigarettes.

Six o'clock approaches, and the glare and heat of the earlier hours have given place to a mellow light and and genial warmth which warn the denizens of the jungle that the day is about to close. Overhead, macaws and green parrots swiftly wing their way to their distant home-trees, squawking harshly the while. From the high ground on the far side of the river, pigeons come zig-zagging down to roost in the tall canes on the island, which they share with flocks of chattering parakeets. A duck or two—large birds, boldly marked in black and white—fly heavily downstream. The sun dips behind the distant ridge, and day merges into indigo-tinted dusk. For a brief space of time, strident voices are stilled. A deer, perhaps, breaks through the bushes that edge the forest, to drink at a quiet back-water, or a panther slinks across a stretch of sandy beach and is swallowed up by the scrub. And suddenly it is dark.

The workers of the night now leave their hiding places and set about their various activities. The first indication of this reawakened world comes from the tall grass in the clearing by the river where the nocturnal minstrels—crickets and other insects—are tuning up. The chirping, whistling and droning, reinforced by the deep boom of the bull-frog, gradually swell to a surprisingly large volume of sound. In the darkness across the river a small bright light appears and moves steadily across the intervening space like a lantern borne by some invisible agency. It is a fire-fly, which, having reached the hither side joins its fellows that are darting in and out of the

balsa trees about whose great white blossoms bats flit and swoop.

“Let’s pretend” that this is the time of the full moon in the dry season. A faint glow appears low in the eastern sky and sharply outlines the black ridge across the river. Presently a thin line like a red-hot wire crowns the silhouette of a tree. The line thickens rapidly and from behind the forest screen rises a gigantic disc glowing red like a live coal—the moon greatly magnified and wonderfully beautiful. Quickly it climbs, its rosy hue fading the while, till presently it shines in silvery splendour, and by its cold light the landscape stands revealed in black and silver, weird and unreal.

Overhead, a low-hung sky of darkest purple and of rose-leaf texture is pulsating with myriads of brilliant stars. On every side is the age-old jungle, dark and mysterious, brooding as if it were a living thing, girdled by the broad river that gleams and flashes in the moonlight. Palm leaves, stirred by the faint breeze, are rustling softly, with a dry, sibilant sound, as though ghosts were whispering. On a breath from the forest is borne a perfume sweet and memory-haunting, which lingers for a moment and is gone. Now and again, distinct from the other noises of the night, come the long, shrill whistle of a tapir and the savage miouw of a hungry tiger-cat. There is a crashing and swishing in the trees that edge the clearing, and the dark forms of a troop of lemurs can be distinguished, leaping in the topmost branches, uttering, at the sight of man, their short, coughing danger signal. On such a night, it seems almost wicked to waste hours in sleep, as one is constrained to do, mindful of the next day’s duties.

There is a Spanish saying, “*Cada dia no es Santa Lucia*” that is, “Every day is not a red-letter day”—nor is every night one of full moon. In the rainy season,

the evenings are dark and cheerless ; the rain rattles monotonously on the leaves ; the rumble of the swollen river has an unfriendly, threatening note ; and the air blows damp and chilly through the walls of *charro* canes.

One December afternoon, just before sundown, I was struck by the peculiar sandy colour of the sky above the ridge across the river, and, as I watched, wondering what this might portend, the trees that crowned the hill-top suddenly swayed violently to and fro. It was a tornado, which was apparently advancing straight on to the camp. It swept down the wooded slope in which it cut a wide swarth, great trees crashing down one after the other, like a row of ninepins. At the same instant, rain fell in torrents, as though the dam of some overhead reservoir had burst. It looked as if the fate of the house were sealed and the roof would, within the next instant or so, be lifted off. I shouted to the other members of the white staff to "clear out" at once, and in the shortest possible space of time we were gathered in the *patio*, drenched to the skin. By good fortune some freak diverted the course of the whirlwind, the full force of which struck the near bank of the river a couple of hundred yards below where we were standing. Yet, even on its fringe, the force of the tornado was terrific, and the house rocked and seemed to be in imminent peril of toppling over. It was with considerable relief that we felt the violence of the storm abate, and found that we were not homeless on a night ill-suited to such a condition.

It was shortly after this that, having some matters to discuss with Schneider, I took passage on a *callapo* down to Chichiponte, intending to return on some passing *balsa*, or, in default, on one of Schneider's rafts, which were continually going up river to Mapiri, laden with rubber. My plans, however, were brought to

naught by the river rising, a few hours after my arrival at Chichiponte, to such a height that any thought of travelling up-stream had to be abandoned. Some of Schneider's Lecos were going overland, by the jungle trail, the following morning, to Guanay, and would be passing close to Maquiqui, so I decided to travel in their company that far.

An early start had been planned, but Schneider's Lecos, who were even more unruly and independent than the rest of their tribe, came straggling up to the Administration House all the morning, and it was long past mid-day when at last we set out on the tramp to Maquiqui in a heavy downpour of rain. I was wearing *polcas*—footwear which, at any time, I found unsuited to long tramps, but more especially so in the wet season, and my progress through the forest now was an imitation of skating, as I slipped and skidded, especially where the steep and muddy banks of streams had to be negotiated.

We walked until darkness overtook us, and made camp beside the path. The Lecos hacked down some boughs, and propping them against tree-stems made shelters more apparent than real from the rain which fell unceasingly. Tired and wet, no one bothered to light a fire—which, indeed, would have been a somewhat difficult matter in the circumstances—and for my part, I was glad enough to roll up in my blanket and go to sleep without troubling to eat any supper, though I had brought away from Chichiponte a couple of small loaves of bread and two tins of sardines. These I attacked the next morning for breakfast, giving the remainder to the Indians, which they demolished, together with the potful of cold boiled rice that they had brought with them.

With the first light of day we set off in an attempt to reach Maquiqui that night. Cold and wet we

plodded on along the narrow path that wound through the dripping jungle, edged on either side by tangled undergrowth, the moisture-laden air impregnated with the smell of rotting vegetation.

It was about mid-day when Silverio, the head Leco, who was leading the way just ahead of me, suddenly signalled to me to approach carefully, and pointing overhead whispered *Mono!* (monkey). I looked up and saw some monkeys—large fellows with sandy-coloured fur, who were watching us interestedly from the boughs of a tall tree. "Shoot one, Señor," implored the Leco; I did so and shrieks of childish delight from the Indians greeted the monkey as it reached the ground with a thud. "It is mid-day, Señor," said Silverio, "and it would be well that we should eat." Wood was collected and a fire lighted; the monkey was spitted on a stick and roasted over the fire round which we squatted. Presently the Indian in charge of the cooking operations pronounced the meat to be ready for eating, and a piece was hacked off and served to me on a wild plantain leaf. Monkey flesh is far from being unpalatable, and that particular meal I found to be especially good eating. The warm food was very comforting, for I had been soaked to the skin for twenty-four hours, and was feeling somewhat chilled. The Indians, also, were heartened, and it was a more cheerful gang of men that pursued their way that afternoon than had broken camp in the morning.

The Indians had brought with them from Chichiponte a bottle of the raw alcohol which is more commonly drunk on the High Plateau than in the Quebrada, where it is replaced by rum. From time to time, when we reached a stream, Silverio doled out to each Indian a ration of this "chained lightning" mixed with a little—a very little—water. On these occasions I also was offered *un tragito* (a little swallow) which I as invari-

ably refused, until late in the afternoon, a halt having again been made for this purpose beside a little brook, Silverio, bottle in hand, said to me, "Señor, you are cold; it would be well to take a little drink of this." And, because I was chilled to the bone, I consented. The Leco stooped to collect a little water in the enamelled-iron mug which he carried dangling on a bit of string, from his waist-belt, added some *aguardiente* and passed the cup to me. When I had gulped down the fiery stuff, I felt a pleasant glow throughout my body, but half a mile further on, to my astonishment, my legs failed to function! Potato alcohol had been too potent for me, and there was nothing else to do than to sit down, propped up against a tree and await a return to sobriety; though, curiously enough, my head remained perfectly clear. And thus was an hour wasted.

We pressed on again, but we were still three miles from Maquiqui when we were forced by the fall of night to call a halt. The next morning it was in my own house that I had breakfast, preceded by a hot bath, a change into dry clothing, and a drop of decent Highland Dew accompanied the registering of a vow never again, in any circumstances, to be inveigled into drinking potato alcohol—a liquid more poisonous even than I had imagined it to be.

CHAPTER XIV

INTERLUDES

Down the Beni River—Fishing with Bow and Arrow—River Perils—Rurrenabaque, a Centre of the Rubber Industry—A Mad Englishman—Wrecked—A Christmas Dinner (or the Conversion of Francisco)—My Menagerie.

THE dredge had been under construction for a little over two years, and the hull was approaching completion, when the four dredgemen, who had been engaged in New Zealand, arrived at Maquiqui. Work now advanced rapidly. The hull was ready and the launching ways were in place, awaiting the first high water, which arrived suddenly one night. When, next morning, it was found that the river was up to the required level, the hull was jacked off the blocks on which it rested, and slid down the soapy ways into the water, where it floated, moored to the bank, pending the erection of the superstructure.

It was shortly after this that Lord N., a son of one of the directors of the Company, arrived at Maquiqui from England. N., who was an excellent fellow, was very anxious to go down river as far as Rurrenabaque, and it was arranged that we should go down together in one of Schmidt's *callapos*, which was to pick us up on its downward journey. The craft that arrived one evening at Maquiqui for this purpose was, however, a flat-bottomed boat which Schmidt had constructed as an experiment. The river had now returned to its normal level; the first *avenida* had lasted barely long

enough to permit the dredge to be launched from the high ground on which it had been constructed. The morning was uneventful, and we sat perched on the assorted cargo, as we glided through valley and cañon, encountering *malpasos* of but minor importance.

In the afternoon, the boat was paddled up a creek into a wide lagoon, where the Lecos told us they were going to procure fish. Previous to the coming of the demoralising white man, the river Indian's only methods of catching fish was either by the use of traps, or with bow and arrow; both of which methods he still employs, but to a very limited extent. Now, he prefers to use dynamite, as it gives the maximum result with the minimum amount of trouble.

Shooting fish with bow and arrow can only be done when the river is high and turbid and the fish seek shelter amongst the boulders in shallow water. Armed with his bow and a long palm-wood arrow pressed against the taut bowstring, ready for instant release, the Indian advances cautiously up-stream, feeling among the boulders with the point of his arrow, which, on coming into contact with a fish, is shot into its body. Even if not instantly killed, the fish, transfixed by the barbed shaft, is easily recovered should it attempt to escape.

Hooked the Leco seems not to have known the use of in the past, and even now, employs them solely for catching *suche* (catfish) which, in these rivers, grows to a very large size—I hooked and landed one, on this very trip, which weighed fully two hundred pounds.

In the lagoon our boat was moored to the stump of a tree, and the Leco crew divested themselves of their shirts, preparatory to the throwing into the dark water of the dynamite cartridge that one of their number was preparing. The fuse, which, according to Leco usage was dangerously short—a couple of inches long at most—was lit with the end of a cigarette, and the cart-

ridge tossed into the water. The splash it made was almost immediately followed by an explosion, a column of water rose high in the air, and fish, dead or stunned, appeared on the surface in profusion.

With yells of delight, the Indians plunged into the lagoon and commenced to throw fish on to the bank. The attempts of many of the fish, which were only slightly stunned, to elude the grasp of the Lecos, gave rise to more shouts and shrieks of excited laughter, as the men dived after them. At length, there seemed to be no more, and stock was taken of the "catch" which numbered over two hundred and fifty fish, all *suchos*—a soft-mouthed fish, weighing about two pounds, the flesh of which is very sweet but difficult to eat because of numberless fine bones.

When the catch had been loaded on the boat, we set off again, and pursued our journey, without further incident until, just before nightfall, we made camp on a wide beach. The Lecos now set about collecting driftwood and the making of big grids of green cane, on which they laid their fish to roast over a slow fire. It is by this method that the Leco treats fish or meat surplus to the day's requirements; when thus grilled and smoked—or *chuchucado*, as he calls it—flesh will keep for three or four days.

The grilling of the fish was in full swing when one of the Indians cried *chancho!* (pig), and, looking up, we saw a large herd of peccary, which had entered the water a little above us, swimming across the river. Lord N., who had his rifle beside him, opened a rapid fire as the current carried the pigs past the spot where we stood. Meanwhile, the Lecos had pushed the boat, laden as it was, into the water, and with pole and with paddle pursued the herd, and presently were themselves blazing away at them with muzzle-loader and carbine. They returned about an hour later, having

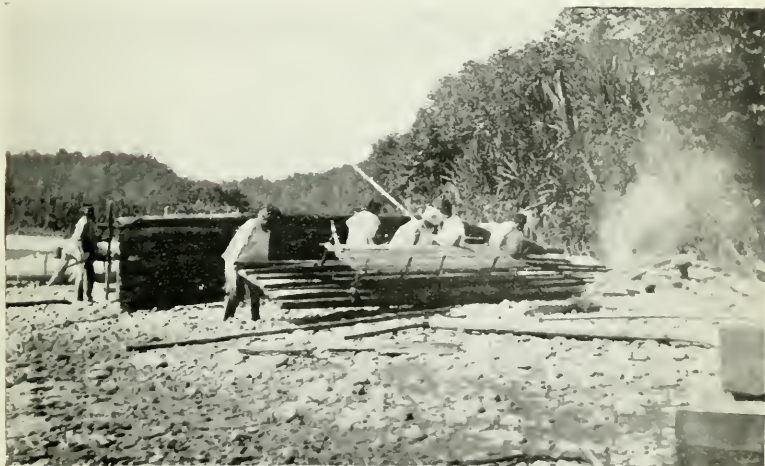
had a hard time to pull the heavy boat up-river, but were delighted in that they had been able to secure one pig, which was immediately hacked up and the flesh laid on the grids to be converted into *chuchucado*. When all the excitement had died away, we rolled up in our blankets under our mosquito nets and slept soundly.

Early the next day, we arrived at a juncture of the Kaka with an equally large river—the Bopi, or Rio La Paz. This meeting-place is the beginning of the Beni river proper, which, even here, is a mighty stream, measuring some five or six hundred yards from bank to bank. The character of the country was now changing, being much flatter. The ridges were low and far apart. Wide beaches bordered the river's edge, covered with the blackened trunks of trees brought down by the high waters of previous years, which now lay piled up here and there, forming tangled barriers. In places, these barriers occurred in the stream itself, making navigation difficult and even dangerous. In one spot, we narrowly missed destruction in mid-stream from a partly-submerged tree-trunk.

The foreman in charge of the boat was anxious to proceed as far as possible that day, and, contrary to custom, did not make camp at sundown, but continued downstream for some time afterwards, by the light of the moon. Suddenly, a Leco in the bow gave a shout; but a few yards ahead of us, scarcely distinguishable against the surrounding dark water, we saw the jagged branch of some submerged tree projecting just above the surface, on to which the current was rushing us. So short a distance separated us from this sudden danger that disaster appeared inevitable; but the Indians plied their huge paddles with such frantic energy that our craft managed to elude the branch without an inch to spare. This hair's-breadth



THE BEACH, RURRENABAQUE.
Boats of the Lower Beni.



A HALT FOR THE NIGHT.
Rafts beached and propped up to dry.



escape damped the foreman's desire for haste, and we made camp forthwith.

When we set out next morning, the interest of the Leco crew seemed to be centred on the probable condition of the last and worst *malpaso*—Bala. *Como será Bala?* was the question that from time to time, a Leco would address, seemingly, to the world in general—an interrogation which never failed to evoke grunts from his companions, indicative, to judge by their faces, of pleased anticipation of the coming battle with the mighty river, which here let loose all its forces in a last frantic endeavour to rid itself of the pigmies it carried on its broad back.

Presently, in the distance, the blue mass of the Bala mountain range came into view, stretching across the plain through which the river was now winding. As we neared the ridge, it seemed impossible but that the stream would here be diverted by this obstacle across its path. It was only when the boat was close to the apparent obstruction that a sudden bend in the river revealed a narrow chasm, through which the water poured. Into the defile we rushed, the river churned into foam by the huge boulders with which its bed was strewn, seeking to obstruct its progress. Into this turmoil we were hurled, our boat bobbing about on the angry waves, escaping the disaster that threatened it at every moment only by the herculean efforts of the Lecos, straining madly at their paddles. Around a sharp bend we hurtled, and again another bend, and into one more boiling cauldron, until at last the cañon ended and the river again expanded and continued placidly on its way.

A few miles further stood the last outpost of the far-flung foothills of the Andes—a knoll not more than two hundred feet high, San Buenaventura, the last hill, I was told, that a traveller would see were he to pursue

his journey down the Beni, the Madeira, and the Amazon to the sea. This knoll was the portal of Rurrenabaque, a town of palm-thatched, cane-walled houses and wide, sandy streets, which lay in a clearing in the jungle.

Our arrival was watched with interest by some of the inhabitants who gathered on the bank; among them was one, unmistakably an Englishman, who when we stepped ashore, introduced himself as Mr. Merritt. Although I now met him for the first time, we had frequently corresponded and exchanged English periodicals. "Don Jorge," as he was universally known, had lived some twenty years in Rurrenabaque, where he was now the leading trader. He would not listen to any other proposal than that we should stay with him, and bore us off to his large and comfortably furnished house, where, over a sumptuous lunch, we regaled him with such information concerning the outside world as we, who came from a spot eighty miles nearer to it, possessed. We were chatting over our coffee when the door opened and in walked another distinguished citizen of the town—Mr. John Drew, formerly of London—Whitechapel, to be exact—but resident for the last thirty-five years in Rurrenabaque, during which period he had not once revisited his native country. He had arrived as a youth, engaged in trade and prospered.

There was one member of the English colony in Rurrenabaque, however, whom we did not see—a man named Stone, who, in former years, had been a very wealthy trader. Whilst still a young man however, his mind became unhinged, and he literally threw his fortune away with both hands. It is related of him that when he had disposed of a large consignment of rubber at Riveralta, he would, on making camp on the up-river journey, call together the crews of his *bate-lones* and pour on to a large cloth spread on the beach

bags of English sovereigns, the proceeds of the sale. He would then cry "Help yourselves, boys!" and watch with glee the scramble which ensued. Such pastimes can have but one result, and it was not long till Stone's wealth was entirely dissipated. He then took to the "bush," constructing for himself a miserable cabin in the jungle, by the water's edge, where he lived like a savage, shunning all contact with his fellows. He had become, so it was said, wonderfully adept in the use of the bow and arrow, and could shoot fish as well as any river Indian. Later, I met his brother, who had come out from England, with the object of persuading Stone, whom he had not seen for many years, to accompany him to England, where he could be taken care of. When, a week or two later, he paused at Maquiqui on the return trip, he told me that his brother refused to abandon his present mode of life, as he was perfectly happy and contented.

On taking his departure from Merritt's house, Drew pressed us to take tea with him that same afternoon, for, on the following day, we were to set out on our return journey, as our *balseros* were anxious to be off, to escape, if possible, the next *avenida*, which was due to occur in the near future. Lord N. and I left Merritt to attend to his business affairs, and strolled out across the wide *plaza*—which was deserted except for a few village pigs and a tame South American ostrich—and finally reached the river bank. Here there was little or no sign of Rurrenabaque's importance as a river port. A few native boys were playing in the water, and the village girls, who came down to fill their pails and jugs, improved the occasion by taking a dip in the cool stream. On the river, whose waters glittered dazzlingly, an Indian was paddling a raft across from the opposite low-lying shore, fringed with giant palms, their leaves motionless in the breath-

less, noon-day heat. The scene, shimmering in the fierce sunlight, was eloquent of the siesta hour, when all who could do so had sought refuge within their houses from the heat.

On the beach lay two or three *batelones*—the big canoes with a capacity of twenty tons or more which are used in the collection of the rubber from the estates that border the river and its subsequent transport to Riveralta, the headquarters of the Bolivian rubber trade, at the confluence of the Beni and the Madre de Dios.

We next visited a young Peruvian merchant whom I knew. Him we found sitting in his warehouse amongst the usual merchandise of the river trader. Cheap hats and yellow boots jostled enamelled pots and table ware; bales of calico fought for prominence with stacks of cutlasses. There were also sacks of *charque*, thin strips of dried beef, the produce of the *pampa* region of Reyes, two days' journey eastwards, a cattle country where horses and mules are non-existent, for they invariably succumb to a disease that produces paralysis of the hind quarters. The artistic touch was given to the contents of the store by the variegated labels on a profusion of bottles of assorted drinks, an invitation to sample which was not declined.

Curiously enough, the principal medium of exchange on the Beni was the English sovereign, which, together with Bolivian silver coinage, was practically the only currency, the natives refusing to accept Bolivian bank notes, although the traders were now beginning to introduce them. It was strange, yet somehow, distinctly pleasing, to see the familiar "Jimmy O'Goblin" circulating in this remote region.

In the early afternoon of the next day, despite our desire to prolong our stay for a day or two, we embarked on our homeward journey, fearing lest any further delay on our part might result in our being marooned in that



INDIAN BOYS AT PLAY.
Iturrenabaque, Rio Beni.



A SOUTH-AMERICAN OSTRICH.



spot during the coming rainy season, for the Lecos were anxious to return to their homes before the next high water made up-stream progress difficult, if not altogether impossible. The Leco is a highly independent savage, and our boat-crew would undoubtedly have departed without us had we accepted our host's urgent invitation to remain until the morrow.

We camped that night just below Bala, and shortly after dawn of the next day we were struggling through those rapids. Half the gorge had been traversed, and N. and I were aiding the Lecos straining at the tow-ropes to haul the boat over rocks that lay in very shallow water near to the shore, when there was a loud crack, and a moment later we were sprawling on the beach with the ropes slack in our hands. The stem of the boat had parted company with the hull into which the water was rushing. Fortunately, the boat was resting, at the time, on a flat rock, where she remained whilst the Lecos, convulsed with merriment, leisurely salvaged our belongings. Thus, at seven o'clock one morning, we found ourselves stranded on a narrow beach in the cañon of Bala, there to remain until rescued by some passing raft.

Fortunately, we had food sufficient for several days, but, beyond having meals at intervals, there was nothing we could do to while away the time during our sojourn within the narrow limits of our sandy beach. The sand-flies here were more pestilential than in any other spot I had encountered on the river, and they were reinforced by countless mosquitoes—not to mention swarms of little sweat-bees, which, though stingless, are sticky and tickling. Flies in such numbers are sufficiently annoying when one has something to do, but when one is idle, they are maddening beyond endurance. So N. and I rigged up our mosquito nets on the beach, under the stuffy protection of which we lay

in the blazing sun, awaiting nightfall or deliverance. That occasion will always live in my memory as the one on which I wrote the longest letter I have ever written or shall, probably, ever write. I am one of the worst correspondents that ever annoyed his relations and taxed the forbearance of his friends, yet cooped up in the narrow confines of a mosquito curtain, with no other means of beguiling the tedium of a long day, the most hardened of such culprits will put pen—or, rather, pencil—to paper, if for no other purpose than of expressing his sentiments in regard to his present plight.

It was about five o'clock, when I had smoked myself sick and written myself dry, that, at a whoop from one of the Lecos, I peered out from under the folds of mosquito net and saw a *balsa* rounding a bend in the cañon, going up-stream. Close behind it appeared another raft. Quickly, we got our traps together and awaited the rafts, delighted to abandon the role of "castaways" and to ring down the curtain on the shipwreck scene.

Our predicament, of course, gave rise to unbounded mirth on the part of the newcomers, who readily agreed to transport us to Maquiqui, where, now that the rafts' crews were augmented by our men, we hoped to arrive in about five days, all being well. But all was not well, for the next day it began to rain, and the river rose steadily. Progress was slow, for the current was strong and the Indians, chilled by the deluge, lost their accustomed vigour and dash. We had but one medium sized canvas fly, under which, at night, we all huddled, packed like sardines. It was none too warm, for a cold wind, which prevails during a week or two at this time of the year, was blowing. Thus we proceeded, day after day, the rain never abating for even an hour. Occasionally we stopped for an hour or two in the neighbourhood of some salt-lick to shoot a pig, as the stock

of provisions was becoming low. One morning, shortly after day-break, we had the luck to shoot a deer that had come down to the river to drink—a windfall which greatly cheered the Lecos, who, during the previous night, had shivered under their damp cotton blankets. After eleven days' arduous travelling, we turned one more bend in the river and brought Maquiqui into view.

Christmas dinner during the two previous years at Maquiqui had been marred by the absence of real Christmas pudding. I had attempted to make substitutes—on the first occasion, of ingredients quite other than those given by any orthodox recipe. My second attempt was much better—in fact, I may say that it was an unqualified success, judging by the rapidity with which it disappeared, in spite of its generous bulk—it weighed about ten pounds! In all fairness, I should perhaps state that the sauce contributed in no small measure to the success of the pudding, for it contained nearly half-a-bottle of whisky.

I decided, however, that the third Christmas should be the occasion for a special display of the culinary art. So far as the pudding was concerned, I had long before ordered a tinned plum pudding from La Paz. It was, therefore, with the courses which were to precede it that I was mostly concerned. My house-boys were, of course, as cooks hopelessly incompetent. On my first arrival in Maquiqui, I had to teach them the art of making bread, for which we had to make our own yeast from a few precious potatoes imported from the exterior for the purpose. This bread was baked in a mud-oven shaped like a beehive, previously heated by burning wood inside it. As a rule, the oven was used solely for baking bread, for the art of baking meat was quite beyond the capacity of my cook-boy to grasp

his forte being stew—and always the same old stew—*chalonga* and rice.

On Christmas morning, therefore, I had to direct culinary operations myself. First, there was tortoise soup, prepared from a big land tortoise which someone had captured in the forest. From Aparicio I had, some time before, procured some of the wild ducks of which he had reared a few on his plantation, handsome, black-and-white birds, much larger than our domestic duck. These were roasted. Then, as a *pièce-de-résistance* in the meat line was roast peccary. On any other occasion, “roast peccary” would have denoted nothing more than roast peccary, but to-day a tragedy lay concealed in that term, for the wild pig that furnished the wherewithal for the making of that dish was “Francisco,” and Francisco had, for a little time past, been a not-unprominent member of the household—in fact, it was due to his undue prominence that, in the heyday of his youth, he figured on our bill of fare.

Francisco was brought to me as a wee piglet, by a Leco who had found him wandering, lost and disconsolate, on the river bank, squeaking piteously for the mother and herd from which he had become separated, probably during an independent expedition of his own. Independence was a strong feature in Francisco's makeup. A diet of condensed milk agreed with piggy exceedingly, and, before long, he was able to exchange this for more solid food, and waxed fat. He ran about loose and was dog-like in his devotion to the cook, who fed him. Me, his master, he tolerated, and if he was somewhat supercilious in his attitude towards me, we were quite good friends. The two house-boys he loathed—doubtless because of teasing on their part. The result was that one or the other was constantly coming to me with a leg or a foot which bore evidence of Francisco's displeasure. When he bit them he bit them

severely, and the bite was slow in healing. Besides laming the boys and giving them an excuse for doing less work than usual—which was little enough—Francisco's reprisals involved taking up a lot of my time in dressing the wounds that he inflicted. At last, it resolved itself into getting rid either of the boys or of the peccary, and, the former being somewhat more useful, Francisco was doomed. To have converted him into a Christmas dinner may seem a callous act, but, where fresh meat is procurable only with difficulty, one cannot afford to throw it away. And so I had to steel my heart.

This Christmas dinner, ushered in by a soup tureenful of egg-nogg, was a great success—perhaps fatally so, for it is more than possible that it was, to a large extent, responsible for the illness that, on the following day, laid low Tough, the dredgemaster, resulting in his death some ten days later. Tough was a Scotsman, long resident in New Zealand, and, by reason of his age—being nearer sixty than fifty—was an easy prey to the diseases of the tropics, which he was visiting for the first time. Fever had attacked him on the journey down to Maquiqui, where he arrived a sick man. Hearty indulgence in a somewhat indigestible meal brought on another attack of fever on Boxing Day, from which the poor old chap did not recover.

From the Lecos, who, from time to time, brought me wild animals captured by them, I had purchased an odd assortment of birds and beasts. The first member of the menagerie was "Murphy," a little lemur, with a beautiful silver-grey coat. Murphy was a "night-bird," and it was only after sundown that he took any active interest in things. He was passionately fond of an insect resembling a green cockchafer, and, during the evening meal, it was the duty of all to catch these "Irish lobsters," as we called them, as they flew

around the lamps. Murphy, however, although a pretty animal, was uninteresting. The foundations of the circus were not really laid until the almost simultaneous arrival on the scene of "Pete" and "Togo."

Pete was a German boar-hound puppy, and Togo a baby monkey, of the species known locally as *silvador* (whistler). These two soon formed a David-and-Jonathan friendship. Pete grew into a powerful dog on whose broad back Togo delighted to ride. Wherever Pete went, Togo had to go also. One day, I heard Togo whistling piteously from the direction of the river; it was obvious, from the plaintiveness of his call, that he was in trouble. I went down to the river bank, and there I saw Pete standing up to his neck in water, cooling himself, whilst, clutching desperately at his ears was Togo, with his head just above the level of the stream. In obedience to my command, Pete emerged from the river with the frightened Togo on his back, who, when the bank was reached, abandoned the friend who had played him so mean a trick and scurried, swearing violently, to the house.

The monkey's favourite amusement was to lie in wait for some unsuspecting fowl and spring out on it as it passed him. The terrified hen escaped at the expense of a handful of feathers, which Togo would gleefully chew as his panic-stricken victim tore squawking away. He used the same method to make poor Francisco's life a burden to him, lying in ambush when he saw the pig approaching, seizing his hind leg as he passed, and vigorously biting it, grinning delightedly when Francisco, squealing with mingled fright and pain, sought refuge in the banana plantation.

Another pet was a parrot—a fluent talker. Whenever a rainstorm was in progress, there was always a flood of language and song from the cookhouse, on the ridge of which sat the parrot, bedraggled and half-

drowned, unburdening herself of her repertoire at the top of her voice.

An important member of the household was Margaret. Though small in stature, she contrived to make her presence felt, for she had much individuality and a not inconsiderable amount of intelligence—in fact, she was the most intelligent member of her species I ever met.

Margaret was petite, and had a pretty, rounded figure, bright eyes, and a most attractive light-brown colouring—an altogether charming little person. Whenever I returned to the house Margaret was generally the first to greet me, though the possibility that I might have in my pocket some little gift, doubtless had something to do with the warmth of her welcome.

Margaret's devotion to me was, at times, somewhat overwhelming, especially during meals, when she invariably took her place at table perched on my shoulder. I believe I have omitted to mention that Margaret was a hen. I found it necessary to fill Margaret's crop with bread at the beginning of every meal, in order that my fork, on its way to my mouth, should not have to run the gauntlet of her beak.

The nest boxes that had been constructed for the use of the other hens Margaret disdained. She insisted on laying her eggs in an empty packing case that stood, end on, in my office, serving as a stand for a letter press, and there, likewise, she hatched out a numerous family; for to have used the eggs of a super-hen like Margaret for food would have been sheer vandalism.

Margaret, however, had incurred the enmity of the houseboys—for what reason I do not know, as they did not seem to object to any other members of the menagerie; perhaps they thought that such a common, everyday thing as a hen had no good title to the privileges enjoyed by her colleagues in the zoo. Whatever the reason for it, their hostility, though concealed,

was none the less to be dreaded, and so it came about that, on my return to the camp after an absence of a few days, I discovered that Margaret, who, for a year or more had been queen of the hen-roost, was missing. The boys, of course, knew nothing about it; according to them, her disappearance must have been due to a visit from the opossums that almost nightly prowled about the house. It was much more likely that Margaret disappeared into a stewpot and was eaten by the boys. None of her chicks grew up to be like its mother, who left a gap which could not be filled.

I had a film camera, but my efforts in photography in the Quebrada were not invariably successful. The difficulties were many. The developing of the negatives could only be done on nights when there was no moon, for I had no dark room other than a small tent pitched in the back yard for the purpose. Another condition was that the river water should be fairly cold and clear. Developing was hot work, for the temperature in the small tent, with the flaps securely drawn and the ventilation apertures sealed to exclude light, rose rapidly, and the atmosphere became suffocating. It was always with a gasp of relief that, as soon as the films had been immersed in "hypo" solution, I crawled outside.

One night I had developed several reels taken on a recent trip, and the results had been excellent. I left the long strips of film suspended from the ridge pole of the tent to dry, thinking that they would be less likely to be injured there than elsewhere. When, the next morning, I went to have a look at them, I found most of the fowlyard gathered inside the tent and the fowls jumping up to pick off the sandflies as they settled on the still wet films, to which they seemed attracted. Every negative now looked as though it had served as a target at a miniature rifle range where the scoring had been good; the perspiring hours I had spent in developing the night before, had been for naught.

CHAPTER XV

“TEXAS” INTERVENES

Coroico Revisited—A Rapid Return—The Two Gold-seekers of Tipuani.

THE rainy season was late in commencing that year, and Lord N. and I decided to take advantage of the low state of the river to make a hurried trip to Naranja Cala, and from there on to the town of Coroico. At Guanay we procured a raft and three *balseros*, to take us up the Coroico river. We expected to reach Naranja Cala in two and a half days, but, our journey only half accomplished, the river rose considerably.

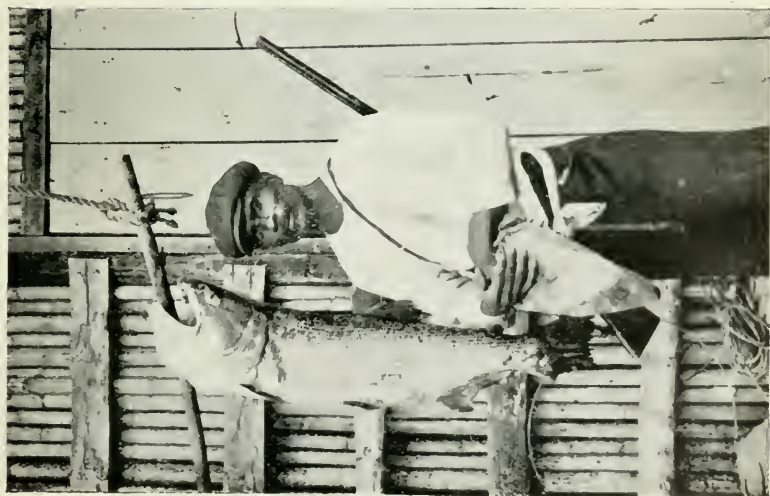
The spell of fine weather that had favoured us broke, and for days we struggled against an ever-rising river, in a deluge of rain. We advanced foot by foot, now pulling ourselves a yard or two forward by means of low, overhanging branches, now scrambling through the thick bush whilst our three *balseros*, up to their waists in water, hauled the raft through a rapid. More than once a whirlpool clutched the *balsa* and we narrowly escaped being engulfed in the swirling water, an eventuality which would probably have written “Finis” to our adventure.

We reached Naranja Cala at the end of five days. The camp had been cleared of all machinery, and abandoned. The bungalow, which had been constructed there four years previously, had fallen into disrepair; the roof leaked like a sieve, and in point of dryness that night was no better than those passed under the little

fly of light canvas that we had brought with us. We set off in the early morning for Coroico, our three Lecos acting as bearers, a duty which pleased them not at all, for the Leco dislikes being burdened with anything besides his gun and his home-woven haversack of gaudy colouring, in which he carries his shot and powder flask, his little cotton blanket, and food.

The broad trail, over which mules had not passed for more than a year, was now in places so thickly overgrown that we had to hack our way through with our cutlasses. Doubly drenched by the unceasing rain and the showers that fell on us from the broad-leaved jungle plants and young trees as we cut them down, we pushed on through the steaming forest, stopping at night at one or other of my old camping sites. The old palm-thatched shelters were now very dilapidated. Late one night we reached Challa. The door of the little house I had built before leaving Challa, in anticipation of the collapse of the original shed, was closed and bolted. My summons brought an Indian woman to the door who asked what we wanted, and to my reply that we wished to spend the night there, she rejoined that we could not do so. When I had made myself known to her, however, she admitted us with many apologies, and soon she set before us immense mugs of wonderful, hot coffee. Her husband, who had formerly been in the employ of my Company as an *arriero* (muleteer), was stretched out on a little cot in the corner, groaning. He was in the grip of malarial fever, which works havoc with the Indian of the High Plateau when he ventures into these low-lying regions, as testify the little wayside graves beside the trail from Coroico to La Paz. Of medicines the Indian woman had none, not even quinine bark, so my little medicine case was again brought into use.

When we left Challa the next morning, the rain had



BENTLEY AND A FINE DORADO.



A WHIRLPOOL, RIO COROICO.



ceased, the sun was shining gloriously, the birds were singing, and all nature was looking bright and gay, as though the leaden skies and drenched landscape of the preceding days had never been. Gone was all the chill and numbness of yesterday when we began the climb of of two thousand odd feet up the steep slopes on the summit of which lay the town of Coroico. Grilled and parched with thirst, we made a small detour to a little halfway house, where, sometimes, on former occasions, I had found beer on sale; but to-day we were not in luck, and the only refreshment that the old *chola* who kept the place could offer us was pine-apple *chicha*—a pleasant but syrupy drink which made us, if anything, thirstier, and wish more devoutly than ever that we had reached the top.

We continued our ascent, past carefully-tended coca fields, occasionally meeting with a little welcome shade, where our rugged footpath was bordered by tall coffee trees; past isolated Indian shacks, where coffee beans and coca leaves lay drying in the sun; until at last we arrived at the yellow adobe wall that enclosed Coroico, and passed on to the steep streets paved with cobble stones worn smooth by countless bare feet.

In Monje's cool *tienda* (shop) we were welcomed by its proprietor, who was to be our host during our short stay, and presently his wife called us to sit down to a meal she had prepared for us, of the best the house afforded. There we remained for two days, during which our Lecos enjoyed themselves like the children they were. At least once a day they appeared, to ask, somewhat shamefacedly, for more money to spend on rubbish. Fish they bought; these men whose homes were beside the teeming waters of the Mapiri and the Kaka bought, at high prices, stale fish caught several days before in the Titicaca—an insipid fish even when fresh; to them it was a new species—hence its attraction.

The return trip to Naranja Cala was made in a similar deluge to that which had prevailed during our outward trip, and we found the river in full spate. Our *balseros* laughed delightedly as they discussed the dangers attending an undermanned *callapo* on those roaring waters, for a *callapo* should have at least four men to steer it, and we had but three. With a small raft purchased from the half-breed, Naranja Cala's only inhabitant, lashed to the one we had brought, our *callapo* was formed. We clambered on and secured the large, rubber-coated bags of local make that contained our clothing to the little platforms on the rafts, and, with the assurances of our raftsmen (given with shouts of laughter) that we should undoubtedly be wrecked, we shot into mid-stream.

The pace at which we were borne by the red-brown flood was breathless. Almost certain shipwreck would suddenly loom before us, be averted with amazing dexterity, the danger point passed in a flash, and we were whirled off to the next peril that threatened us at no great distance. A dozen times it seemed that our frail raft could not but be dashed against some rock, or be splintered as we skimmed over barely-submerged boulders. Our *balseros* worked like madmen with paddle and pole, dismissing each narrowly-averted catastrophe with peals of laughter.

When we reached the broader and less turbulent waters of the Kaka river, we had accomplished the journey of fifty miles in four hours—a mere snail's crawl for a motor car, but express speed when performed on a few brittle poles, driven through narrow and tortuous chasms by a mountain stream in spate.

We reached Guanaya a couple of hours later, without too much difficulty, as the Mapiri river had not risen to the same extent as had the Rio Coroico, and we put up at Carlos Schmidt's house, to await transport to

Maquiqui on the next *callapo* to be dispatched down river. To fill in at least part of the period of waiting, we borrowed a couple of mules and set off for the village of Tipuani, on the river of that name some miles above its juncture with the Mapiri. The banks of that swiftly-flowing stream, whose snow-fed waters are still icy when they reach Guanay, were said to be rich in gold. Two *gringos* were, at that time, working their respective claims in the neighbourhood of Tipuani village, and it was these workings which we wished to see.

The trail was rough, running, for the most part, along the crest of the high ridge that divided the Mapiri and Tipuani valleys. We made rather a late start from Guanay, as the *corregidor's* mule, which I was to ride, did not appear until long after the appointed time. We rode slowly, scrambling up the almost precipitous sides of a ridge or sliding down the other side accompanied by cascades of stones; past clumps of *quina* (calisaya) trees, made noticeable by their silvery bark; and, just at nightfall, we arrived at the suspension bridge across the Tipuani, over whose rotten timbers we cautiously led our animals, and finally gained the village and the *posada*, where we spent the night.

The next morning we set out to find the two miners whom we had come to see. The first was a Canadian named Ernest Charest, who had prospected for gold from his earliest days, and he was now sixty-three. His hair was almost white and his face weather-beaten and seamed, yet he was as sturdy and as hopeful as many men of half his years. He was delighted to see us, for he seldom saw any English-speaking man except his fellow-pro prospector Stevens, whom he met but rarely, as their claims lay on opposite banks. We found him at work installing a small hydraulic lift, constructed by himself out of sheet iron, with which he intended to excavate the gravel from the bed of the river itself.

Unaided, he had made an aqueduct which tapped the river at a higher level and supplied him with the head of water necessary to work his hydraulic lift. Being completely without funds, he had purchased the bare necessities of life with the gold dust washed from his claim. When he had shown us his workings, his face alight with the pride and unconquerable hope that had buoyed him up through all his reverses and hardships, he took us to the wretched little shanty where he lived, and insisted on offering us hospitality, in spite of our protests. An under-sized, fever-ridden Indian boy was despatched to the village store for a bottle of whisky, which, when it arrived, was served to us in enamelled iron mugs. I have drunk passably vile liquor on occasions, but nothing that could approach the contents of that bottle. The label said "Whisky" and nothing more; it gave no hint as to whether it was to be considered Irish, Scotch or American. Doubtless, one was supposed to pay one's money and take one's choice. The maker's name and place of origin were discreetly withheld. Its chief ingredient, I think, must have been turpentine, with a little essence of ginger added as a flavouring, and some oil of vitriol to give it a "bite." It bit me so hard that I murmured some excuse for going outside, taking my mug with me, the contents of which I disposed of in the form of an offering to Mother Earth. An Indian, before he takes a drink of spirits, spills a few drops on the ground, but I thankfully gave all. Poor Lord N. had to drink his. I saw him once or twice attempting to get his mug under the table, in the hope of being able to pour the "chained lightning" on the earthen floor, unnoticed; but he was no sleight-of-hand artist, and each time, at the critical moment, he looked up to find Charest's eye fixed on him. So the mug, instead of travelling downwards, had to be raised to his lips. We were sorry to

have to cut short our stay with Charest, but the spirit was far too strong for our weak flesh, so we bade him a hasty farewell.

Guided by Charest's factotum, we walked a little way up the valley to where lived an Indian who ferried us across the river. Following a little path through the tangle of brushwood, we arrived at a clearing, where we found Stevens at work, with a couple of Indians, shovelling gravel into a long sluice box. Stevens commonly known as "Texas," was a big, raw-boned Westerner, who had formerly been a cowboy in the State from which he derived his nickname. We found him considerably depressed by a discovery he had just made.

It seemed that, in working the face of the high river-bank, Stevens had at length struck "pay dirt"—gravel so rich that he believed he was about to receive a handsome recompense for the hardships he had endured during the five or six years he had spent on this claim. He showed us several nuggets, panned from this gravel, which certainly seemed to support his contention that it was running at least a dollar to the pan. But, two days previous to our visit, the fortune that had seemed to be within his grasp had completely vanished with the stroke of his pick that had revealed a burrow which proved to be an old working, probably of the time of the Incas. The miners who had forestalled him had followed the run of the "pay dirt," scraping out as they proceeded, according to native fashion, a tunnel barely high enough to permit a man to work whilst lying at full length. There was a rueful smile on Texas' face on which fever had left its imprint; yet in spite of the blow that he had just received he could not suppress his admiration for those who had forestalled him centuries before.

It was a despondent Texas who led the way up

to the little house where he lived. Until now, his claim had merely produced sufficient to enable him to pay the wages of his two Indian labourers and provide him with rice, *chalonga*, and tobacco. As we ate our *chupe*, he told us the story of his and Charest's adventure in this valley some five years before, a story which was, next year, to have a sequel with an unhappy ending.

Texas and Charest had been working for about a year on their present claims, when one evening a *chola*, a neighbour of the Canadian miner, dashed into his shanty, imploring protection from her husband, who, she said, intended to murder her. Assuring the almost hysterical woman that she was safe in his house, Charest bolted his door. Scarcely had he done so when there was a hammering on the stout timbers, accompanied by abusive demands by the husband for admittance. Charest's curt refusal was met by the man—who was evidently mad drunk—with a torrent of oaths and threats to kill him as well as the woman. The Canadian sternly warned the half-breed to leave his vicinity if he wished to avoid a thrashing, which, in spite of his years, Charest, who was powerfully built, could have easily bestowed. The reply to this advice was another flood of insults and a revolver shot, the bullet penetrating the door and burying itself in the adobe wall beyond, causing renewed screams of terror on the part of the woman, who lay huddled on the floor in a corner of the room.

Such outrageous behaviour on the part of the half-breed was more than Charest could tamely endure, and, thinking to frighten the man, he drew his six-shooter and likewise fired at the door. This time, the report was followed by a scream on the outside of the house. Fearing that he had hit the man, Charest opened the door and found the half-breed lying on

the ground, surrounded by several other villagers, who had been attracted to the spot by the disturbance. Removing the revolver which the fallen man still grasped, Charest bent over him to examine his hurt, and found that he had been shot through the abdomen. The man was carried to his own house, and Charest gave him such medical attention as he was able, but the wound was beyond his skill to treat, and the following morning the man died.

Then a great outcry arose in the village against Charest because of the "murder" he had committed. The *corregidor* accompanied by an armed gang, went to Charest's house and arrested him. Charest submitted, for, being a peaceable man and knowing his innocence of the crime imputed to him, he did not care to cause further bloodshed. So, bound hand and foot as though he were a dangerous criminal, he was locked up in the village gaol.

The news of Charest's arrest reached Texas late that afternoon, as he was working on his claim. He dropped his pick, went up to his house to get his two revolvers, in the use of which he was extraordinarily expert, crossed the river, and strode into the village. Straight to the house of the *corregidor* he went. Without wasting any time in the exchange of compliments, he asked that worthy whether the report was true that Charest was now a prisoner in the gaol. The *corregidor* replied that such was the case, and then launched into an excited account of the unprovoked and inhuman murder which the Canadian had committed. This description was cut short by Texas with the curt demand that Charest be liberated forthwith, which, of course, was met by an indignant refusal. There was a movement of the ex-cowboy's arm, and, the next instant, the pompous *corregidor* was astonished to find himself looking down the barrel of a six-shooter, which,

viewed from his angle, looked particularly unfriendly and dangerous.

"Hand me the key of the gaol," said Texas. The *corregidor* hesitated. "The key of the gaol," repeated Texas, "quick, or I shoot," and, though his voice was low and drawling, the *corregidor* knew that this unprintably-accursed *gringo* meant what he said. Almost paralysed with fright, he withdrew the heavy key from his pocket and held it out to the cowboy, who took it and, without another word, left the house.

Arrived at the gaol, Texas unlocked the door, slashed the cords that bound Charest, and, thrusting one of his revolvers into the Canadian's hand, bade him follow him and to shoot the first man who attempted to interfere with their movements.

They were met by a hostile and armed band of villagers who had been hastily called together by the *corregidor* to capture the gaol-breakers. The look of the two *gringos*, as they emerged from the gaol, and of their six-shooters, was, however, most discouraging, and their would-be captors discreetly stood aside and let them pass.

Once clear of the village and across the river, Charest was, for the time being, free from pursuit. That night, mounted on Texas' mule, he rode away by the trail to Sorata. He eventually gained the pass across the Cordilleras and turned north into Peru. Disgusted for the time being, with South America and all its works, he made his way back to the "States." Meanwhile, a warrant had been issued in Sorata for his arrest, and also one for the arrest of Texas, which latter was never put into effect by the *corregidor* of Tipuani, who had a too-wholesome respect for his own skin.

Four years passed, and Charest, who had received word from Texas that the incident had now been officially forgotten, returned to Tipuani, where he had been working, unmolested, for nearly a year.

Texas told me that the gold-washing operations of both Charest and himself had aroused more than local interest, doubtless due to the stories current in the village of the fabulous richness of the properties they were working. In consequence of this, claims had been pegged out, on either bank, for considerable distances above and below them, mostly by merchants and lawyers of Sorata and La Paz, not with any present intention of working these claims, but in the hope that, in the near future, they would prove to be of considerable value. Both *gringos*, therefore, had to be exceedingly wary lest their claims be "jumped" by one of these enterprising gentlemen, some of whom specialised in that practice.

The sequel to the story Texas told us must be given now, although it took place at a later date. One morning, a year afterwards, a *callapo* arrived at my camp from which stepped Texas. I noticed that his only baggage appeared to be his Winchester rifle—indicating a somewhat hasty departure. Presently, when the wants of his inner man had been attended to, Texas, who looked travel-worn and tired, told me his story. The exaggerated accounts of the richness of the ground that Stevens and Charest were working at Tipuani had excited the cupidity of some person or persons of influence, who, in order to dispossess the present owners of these claims, resurrected the old charges against them. A week before, the *corregidor* of Tipuani had received new warrants for the arrest of the two miners, with instructions to put them into immediate execution.

Unaware of any such plot, Charest was found working his hydraulic lift, and was seized before he knew what was on foot, and lodged in the village gaol, under guard. The *corregidor* then immediately proceeded to attempt the capture of Texas before the alarm

reached him. The big Texan was at work when the *corregidor* appeared with his escort of four men armed with rifles. When informed that he was a prisoner, Texas agreed to submit to arrest, but urged that he be allowed first to clean up his sluice, which now contained the results of several weeks' gold washing. To this the *corregidor* consented, probably prompted by the thought that he would himself annex the gold. Leaving the *corregidor* and two of his men to watch the initial stage of the cleaning-up carried out by the two peons, Texas, escorted by the other two guards, was permitted to go to his house, to fetch the mercury required for the final operation. The two men remained posted at the door of the house, whilst Texas went inside and crammed a tin of bully-beef and two small cakes of bread into his pocket, and took from their hiding-place the fifty sovereigns which he had hoarded against some emergency. He then took his rifle and a handful of cartridges, and, with a sudden leap, was through the door, and, before his guards had recovered from their surprise, he was halfway across the small clearing. As the start which he had gained made pursuit by the guards hopeless, they commenced to shoot, but the agitation of the natives made their marksmanship even worse than usual, and their prisoner disappeared into the jungle unhurt.

Knowing that the trail to Sorata would be watched, Texas decided to strike out for the Mapiri river, where he hoped, with the aid of some of his sovereigns, to induce a couple of Lecos to take him down river. For five days Texas wandered in the dense jungle, the slope of the ground affording him his only guide. So rarely had this trackless region been trodden by man that he found it easy to approach wild animals which, in other districts, are of extreme shyness. On the third day, his little store of food was exhausted,

and then he received another blow—a very serious one for a man in his position. The fifty sovereigns, which spelt so much to him, he had placed in his hip pocket. As he hacked his way through the tangle of the undergrowth, hungry and weary, he suddenly realized that there was no longer a weight in that pocket. Every sovereign had trickled out through a hole that the gold had worn, lost beyond hope of recovery. Dispossessed of his property and a fugitive, he now found himself penniless as well.

On the fifth day he struck a stream which led him down to the Mapiri river, at a point several miles above Guanay. Here lived a Leo whom he persuaded to take him down on his *balsa*, under cover of night, to a point far below Guanay. On the following morning, he obtained a passage on a passing *callapo* laden with goods consigned to me. Safe for the time being, at any rate, Texas told me that he intended to proceed to the Madeira-Marmoré railway. As I myself intended leaving the country shortly, I was able to fit him out with clothes and blankets, and a store of tinned provisions; also sufficient ammunition to enable him to keep a regiment at bay. With a few pounds in his pockets, some days later, when he had somewhat recovered from his recent experiences, I despatched him down river on a passing *callapo*. I heard no more of him, but he doubtless reached his destination, for at intervals on the river there were kindly persons ever ready to assist the needy *gringo* on his way.

In regard to the fate of Charest, I heard, afterwards, that he had been taken from Tipuani to Sorata under a guard of soldiers, and was lodged in the town gaol to await his trial, where he died a month or two later.

CHAPTER XVI

LIGHT AND SHADE

A River Carnival—An Expensive Compliment—Our Host, the Murderer
—The Wheels go Round—Disappointments—More Members of
the Zoo.

ONE morning, a day or two after our return to Guanay from the Tipuani excursion, a messenger from the village brought across the river a huge envelope addressed to Lord N. and myself, enclosing an invitation, signed by the *corregidor* and other notabilities of the place, to attend the opening of the carnival festivities on the following day. The invitation, which was beautifully written on a large photographic mount, with embossed edges, went on to express the hope that Lord N. would consent to be President of the carnival. The latter proposal rather perturbed Lord N., who imagined that there would be a certain amount of ceremonial involved of which he had no knowledge. He was somewhat reassured, however, when I explained to him that the principal, if not only, function of the "President" was to supply drink, and that he, being an English lord and, therefore, in accordance with popular fancy, fabulously rich, was, in the eyes of Guanay, ideally fitted for this high office. To this he objected that, far from being rich, he was decidedly hard-up. Nevertheless, he wrote an acceptance, which was doubtless received with much anticipatory smacking of lips by the village worthies.

Our appearance, towards noon on the following day,

at the *corregidor's* house, was warmly welcomed by a large gathering assembled there, who were drinking the cheapest liquor to be had—locally-brewed white rum. The proceedings had evidently been somewhat dull up to that moment, for the merry-makers were glum and silent, but the immediate prospect of more expensive “booze” cheered them up considerably. When the messenger whom I had sent to the nearest store returned with a dozen bottles of gin, mirth was unrestrained, and Lord N. had to endure a continuous flow of toasts and complimentary speeches of which he understood not a word.

Fortunately, the *almuerzo* (lunch) was soon announced as ready, and we trooped off to the newly-constructed barn where it was to be held. All Guanay had contributed towards the meal, and, therefore, all Guanay was present—that is to say, all those who belonged to Guanay’s “Five Hundred.” The traders and little shopkeepers, with their women, were all present, including Lopez, who was “wanted” for the murder of his wife and who had emerged from his hiding-place for the occasion. It was his barn that was doing duty as banqueting-hall; he was, therefore, regarded rather in the light of host and comported himself as such. One long, narrow table, made of rough boards, on supports driven into the ground, ran the entire length of the barn. At the head sat the *corregidor*, with Lord N. on his right hand and our host, the murderer, on^l his left. It is, perhaps, unfair to label Lopez as *the* murderer, for he was not the only one present.

The meal consisted chiefly of the inevitable *chupe*, half soup and half stew, made, on this occasion, with fresh meat brought by special messenger from the High Plateau. This was washed down by beer provided by the “President.” The thirst of the guests was appalling, and touched me very nearly, for all the

expenses of the trip were pooled by Lord N. and myself; I, therefore, shared half the costs of his presidential munificence. The speeches that followed were, as usual, interminable. Poor N. was called upon to respond to the toast in his honour. His address was delivered in English, admixed with a little French, and sprinkled with the half-dozen Spanish words he knew. This, of course, was understood by no one, but was, none the less, vociferously applauded.

When everyone had had his say, we were allowed to depart; not, however, before a promise had been extracted that we would attend an open-air fête to be held the next afternoon. This entertainment took place in a shady spot, near to where the Tipuani river flowed into the Mapiri, and was, in its first stages, amusing. There was much dancing of the popular *baile de pañuelo* (handkerchief dance), to the music of guitars, flutes, and *charrangas*. The *charranga* is like a miniature guitar, and closely resembles the Hawaiian *ukelele*; the sound box is sometimes made of the hard back of the armadillo, and it is popularly believed that if the stiff bristles that edge the segments of the armadillo *charranga* are cut and fail to grow again, the owner of the instrument has not long to live. There was a pause for refreshments in solid form. The *pièce de résistance* was *aji de conejo*, a stew made of guinea-pig, potatoes, and red pepper—more especially the last ingredient.

By sunset, the entire assembly had acquired considerable hilarity, and Lord N. and I took advantage of the fall of night to give our hosts the slip. After much searching, we unearthed the two Lecos who were to ferry us across the river, induced them to leave their convivial friends by the promise of a bottle of rum, to be received on the other side, and, in the darkness, made a hazardous crossing of the Mapiri river, then in spate.



A LECO INDIAN OF THE RIO MAPIHI.
He has just shot a fish with bow and arrow.

N. and I agreed that we had contributed in sufficient measure to Guanay's merry-making, and decided to remain in Wito Ponte on the far shore, the remainder of our stay. There was no hope of getting a *callapo* crew together so long as carnival lasted, and as the Mapiri and Kaka rivers were in full flood, and likely to remain so for a considerable time, our only chance of returning to Maquiqui was to hire a special *callapo* for the purpose.

About a week later, a crew of Lecos was assembled, and we embarked on the last stage of our trip, which was accomplished in hurricane fashion. There was a quick succession of whirlpools and rapids, smothered in foam; a mad moment, as we rushed through Retama; and in much less than half the time usually required, we reached Maquiqui.

During the next two months, the construction of the dredge was completed, and one morning in April she floated down stream to the head of the dredging concession, which lay about a mile below the camp. There was an anxious moment when the hull grated on a sandy bar, but the obstruction was cleared, and a minute or two later the sixty-foot bucket ladder was lowered with a rattle, anchoring the dredge until she was safely moored in mid-stream by her steel hawsers. The steam winches were now manned, the bucket ladder raised somewhat, the chain of buckets began to revolve, and the first sample of gravel from the river bed was brought up. The excitement for the moment was intense. Some indication would now be given whether the river sands would yield gold in quantities sufficient to repay with interest the money and labour that had been expended on this enterprise. Sample after sample of gravel was taken out of the buckets as they passed, and panned. Gold each time was found, but never in satisfying quantities. At last a bit of blue clay was

seen sticking on the lip of a bucket. Bedrock! Now, assuredly, the gravel would be richer. Again, more samples were taken and eagerly panned. But the yield of gold was no greater than before.

The first indications were decidedly unpromising. It was felt, however, that we had had the misfortune to strike a poor patch for our initial operations, and that work at another spot would have a very different result. A big flat was chosen as being promising ground into the banks of which, if satisfactory results were obtained, the dredge could eat its way and form a paddock wherein it could work in safety during the season of floods. This spot was some distance from Maquiqui and, moreover, was on the opposite side of the river. It was decided, therefore, to leave our old quarters and build a new camp on this flat. In a clearing by the water's edge made in the tall canes which here grew thickly, little huts were speedily constructed, and we moved camp.

It was not long after we had installed ourselves in our new quarters that it became apparent that no good results were to be obtained in dredging this particular stretch of the river, yet there was no alternative but to remain here, hoping against hope to strike a good patch of ground, for the river here flowed wide and shallow, and a sandy bar cut off access to the lower reaches until such time as the river rose sufficiently to float the dredge over it. Gold there was in every panful, but not in sufficient quantities to make its recovery a paying proposition.

The camp site, hemmed in on three sides by thickly growing *charros* was a depressing one to live in and an unhealthy one as well. During the past three years, I had not suffered from a single attack of fever, though everyone else, white and native, had been laid low from time to time, and some had died. My period of immunity

now came to an end, and I had a very severe bout of malaria.

It was on the second day of the fever that Pete, the dog, crawled into my hut and stretched himself beside my bed. He had been absent since the day before on one of the hunting expeditions which he occasionally took by himself. The manner in which he moved attracted my attention, and, on looking at him, I found that his body, from neck to tail, was covered with long deep gashes. He had evidently had an encounter with some wild animal—probably an old boar peccary, whose tusks had ripped him into ribbons. The poor dog was very weak and in great pain. There was no one in camp except myself whom he would allow to touch him when he was hurt; so I made an effort to get up and dress his wounds, but found it was beyond my strength to do so. Had it been possible to sew up and bandage the gashes, Pete might have recovered, but, if left uncared for, gangrene would most certainly have set in. In the circumstances, there was but one thing to do. I got my boy to bring me my rifle, and shot poor Pete where he lay. That done, I remembered no more for a week.

The day after the fever had left me Carlos Schmidt called to see me, on his way up-river from Rurrenabaque. When he found me lying on my cot, limp as a wet rag, he told me he was going to take me up-river with him. Though I made strong objections to leaving the camp at that moment, he took no notice of my protests, and half-an-hour later I was carried by his Lecos to where his *balsa* lay and was shortly on my way up-river. The change of scene worked wonders, and after ten days spent under Schmidt's hospitable roof at Wito Ponte I returned to camp.

The next few months were devoid of interest. The only incident worth recording was the visit paid by

the members of an expedition sent by the Bolivian Government to combat a disease rife in the tropical regions of Bolivia, known as *espundia*—sores which gradually spread all over the body. In one form, the disease attacked the membrane of the throat and nostrils, with fatal results. The inhabitants of some localities, more than others, seemed to be subject to *espundia*, but the manner in which it was communicated was then unknown, though some insect—possibly the “bush-tick”—was suspected of being the agent. The head of this expedition—Señor Blanco—who had studied medicine in Paris, informed me that they proposed to treat communities where it was most common in a wholesale fashion, with injections of salvarsan, which had been found to be an effective cure for this scourge.

It was with great relief that, on the first high river, we cast loose the cables that held the dredge, and floated her down river to the spot called “Mayaya,” where, on a point of high ground, a camp had been prepared. Until that time, the dredge had been worked on a single shift. Another “winchman” had arrived from New Zealand, and it was now possible, as well as desirable, to work at night as well as by day.

The electric light with which the dredge was equipped was a constant source of wonderment to the river Indians, who had never before seen this marvel. Parties arrived from Guanay and camped on the beach opposite to where the dredge was working, to watch “the lamps that burned without fat or oil.” *Balsa* crews going up or down river broke their journey for a day, to see this phenomenon.

Mayaya was a very different site to the one we had just left, the camp standing on the crest of a knoll, at the foot of which the river swept past in a big bend. On the far side was a wide beach, dotted with castor oil and sensitive plants and, beyond that, the jungle.

My menagerie here received several additions—a toucan; five green parakeets, no larger than canaries; and a handsome bird, black with a crimson beak, and about as large as a pheasant, called by the natives *pava*, which was fairly common in the forest and excellent eating.

The toucan was a rascal, of that one felt sure when one saw him hopping about the camp, peering inquisitively and surreptitiously at any object that aroused his interest. He had an uncanny aptitude for catching in his large and gaily-painted beak any small object that was thrown at him. I would toss a box of matches to him when he was, apparently, engrossed in some other matter, but I never knew him to miss. The reason for this knack puzzled me for a long time until one day I suddenly turned the corner of the fowl-house, and found, in front of the open door, Mr. Toucan, with a hen's egg, which he was throwing up into the air and catching, until at last it broke and the contents slid down his throat. So absorbed was he in his juggling that it was not until he had thrown away the empty eggshell, and had smacked his beak appreciatively, that he became aware of my presence. The speed with which he immediately took his departure indicated that he was aware that his action might be viewed unfavourably.

A few days later the toucan was making a tour of inspection of the yard. Wishing to see how he would behave, I placed an egg on the ground, where he was sure to find it, and hid myself. He came hopping along jauntily, until, rounding a corner, he perceived the egg lying a few feet away. The bird stopped dead, cocked his head on one side, looked here and there and then up in the air, in a detached manner, as though he were studying the weather. The coast was apparently clear, so he hopped right up to the egg, gazed at it speculatively,

passed on for a short distance, and again surveyed the neighbourhood. No one in sight! Good! His air of indifference was now cast off, and briskly and boldly he retraced his steps and picked up the treasure-trove. Up into the air he threw it and caught it, without cracking the shell; a second time he made the attempt, without success. I now thought the experiment had gone far enough, for eggs were scarce. I emerged from my hiding place and confronted the villain, who, egg in bill, looked at me for a moment in astonishment; then unceremoniously dropped his booty, and bolted.

The parakeets were a clannish lot. When, in the early morning, their little cage was placed on the ground and the door was opened, with a chorus of squawks, they hustled off their perches. In single file, beaks to the ground, they pattered off as fast as their little legs could carry them to the edge of the clearing, and I saw them no more till lunch-time.

The mess hut at Mayaya had a doorless entrance at either end, and at meal-time every member of the menagerie, including the ducks and the hens, strolled in. Whenever a scrap of bread was thrown to them, a great scramble to secure it resulted, and it was usually during one of these scimmages that the parakeets bustled in and immediately took command of the proceedings. One detached himself from the column and, with a little war-whoop, flew straight at the head of the bird that had captured the prize, careless of its size. The onslaught invariably proved successful—not even the game cock, the terror of all his fellows, could withstand the savage attack. Without further argument or show of resistance, he would drop his crust, which the parakeets would polish off amicably between them, the other members of the fowlyard looking on at a respectful distance. This done, one after another, with beak and claw they climbed up my trouser leg,

then up the cloth and on to the table. Once there, they brooked no interference, even from me, and in a body they would turn on me in fury and hurl shrill abuse if they disapproved of what I did.

Throughout the day, their cage stood open at the door of my hut. Shortly before sundown, the parakeets could be seen coming across the yard, at full speed, in Indian file, appearing from Heaven knows where, and heading straight for home. Into the cage they hurried, and, when settled on their perches, a tremendous pow-wow took place, lasting about ten minutes—doubtless a discussion on the events of the day, during which they all talked at once. The plans for the following day, however, were, apparently, not laid then, for at about one o'clock every morning a great hubbub arose within the cage, which hung inside my sleeping hut. After several minutes, the chattering would cease as suddenly as it began and there would be peace, in so far as the little green fellows were concerned, until morning.

The acquisition of new feathered friends did not compensate me for the loss of a furry one, which happened about this time. Hitherto, Togo, the monkey, had revelled in the gladness of life, seizing every opportunity for enjoyment literally with both hands. But one day his high spirits seemed to have left him, his whistle held a plaintive note, and he looked dejected. Ripe bananas failed to please, and the condensed milk that he used to love was left almost untouched. Hens passed within easy reach, and he took no notice. Togo was ill. I suspected gastritis and treated him for it, but he got no better.

In the days of his illness, Togo could not bear that I should be out of his sight. If I left him, a long whistle very soon asked for my whereabouts, and my answering whistle would bring him to me, whimpering a little

because he felt neglected. I had been away from camp one entire morning, and, on my return, I found the office in a lurid condition. Someone had upset the bottle of red ink and smeared it over my desk and papers. I must have made some exclamation of annoyance, for, at the sound of my voice, from the other side of the cane partition which divided the office from my sleeping quarters came a low whistle—friend Togo saying, in his own language, "Hello! Here I am." I went into my bedroom, and there, curled up on my bed, lay the little chap, very pleased to see me and of the colour of the setting sun. He was covered with red ink from nose to tail. On the bed a pile of freshly-laundered clothes presented a sorry sight. They were bedaubed with the mark of a small crimson hand like the death notice of some secret society whose enthusiastic agent had somewhat overdone the warning business. I take it that even in the most bloodthirsty conspiracy circles, it would not be considered good form to plaster their unwelcome signs over the white shirts and trousers of the object of their vengeance.

That was Togo's last exploit, for the poor little fellow died the next night. There was scarcely a soul in camp, even among the Indian woodcutters, who did not regret the untimely death of a great laughter-maker whose fame had spread far up and down the river.

CHAPTER XVII

LAST DAYS

The Return Journey—An Inca Gold-working—In the Shadow of Mt. Illampu—Sorata—An Indian Village War—The Labours of "Sox"
—*Adios*, Bolivia!

THE hopes that had been placed in the lower stretches of our dredging claim were, one after another, wiped out. High mounds of tailings from the dredge arose in the river, but the gold recovered from the sluice-boxes during the weekly "clean-up" was lamentably small in amount. At last, I received instructions to lay the dredge up, pending a decision to be arrived at by the directors in regard to what course they would adopt. At the same time, my request to be relieved was granted, for I had had another serious attack of malaria, from the effects of which I was, somehow, unable to recover. I was losing weight steadily, at the rate of half a stone a week. There was, therefore, a distinct possibility that I would remain in Mayaya till crack of doom unless I took my departure in the near future. So the dredge, the outcome of a vast expenditure in money and of five years' hard labour, from start to finish, was securely berthed in a little backwater, and, leaving the dredge-master in charge, I took passage on the first *balsa* that was going up-river.

The Quebrada was looking its loveliest as my raft slowly made its way up-stream. The trees that lined the gorges were masses of white, yellow, pink, and purple blossoms, and the river banks were aflame with

the scarlet flowers of a creeper that festooned the canes and bushes. Sun, sky, forest, and river had combined to lure me from my purpose to leave the region where I had spent so many years. They were in so far successful that the knowledge that I was seeing each familiar bend and landmark for the last time, in all probability, did not fill me with the elation which he should feel who is homeward bound, his course set for the land of policemen, starch, and income-tax. The natives say "He who has drunk of the waters of the Kaka will return to the Quebrada before he dies." *Quien sabe!*

From Guanay, I went up the Mapiri river, two days' journey, to the village of Mapiri, where ends the mule trail from Sorata across the Andes. Here I had to remain a couple of days, awaiting the saddle mule that had been sent out from La Paz to meet me, in the care of a *fletero* whose team was bringing in cargo consigned to river traders.

Mapiri was a more-dead-than-alive place, a collection of palm-thatched houses beside sandy roads—a fever-stricken spot, whose listless and pallid inhabitants seemed to have very little interest in life. When, therefore, on the afternoon of the second day, the mule-team tinkled in to the dusty *plaza*, I thanked my lucky stars that my sojourn there was to end on the following morning.

The first day's journey was one of almost uninterrupted ascent. By mid-day, we had left the last tree behind us—a lonely outpost of the Quebrada. From the knife edge crest of the ridge along which we were travelling, we had a last glimpse of the green Mapiri valley, many thousands of feet below. And now there were only stunted scrub and thick moss growing beside the trail, which frequently resembled a roughly-hewn giant staircase, where the mules leapt and scrambled from step to step.



RIO KAKA.

Banks that make upstream journeys slow.



THE MAFIRI—SORATA TRAIL.

Pack-animals resting on the eastern slopes of the Andes.

To face p. 282.

The next day, the scenery became more wild and rugged, the mules walking cautiously along the outside edge of stony paths that were bounded by walls of rock on the one hand and on the other by space. That day we rode in a steady downpour, for we had entered the region of almost perpetual rain, where the warm winds of the tropics encountered the chilly Andean barrier and shed their moisture.

It was late in the afternoon when one of the *arrieros* galloped up to the head muleteer, and reported that a mule was missing. The team was halted whilst two or three men were sent back to search for the strayed animal. Anxious to arrive as soon as possible at the rest house where we were to spend the night, I pushed on alone with José, my Indian "boy," who had been stolidly tramping along just behind me. At sundown we arrived at the little mud-walled hut which had been constructed in this desolate place for the use of wayfarers. All day we had travelled without seeing another house.

There was only one other occupant, when I entered, of the single room that comprised the hut—an Indian, whose bundle, José soon discovered, contained small loaves of bread baked in Sorata, which he intended to peddle in Mapiri, where bread is regarded very much as cake is at home. This was a stroke of luck, for the "chop box" containing my food was on the back of one of the pack mules that we had left with the team an hour or more before, and in my saddle-bags I had only an alcohol-lamp and some sugar and tea. Hot tea and an appalling number of loaves took the edge off an appetite rendered sharp by the long ride in that keen air. It was very cold, and of fuel of any sort there was none, on which account the merchants of Sorata and Mapiri who were interested in maintaining this rest house, found great difficulty in keeping the roof in

repair, for travellers were in the habit of using the grass thatch and the rafters for making fires.

Long we waited for the pack animals, till the demands of sleep made me forego the prospect of any more supper that night; so, rolled up in my saddle blankets, I slept soundly, in spite of wet clothes and the cold. Several hours later, I was awakened by the arrival of the belated muleteam, whose weary *arrieros* were still recommending to eternal perdition the mule that had caused the delay.

At break of day we were again on the road, and at the end of a couple of hours' stiff climbing, we reached a point above cloud-level. We were now travelling along the eastern flank of the Cordilleras, and to the right, looking westward, lay a great stretch of cloud bank, pierced here and there by black peaks, like islands in a sea of cotton-wool. Once more the trail turned westward, and presently we were passing beside a high wall, constructed of enormous boulders. On the other side of the wall ran a small stream, now almost dry. It was from the bed of this mountain torrent that the boulders composing the wall had been extracted, and this not by present-day engineers, with their mechanical appliances, but by Indian gold-miners of Inca times. To work the bed of the stream, they had diverted the water into another channel. These are the old workings of Ingenio. Gold is still to be found in the locality, and that very day I passed the outfit of a New Zealand prospector, who was about to start work there. There were a few houses at Ingenio, where dwelt natives who maintained themselves by the gold that they washed out from among the rocks in this dreary place, situated at the entrance to the pass across the Cordilleras.

A few miles farther on we reached the summit of the pass, the altitude of which is in the neighbourhood

of 16,500 feet and commenced the steep descent on the western side. We now came to the end of the corridor across the range, and before us lay a stretch of tortured and twisted country—narrow, gloomy ravines, thousands of feet deep, surmounted by bare ridges; and overshadowing all lay the majestic mass of Illampu, or Mt. Sorata, its snow-clad peaks glistening in the strong sunlight. This is the highest mountain in the Bolivian Andes, rising 21,490 feet above sea level. From now on the descent was continuous, but, owing to the roughness and steepness of the trail, progress was slow.

It was early afternoon when, on reaching the lip of a deep valley, the *arriero* pointed to a little white town nestling deep down in its folds, and said that it was Sorata, our destination that day, still a long way off.

The road that wound around this cup in the mountain was broad and tolerably smooth. The day was hot, and there was a strong glare from the white, dusty track, along which we met groups of Indians going from one to another of the hamlets that stood beside the way. It was Sunday afternoon, and the tinkling of church bells mingled with the piping of flutes and the melancholy chant of some drunken Indian.

I had just passed one of these wayside settlements, its whitewashed chapel its most prominent feature, when I heard the sound of a horse galloping behind me. I turned in the saddle, and beheld a white-robed figure on horseback, tearing down the track, "all out." When he reached me, the horseman pulled his steed up on its haunches, and I saw that it was Padre Vincencio, the friar who, two years previously, had baptized the dredge at Maquiqui. He told me that he had just been celebrating mass at the hamlet above us, and had learned from the *arrieros* the identity of the *gringo* who was riding ahead—meaning me. He was flatteringly overjoyed to see me, and, reaching behind him, pulled

out of his saddle-bag a half-full bottle of brandy and an enamelled iron mug, and insisted that we should have a drink on the spot, to celebrate this happy meeting. In how far his pleasure at seeing me again was due to real regard, or to previous helpings from this and other bottles, I cannot say. Anyhow, we had a drink there and then, and it was not long before he suggested that another one was in order. This I accepted purely out of politeness, for it is considered bad manners to refuse an offer of a drink. Though the dust and heat made liquid refreshment very acceptable, had I been given my choice it would have been anything rather than raw and undiluted spirit. When, half-a-mile or so further on, the good *padre* again drew rein, and once more withdrew the brandy bottle from his saddle-bag, I jibbed, and in defiance of accepted custom, declined the proffered mug. My companion was somewhat taken aback, but took my refusal in good part, and, with a hearty *Salud!* drained the cup himself.

It was late in the afternoon when we trotted up the narrow streets of Sorata and dismounted at the door of the ramshackle hotel that stood at one corner of the large *plaza*. When the *padre* had recommended me to the care of the hotel's proprietor, he re-mounted and galloped off. I was conducted to the best bedroom—a large, unkempt apartment, in which stood a bedstead, with doubtful-looking bedding; a small rickety table, supporting a cracked basin and a handleless jug, both of midget proportions; and a chair which was better adapted to give way than support. When soap and water and a brush had removed some of the grime collected during the day, I went out for a stroll.

Sorata was a pleasing little town, of whitewashed houses and tortuous streets. There were several commercial firms with headquarters here—one or two of them owned by Germans chiefly engaged in trade with



MOUNT ILLAMPU.



SORATA.



the rubber country. There was nothing of any special interest to see in the town, yet, when I returned to the hotel, I had made up my mind to break my journey here, for I was not sure what effect the altitude of the High Plateau would have on me after three years spent in the Quebrada without a break.

That evening I had a visit from the only English-speaking resident of the town—an Australian, the manager of a rubber forest, whom I had met before. On learning that I was remaining in Sorata the following day, he asked me to lunch with him on the morrow.

I had heard others who had stayed in Sorata describe it as an infamous place, where sleep was out of the question because it was infested by fleas—and fleas of a peculiarly active breed, who revelled in making night dreadful to the stranger. There was one man I knew who, whenever passing through this town, always slept in a "flea bag"—a large cotton sack, the opening of which he could close tightly about his neck. The recollection of these tales of suffering, however, did not disturb me. Of the few attributes of which I can be proud, one is that fleas leave me severely alone. I slept that night through in complete tranquillity, though I could picture legions of ravenous fleas marching up to the attack, but, on discovering the identity of their intended victim, turning tail and hopping away, baffled and disgruntled.

After a day spent in idleness, sitting in the shade of a tree in the *plaza*, watching the inhabitants leisurely go about their business, I resumed my journey alone, for I had sent José ahead with the mule team the day before.

From Sorata, the road climbs up the side of the valley to the edge of the plain that lies between Lake Titicaca and the Cordilleras and stretches southward to Oruro and beyond. It was a stiff climb of some four thousand

feet, and it was nearly mid-day before I reached the level of the plain. Twelve leagues now lay between me and the village of Achacachi—no great journey for a fast and fresh mule, but my animal was still somewhat weary after its recent journeying. So it came about that night fell with still two long leagues to do.

The Indians of this district were notoriously an ill-disposed lot—surly and truculent. The track did not pass through any villages, though, now and again, far to one side, could be seen a forlorn little *estancia* (hamlet), and I covered many miles of that dreary plain without meeting anybody. Late in the afternoon, when within measurable distance of Achacachi, several groups of Indians, going in the opposite direction, passed me. They were, for the most part, bigger men than the average Indian, but what struck me most was their morose looks and uncivil demeanour. The Indian, as a rule, when he passes you on the road takes off his hat and says *Asquiturata, tata.* (Good-day, father). These fellows, however, ignored me altogether and passed on in sullen silence without even glancing in my direction. That the natives of this locality stood in bad repute I knew, but the behaviour of these bands surprised me, none the less. After sundown it was very dark; as I jogged along, I could still make out the forms of people passing me and hear the scuffle of sandalled feet, but there was no sound of voices.

I had just entered the gate in the high mud wall that surrounds the little town of Achacachi when a body of horsemen galloped towards me along the sandy street and passed out on to the dark plain. I made my way through the dimly-lit streets to the *tambo*, where I found several people talking excitedly. It transpired that the horsemen I had seen were cavalry who had been despatched to quell a battle that had raged all day between the inhabitants of two villages

that lay a league or two away. A feud had existed for a long time between these two villages, with occasional outbursts into open warfare, such as had occurred on that day. That very morning a band of Indians had pursued a villager belonging to the other faction into the reeds of the lake, and, having captured him, had killed him in a barbarous manner. Then followed a horrible orgy, in which the top of the victim's skull served as a loving-cup.

News of these events had flashed to the rival village, whose inhabitants, fortified by alcohol, sallied forth to avenge this insult. They met with a luckless Indian woman belonging to the enemy, and when they had gleefully killed her they went on to where the men of the other camp awaited them. A pitched battle then ensued, with slings and stones as weapons. At intervals, hostilities ceased by mutual consent, and the combatants devoted themselves to eating and drinking, after which fighting was resumed with renewed vigour. What the casualties had been I could not discover.

The strange behaviour of the Indians I had met on the road that evening was now intelligible. They had probably taken an active part in the fighting, which nightfall had interrupted; warriors with the lust of killing still strong within them were going to their homes till the return of daylight enabled them to begin the battle afresh. Small wonder that they were lacking in civility towards belated wayfarers.

The following evening, after an uneventful day's ride, I put up at a little *tambo*. It was very cold, and I shivered on my bed of straw, though I endeavoured to eke out the scantiness of my saddle blankets by piling straw upon them. For the first time since I had been in Bolivia, I suffered from *sorrochi*—the palpitations and difficulty in breathing which make these altitudes impossible for some people to live in. Altogether, it was

an uncomfortable night ; in consequence, I was in the saddle again at the first peep of dawn, just as the sky began to pale.

At sunrise, I was riding close to the edge of Lake Titicaca, its cold grey-blue waters beyond its fringe of emerald reeds stretching far to the west, where it ended in a low line of copper-coloured hills. On the other hand, a few miles away, rose out of the plain the Andes range—a dark mass, crowned by lofty snow-peaks glowing crimson as though they blushed beneath the ardent glances of a sun whose boisterous return had taken them unawares. It was a scene which well repaid the early start that the discomforts of the preceding night had occasioned.

Towards noon I clattered into La Paz, after an absence of three years. The little English colony was, for the time being, chiefly interested in the forthcoming celebration of the King's birthday and in the promotion of a Derby sweepstake. In former years the first event had always been loyally and enthusiastically observed, but in an informal manner. Now, however, there was a British Minister resident in La Paz, who was giving a formal reception to mark the occasion. The function was a great success, in spite of an incident brought about by "Sox's" punch-brewing propensities.

"Sox" enjoyed an almost national reputation as a concoctor of cups since the night of a ball given by a High Personage in La Paz, when a wine cup was served that had been prepared by "Sox" by the special request of the Personage. The result was that many ladies, deceived by the innocuous appearance of the deadly brew on which fruit guilelessly floated, believed it to be a pleasant *fresco* (soft drink) until too-frequent sips revealed its true nature.

For the King's birthday reception, "Sox" had again been asked to preside over the filling of the silver punch-

bowl. On this occasion, the havoc done was limited. All went well until late in the evening, when most of the guests had departed. The Minister's man-servant, an ex-guardsmen, had found the punch-bowl unattended and had decided that he also had a loyal throat afflicted by a super-loyal thirst. "Sox's" cup was not a thing to be carelessly handled; it defeated the ex-guardsmen, who became obstreperous, and had to be trussed up and locked in the pantry to cool.

A day or two later I was standing for the last time on the platform of La Paz's drab little station. The warning bell clanged, and the confusion that had reigned on the platform instantly increased. *Cholas*, laden with bulky bundles and assorted household utensils, who had been jostling all and sundry in excited endeavours to arrive at nowhere in particular, now scurried frantically to the carriages, into which they were unceremoniously pushed, their bundles were thrown after them, and we moved off in a storm of adjurations and exclamations.

As the train toiled up the side of the deep ravine, a last near view was obtained of the snow-peaks that cut a ragged skyline beyond the town. There, to the right, lay white-robed Illimani—a queen among mountains. Facing us was flat-topped Chacaltaya, whose summit according to the Indian legend, a giant had knocked off with a stone shot from a sling, and hurled fifty leagues or more away to where it now stands—the extinct volcano Sajama. The "stone" lies near Viacha like a wart on the plain, a hillock known as "Pan de Azucar."

That evening I stood on the deck of a comfortable thousand-ton steamer that plied between Guaqui and Puno. The last package had been lowered into the hold, the ship's whistle and crew had urged ashore a motley crowd of Indian dock-hands, customs agents, and ship's-

bar moths. The vessel began to slip down the channel towards the open water of the lake, and the shores of Bolivia melted into the night.

* * * * *

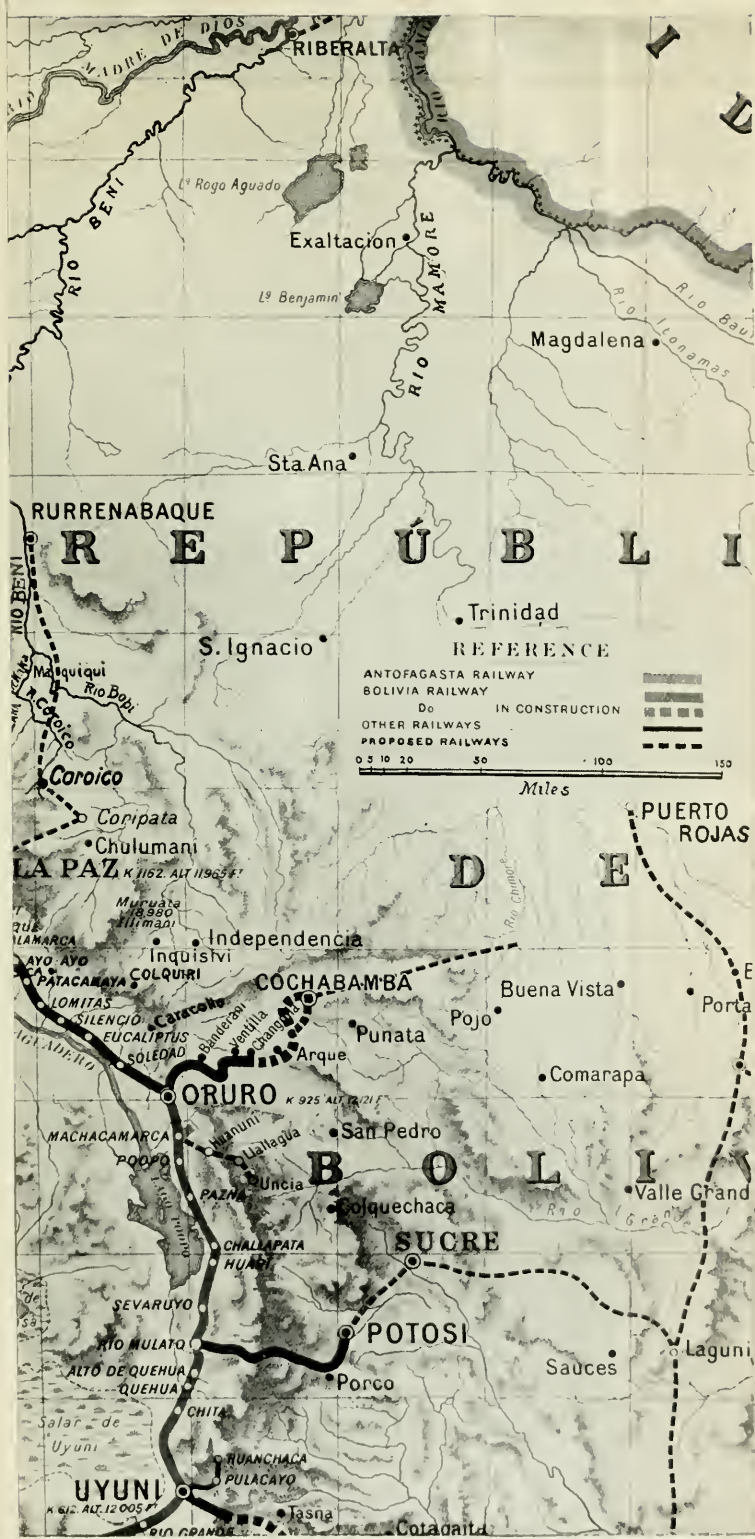
From the point of view of the traveller Bolivia is well worth visiting. Though off the beaten track it is easily accessible from the Pacific coast, either by the Mollendo-Guaqui route or by direct railways from Antofagasta and Arica.

It is, however, not only to the globe-trotter that the country is of interest, for it is a vast region endowed with fabulous riches which are lying dormant awaiting the hand that will stir them into activity. Great mineral wealth lies hidden in the mountains—tin, copper, silver, gold, and wolfram—and in the low country there is petroleum. The sub-tropical Yungas and valleys and the fertile regions that lie between Cochabamba, Santa Cruz and the Argentine frontier could be made to yield all manner of produce—coffee, coca, sugar, cocoa, grain; and there are tracts of country that could provide pasture for huge herds of cattle.

The principal handicap under which the country struggles is the shortage of labour. *Faltan brazos!* (hands are lacking) is the cry that is perpetually on the lips of every employer. In a territory of which the area is not definitely known, but which may be taken as roughly 600,000 square miles, there is, it is estimated, a population of less than 3,000,000, including the savage tribes that people the forests of the interior.

Politically, Bolivia is peaceful—there has been no revolution since 1899. The foreigner is well-received, more especially the Britisher, who, though deemed to be even madder than other *gringos*, has earned a reputation for straight dealing which has inspired confidence and respect. *Palabra de inglés* (word of an English-

man) is equivalent to “ word of honour ” in the local idiom. Yet, in spite of this great commercial advantage, much trade that British firms could have had for the asking and held has fallen into the hands of more pushful and enterprising competitors, who study and cater to the peculiar requirements and tastes of the people.



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