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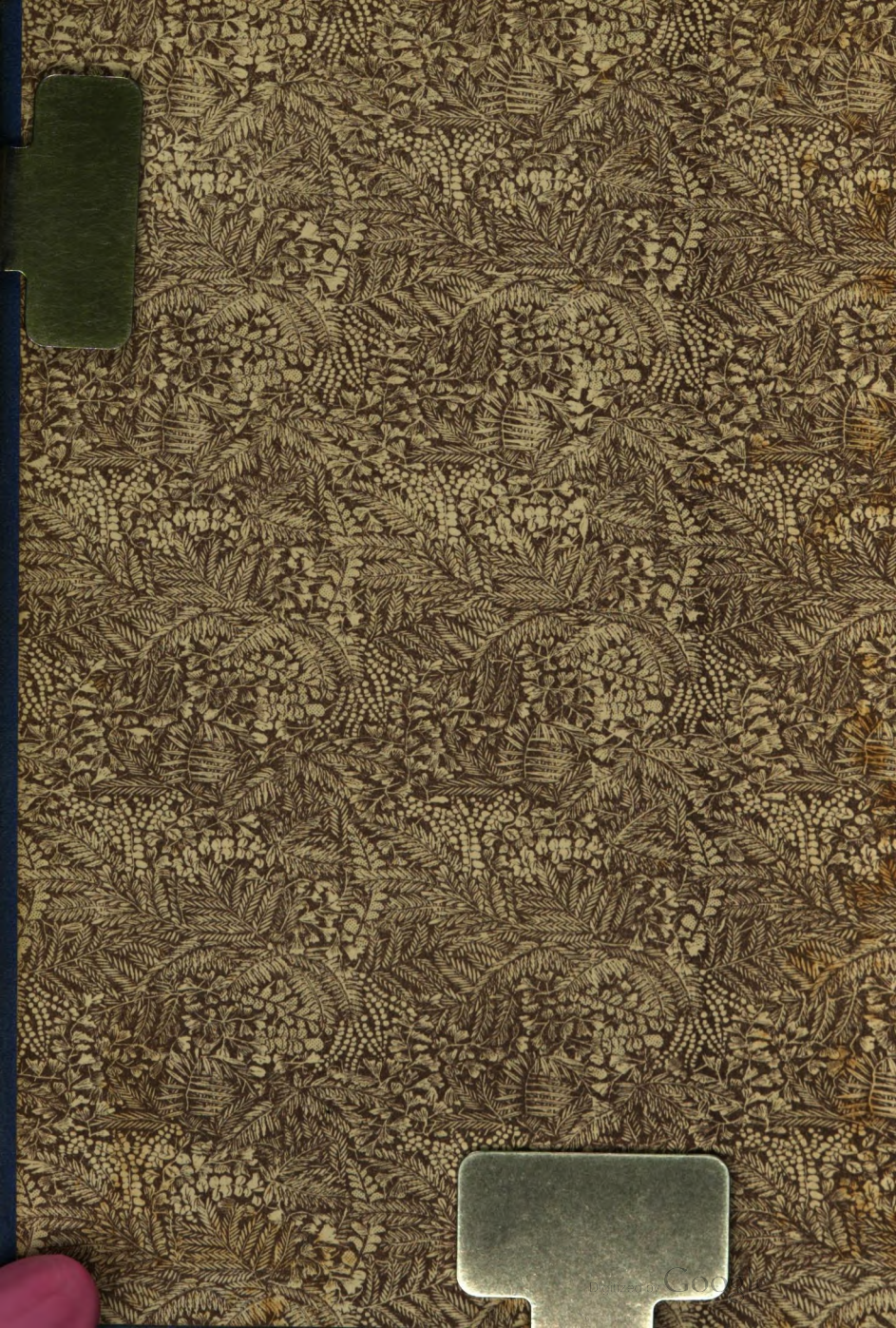
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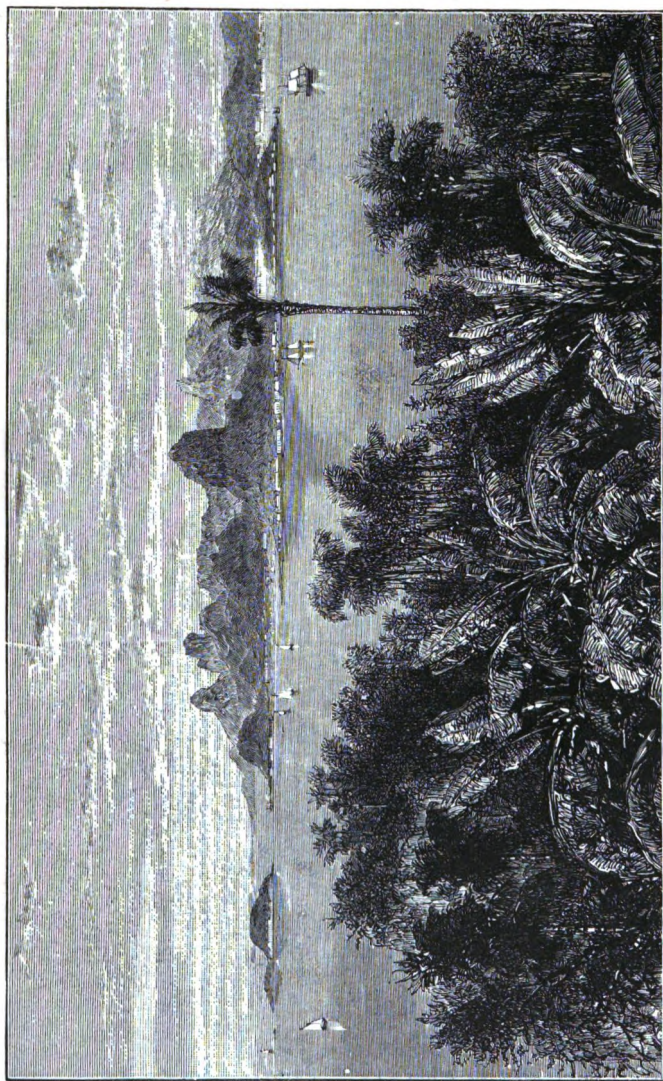


The cruise of the "Falcon"

Edward Frederick Knight







Entrance to the Bay of Rio.

[Vol. I.—Frontispiece.

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~ 72 ~

THE
CRUISE OF THE "FALCON."

*A VOYAGE TO SOUTH AMERICA IN A
30-TON YACHT.*

BY
E. F. KNIGHT,
BARRISTER-AT-LAW.

WITH MAPS AND NUMEROUS ILLUSTRATIONS.

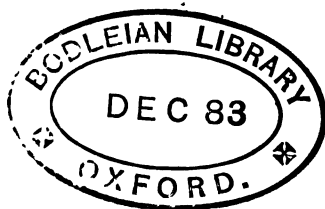
IN TWO VOLUMES.
VOL. I.

London:
SAMPSON LOW, MARSTON, SEARLE, & RIVINGTON,
CROWN BUILDINGS, 188, FLEET STREET.
1884.

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2092. c. 1.

LONDON:
PRINTED BY GILBERT AND RIVINGTON, LIMITED,
ST. JOHN'S SQUARE.



PREFACE.

IN these two volumes I have told the story of the voyage, extending over a period of twenty months, of my yawl the *Falcon* (eighteen tons register, thirty tons RTM), in South American and West Indian waters.

We left Southampton on the 20th of August, 1880, the crew being composed of four amateurs, three of whom were barristers, and a cabin-boy.

The narrative includes the description of a five months' cruise in the yacht up the Rivers Parana and Paraguay, and of a ride across the Pampas to Tucuman.

The number of miles travelled over by land and sea was roughly 22,000.

THE AUTHOR.

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER I.	
THE RESULTS OF A FISH DINNER AT GREENWICH	PAGE I

CHAPTER II.	
VOYAGE TO MADEIRA	12

CHAPTER III.	
THE CAPE VERDE ISLANDS	28

CHAPTER IV.	
BAHIA	44

CHAPTER V.	
RIO DE JANEIRO	69

CHAPTER VI.	
MALDONADO BAY	91

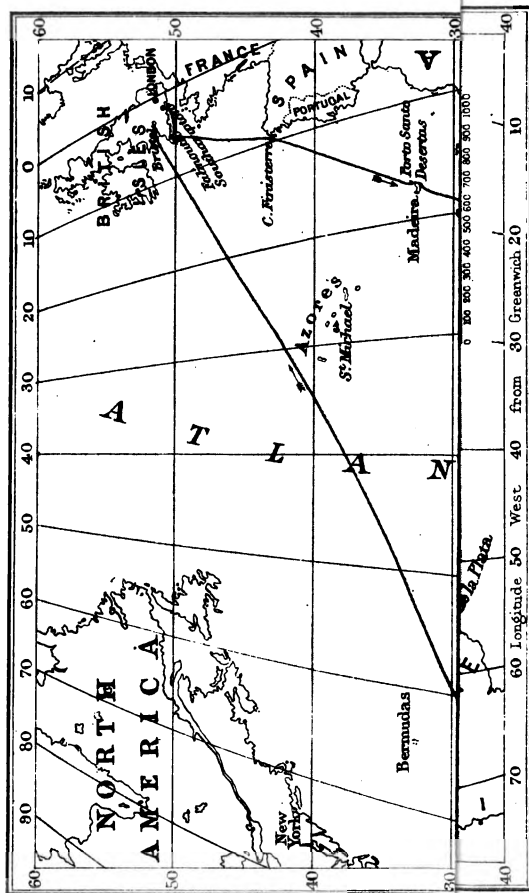
CHAPTER VII.	
MONTEVIDEO AND BUENOS AYRES.	109

CHAPTER VIII.	
THE RIO DE LA PLATA	126

CHAPTER IX.	
	PAGE
THE PAMPAS	143
CHAPTER X.	
WE COMMENCE A LONG RIDE	161
CHAPTER XI.	
THE RIO SEGUNDO	180
CHAPTER XII.	
CORDOBA	193
CHAPTER XIII.	
ON THE TROPILLA TRACK TO POTOSI	211
CHAPTER XIV.	
THE MONTES OF SANTIAGO	232
CHAPTER XV.	
THE RIO SALADILLO AND THE SALT-DESERT	249
CHAPTER XVI.	
SANTIAGO DEL ESTERO	267
CHAPTER XVII.	
TUCUMAN	285

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS.

	PAGE
Entrance to the Bay of Rio	<i>Frontispiece</i>
Off at last	16
A Bahian Trader	70
Paqueta	80
A Gaucho's Home in the Swamps	132
Cordoba	189
One of our Guests	229
Giant Cacti on the Salt-Plains	261



London: Sampson, Low, Marston, Searle & Rivington.

E. Waller.

THE CRUISE OF THE FALCON.

CHAPTER I.

IT was one of those beautiful lazy July days that even London is occasionally blessed with, and which tend to inspire busy man with profound misgivings as to the truth of that trite old lesson, that unremitting toil is his destiny and sole object here below.

My friend Arthur Jerdein and myself, urged by the glory of the weather, concluded that a holiday would be to our moral, physical, and mental advantage, and thereupon acting up to our laudable determination, walked away from the narrow city streets, and took boat at the Temple stairs for the ancient port of Greenwich—a favourite trip of both of us this, but one that never wearied and seemed ever new.

To come out of the confined city, and to steam through the fresh breeze down the grand old river, among the big ocean-going ships, by the stately storehouses, and quaint water-side wharves and slips, has a peculiar fascination of its own, with its manifold suggestions of enterprise in many a strange

land and sea. We enjoyed the orthodox fish dinner, had another stroll through the models of antique ships of war and relics of many victories in the hospital, and then lingered, lazily smoking, on the sea platform of the palace, as we waited for the boat to take us back to the unquiet town.

It was indeed a lovely evening—a Thames-side evening as Turner loved to paint, with just that suspicion of haze in the golden atmosphere to tone down all hardness of outline and crudity of colour, and glorify all.

We looked over the waters, saw the barges dropping down with the tide, their tanned sails gleaming like red gold in the western light.

A big vessel passed us—an Australian clipper she, crowded with emigrants, who raised a farewell cheer as the last shore-boats left her side. A smart yawl yacht of some sixty tons lay at anchor close in front of us. We looked on all this, silent for a time, but our thoughts were very similar, the surroundings influenced us in like manner,

In all the restless air moved the spirit of travel and adventure. Each sound of chain rattling through hawse-pipe, each smell of tar and odorous foreign wood, each sight was full of reminiscence of far lands, warm seas, and islands of spice. All seemed to say, "Go out on the free seas."

We were both vagabonds, I fear, in disposition, with nomadic blood in our veins, and our previous wanderings had not been few. So far, this summer, various causes had kept me in London, so I was more than usually thirsting after change from city-life—and lo! already there was an autumnal beauty in the sky ;

it would soon be too late—a summer wasted ; all these months of glorious sunshine and breeze—winter was near.

The weariness of the city, the sigh of the autumn wind, the surroundings of travel, all combined to wake a restlessness and a regret in me ; so too was it with my friend, for when one of us awoke from the reverie and spoke, the conversation was on that of which our hearts were full.

We admired the beautiful yacht riding at anchor: “How well,” one said, “to set to work now and fit out with all stores a vessel like that, and with a few good friends sail right away from the coming northern winter—right away for a year or two into summer seas !”

In five minutes—though before leaving London the faintest shadow of such a plan had not fallen on our minds—we decided to follow this impulse, and at the very idea of what we were about to do, all our discontent vanished like a smoke, and a most joyous enthusiasm succeeded it.

As is the custom under such circumstances we retired to the “Ship,” with solemn ceremony uncorked a bottle and poured out a libation to propitiate the sea-god, and Æolus of the winds ; then we returned to London, light-hearted and full of our plan, to commence preliminary work that very evening.

Thus it was that the cruise of the *Falcon* came about.

My friend Jerdein, I must tell you, has been a sailor, an ex-officer of the Royal Mail and P. and O. Companies. I myself am an amateur mariner, having had many years’ experience of fore-and-afters. As

skipper, cook, steward, mate, and crew of my little yawl, the *Ripple* of Southampton, in which I used to make periodical descents on the coast of France, I had gained a fair knowledge of practical seamanship. Now what we proposed to do, was to find two or three friends to join us in a lengthened cruise in a small yacht, say of twenty tons burden. The idea was that we should sail her ourselves, and dispense altogether with a professional crew—an advantage in a small vessel. For there your men are thrown in too close contact with you, and so are apt to grumble, become spoilt, and drift into a frame of mind that would make them not be content were you even to chase them round the decks with tumblers of champagne while they worked, for such is the nature of your tar.

On our return to town we exposed ourselves to some chaff when we revealed our grand scheme. Those who did not doubt our sincerity were dubious of our sanity, and unhesitatingly expressed their opinion that both the boat and the crew would be found at about the Greek Kalends.

But before many days had passed we found the vessel; and very lucky we were in her; had we searched all round the British Isles we could have discovered nothing so perfectly adapted for our purpose.

I had written to Mr. Pickett, of Stockham and Pickett, Southampton, who had built the *Ripple* for me, asking him if he knew of any vessel that would suit us. He wrote back and told me that there was the very thing for us laid up for sale in his yard, alongside the *Ripple*.

So Jerdein and myself took the next train to Southampton to inspect her.

We found the *Falcon* to be a yawl of eighteen tons register ; thirty tons yacht measurement, a boat of exceptionally strong construction, for she had been built in Penzance for a fishing-lugger, and the Penzance luggers have the reputation of being the strongest and best sea boats of their size.

She had a splendid run forward—a square stern, which did not perhaps improve her beauty, but gave her a character of her own, and pole masts. Her length was forty-two feet, her beam thirteen, and her draught about seven feet and a half.

She was a most solid vessel, looking as if she meant business, perfectly sound and possessing a fair inventory, so it was not long before I had arranged matters with her owners, and became the proud possessor of the gallant little craft that was to be my home for nearly two years.

Jerdein and myself left London, and at once commenced to fit her out, for we were anxious to sail away into calm seas before the autumnal equinox was on us with its gales.

There was plenty to do ; we had her coppered well above the water-line, fitted her with water-tanks and biscuit-lockers, reduced her canvas, and ordered spare and storm-sails. Beside her main, jib-headed mizen, fore-staysail, and jib, she carried a sliding gunter gaff-topsail, and a spinnaker, the boom of which when topped up just came under the fore-stay, quite sufficient for cruising purposes.

We also constructed a drag or deep-sea anchor, to ride to in case of coming across dangerously heavy

weather. This drag was thus fashioned. To an iron ring of about five feet diameter was bent a stout canvas bag with a pointed end. A bridle was attached to the iron ring, by which it could be made fast to a twenty-fathom hawser.

With perhaps a spar lashed across the ring as a further breakwater, and at most a reefed try-sail set with sheet hauled amidships, I believe that the little vessel could ride out a storm with as great security as the mightiest ocean clipper.

We procured all the necessary charts, directories, nautical instruments, stored away some nine months' provisions, decorated the main cabin walls with arms for defence and sport—Martini-Henry rifles, cutlasses, and revolvers, and purchased a small brass swivel gun with grape and canister.

No one who has not undertaken to fit out even so small a vessel for a cruise of years over tens of thousands of miles of ocean, can conceive how much there is to think of and provide for.

The report of our proceedings spread in Southampton.

Long-shore loafers, yachting-men, and others took an interest in the curious expedition of an amateur crew in so small a craft, and there was generally a small crowd watching the preparations that made Pickett's yard noisy with sound of hammering, sawing, and caulking. Jerdein and myself were employed for three days in unpacking and storing away bales of tinned meats and other stores.

Hearing that we did not intend to take professionals with us, many affected to disbelieve in us, jeered at our plans and prophesied we should weary.

of the trip before we got out of the chops of the Channel, put into Cherbourg, stay there a week or so, and then return.

By some ill-omened soothsayers we were advised to paint the vessel's name conspicuously on her keel, so that she would be easily recognized when found floating upside down on some sea or other.

West Quay, however, believed in us, and Pickett was enthusiastic on the subject and sanguine as to our success; but he and others too would often inquire, "Here are you and Mr. Jerdein, but where's the rest of the crew? We have not seen them yet."

With great difficulty we found two gentlemen to join us, Mr. Andrews and Mr. Arnaud, but unfortunately neither of these had the slightest idea of sailing a boat. They knew nothing whatever of nautical matters, and were too old to learn.

At last they turned up in Southampton, and Pickett's yard came out to study them. The yacht sailors looked on with interest as one of these bold would-be circumnavigators in top hat and kid gloves, with gingerly steps carefully ascended the ladder which lay against the *Falcon's* side, reached the deck, and, looking round, remarked with quite a nautical air, as he hitched up his trousers, "What a lot of strings there are about this boat! I shall never know the use of them all."

West Quay likewise studied bold circumnavigator Number Two, smiled, and shrugged its shoulders.

This was certainly not a promising crew to take across the Atlantic, and no one knew this better than Jerdein and myself.

Thus were we bound to add another member to

our crew, who was of much more use, though small in volume.

This was a small boy, a very small boy of about fifteen, homeless and characterless, who was loafing about West Quay in search of odd jobs, a half-starved, melancholy, silent little wretch, who had been the recipient of more kicks than halfpence during his short existence. On questioning him, we found he had been two years on board a North Sea fishing boat—no gentle school.

When we offered him a berth on the *Falcon* he gladly accepted it.

He never smiled then, that boy—he does now. When we first engaged him, Jerdein catechized him thus:—"What is your name?" "Arthur." "Can you steer by compass?" "Yes." "Can you make a bowline-knot on this piece of string?" He satisfactorily accomplished this feat. "Do you ever get drunk?" "Ain't often got the chance, sir." "Do you ever smile?" "Yes, sir." This response came out doubtfully, and forthwith he tried to screw something like a smile out of his despondent features. It was a ghastly failure; his muscles were unaccustomed to the necessary movements, and worked rustily and with effort. Perhaps it was well for him that he could not smile during the early stages of our voyage, for there *were* things to smile at; deeds of eccentric seamanship on the part of some of the crew, at the which, were he to have smiled, a box on the ears might have brought him back to his normal melancholy.

Others now volunteered to join the *Falcon*; stewards and French cooks, reading of a proposed lengthy

cruise in the papers, came for engagements, beheld the vessel and her crew, shook their heads, and vanished.

At last the *Falcon*, fresh painted and trim, lay at anchor off Southampton pier all ready for sea. There came one last dinner in old London, much shaking of hands with old friends, some popping of corks; then in the morning another adieu at Waterloo, and we started for Southampton. I was laden with my last purchases for the boat, a curiously assorted luggage when one comes to consider it: six navy cutlasses, two dozen pairs of spectacles, a lightning conductor for the main-mast, and a quantity of grape-shot for the cannon.

As far as the provisions were concerned, the *Falcon* was well supplied. We had stores sufficient for five men for nine months, consisting, among other things, of 400 lbs. of biscuit and nearly 1000 tins of preserved meats, vegetables, &c. A supply of lime juice was, of course, not forgotten, and an ample cask of rum was securely screwed down in the main cabin. We carried about 250 gallons of water, which we reckoned would last us three months with proper precautions. On our long passages, as across the Atlantic, all washing with fresh water was of course forbidden. We did not omit to take with us some tinned plum-puddings wherewith to keep up in orthodox form the Christmas days which we should spend on the *Falcon*.

We shipped yet another hand before we sailed. Mrs. Pickett presented us with a little kitten to take with us. Poor little thing! it purred merrily and romped about when it first came on board, little knowing what was before it.

Before starting, the discipline of the ship had to be arranged, and the duties of each apportioned out. Jerdein was officer of the port, I of the starboard watch; Andrews was on Jerdein's watch, Arnaud on mine. The boy, Arthur, was on no watch, as he had a good deal of lamp-cleaning, &c., in the day. He used to turn in for the night, only steering now and then in the day-time, especially at meal-times in fine weather, when he was left in charge, while we four sat down to table together.

We used to keep four-hour watches, watch and watch, in the usual way, with dog-watches from four p.m. to eight p.m. A set of thirteen rules was drawn up and posted in the saloon. None of these were ever observed, with the exception of two.

Rule number eight ordained that,—

"No extra liquor or stores of any kind be issued to any member of the crew except by special permission."

As there was no mention as to who was to give this special permission, the crew observed this rule by giving themselves permission when necessity required. Rule number thirteen, again, was to the effect that,—

"Grog will be served out to each member of the crew twice daily, viz., at noon, one gill; and again at eight p.m. one gill. In the case of all hands being on deck in bad weather, an extra allowance will be issued."

The crew never failed to ask for their allowance of rum at the hours mentioned. On reading the latter part of this rule, Andrews expressed an intention of praying for bad weather as often as possible. He was not much of a nautical man, and found later on that he did not really know what bad weather

meant when he made that remark ; judging from his expression when he did encounter a little rough sea and wind, he was far from reconciled to it, even by these extra grog-rations.

The plan of our cruise was as follows : To sail by easy stages to Buenos Ayres, and then navigate the great tributaries of the River Plate, the Parana and Paraguay, as high as we could in the yacht. We had heard much of the glories of those huge streams, and of the abundant sport to be found on their wild banks. No yacht had ever ascended the Paraguay before, and we anticipated a good deal of novelty and excitement in those fair regions, should we, as we little doubted, effect our purpose.

CHAPTER II.

WE appointed four p.m., on the 20th of August, 1880—a Friday, too—for our departure.

That morning the *Falcon*, ready from truck to keel, lay at anchor off West Quay. The Blue Peter was at the mast-head, indicating to all friends that we were off at last. West Quay took a holiday, and a crowd of small boats rowed round us all the morning, filled with many who wished to inspect the craft.

At two p.m. we stretched the awning on deck, and a lunch was spread out for a few friends—a boisterous lunch, in which many toasts were drunk, and our success warmly wished. At 3.30 p.m. the bell was rung, the main-sail hoisted, and as the last shore-boat left our side, up came the anchor, and, with cheers from the spectators, we dropped down the river on the top of a good ebb.

Almost all the yachts we passed knew us, and their crews cheered us lustily. We still had a large company on board, who insisted on seeing us safe to the chops of the Channel—two friends from town, Captain Forbes, who had rubbed up our navigation at Southampton, and a pilot.

At midnight we were outside the Needles, and commenced to feel the swell of the Channel. The weather was very favourable for the voyage, a light north-east wind was blowing, which continued until we dropped our anchor in Falmouth Harbour on the following midnight, that is, thirty-two hours after leaving Southampton.

We were now enabled to judge more or less of what stuff our crew were made during our trial trip. The philosophic calm which distinguished Arnaud commenced to declare itself. He reclined in his cabin smoking and thinking during the greater part of this voyage ; turning out only at meal-times, and evincing no inclination to undertake his due share of the work. On the afternoon after leaving Southampton, while we were passing the Eddystone lighthouse, he did crawl slowly on to the deck, to our great surprise, with a blanket over his arm. He rubbed his sleepy eyes, looked round with a lazy smile at the smooth sea and cloudless sky, stretched his blanket on the deck, lay down on it, lit a cigarette, and with a half-yawn, half-sigh of extreme content, said, "I could go round the world like this!" and resigned himself once more to his beloved *dolce far niente*.

Andrews, though more active and willing than Arnaud, was equally incapable of mastering the very elements of fore-and-aft seamanship, and caused Jerdein, the officer of his watch, as much trouble as Arnaud did me. There was a good deal of hard language to be heard occasionally on board the *Falcon*, sounding above winds and waves, when such an incident as the following, for instance, would occur :—Time, two a.m.

Dark and squally night. Knight steering. Arnaud smoking and pondering (supposed to be looking out). Knight, observing squall coming up, *loquitur*:—"Arnaud, just run forward and scandalize the main-sail, will you; begin by tricing up the tack."

Arnaud creeps deliberately forward, and disappears in the darkness. Five minutes elapse. Knight, impatiently, "Now, then, have not you finished that yet?"

Arnaud: "In a minute; in a minute."

Another five minutes elapse; we are now in the middle of the squall, which does not prove so violent as was anticipated. Knight, very impatient, "You are a nice, useful fellow on board a yacht! Ten minutes, and you have not triced up that tack; if that had been a serious squall, we might have gone to the devil while you were fiddling about there."

Arnaud, very indignant, "I do not care. I will leave the beastly thing alone. I will not be sworn at. In the daytime I can find the strings; in the night I cannot, and I shall no longer try."

Follows a prolonged and very noisy discussion, whereon the face of Jerdein appears above the hatch. "How the blank do you think we can get a wink of sleep down here when you are kicking up such an infernal row? &c., &c., blank, &c."

This little episode occurred months after leaving England, so the reader will perceive that the education of my friend progressed but slowly. So, too, was it when Jerdein and Andrews were on deck. I was awakened one night by a tremendous row, a banging about of ropes; and, far louder than all, the stentorian and much blank-emphasized exclamations of

the wrathful Jerdein. On coming on deck I found that, on being ordered to let fly the jib sheet, that the ship might go about, Andrews had got rather mixed up among the "strings," and had let go in succession the jib haultards, the bowsprit shrouds, and the peak haultards. A very nice crew, this, to cross the Atlantic with!

And here is another little adventure of Arnaud's. On one fine day, the wind being steady, light, and right aft, and our spinnaker and top-sail set, he was left alone on deck for a few minutes to steer. Suddenly I heard a great flapping of canvas, and on hurrying on deck, perceived that all our sails had been taken aback. The main-sail, top-sail, and spinnaker were bellying out the wrong way, and the vessel was slowly travelling stern-first. The booms, being guyed, had not swung aft. I looked at the compass, and perceived that Arnaud had steered the vessel right round, so that she was heading away from her course; then I looked at the culprit. He was sitting, with his legs crossed Turkish-fashion, on the locker aft—placid, calm as a Hindoo idol. He was deliberately rolling himself another cigarette, the while professing to be steering with his elbow, and evidently unconscious of having done aught wrong.

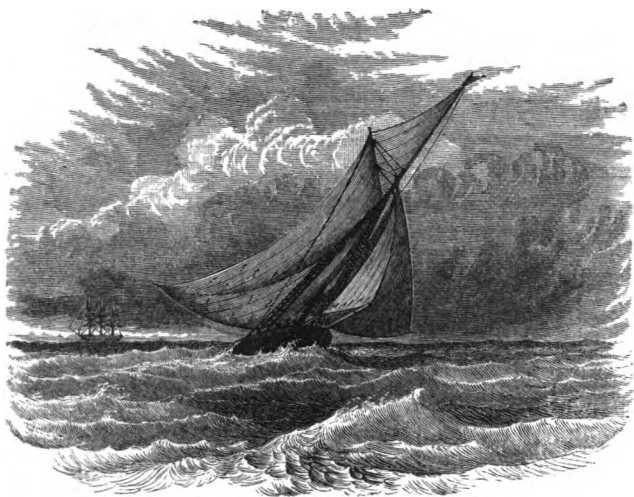
"Well, Arnaud?" I said.

"I think," he remarked in a weary, careless voice, looking at the burgee at the mast-head; "I think the wind has changed."

We passed two days in the quaint old Cornish seaport. Some yachting men called on us, and were somewhat surprised to behold our arrangements. "Where does your crew live?" they asked after going all over

the vessel, for we were at the time in our shore-going "togs," and not to be recognized as the four seamen our friends had perceived in the morning swabbing decks. "Where do your men live? there seems to be only room for yourselves on board."

We pointed to the solemn small boy sitting in the forecabin, with his perpetual huge quid of tobacco



OFF AT LAST.

in his cheek, and his chum the kitten on his lap. "That is our crew."

"But the others?"

"There are no others."

I think these gentlemen looked upon the *Falcon*, with its amateur crew, as being one of the most eccentric craft that ever wandered about the oceans.

We lay in a quantity of soft tack, bottled beer, and vegetables at Falmouth, so that we might enjoy the wonted luxuries of the shore for some few days of our first voyage.

On the evening of the 24th of August we bid adieu to the friends who had accompanied us down from Southampton. The anchor was weighed and catted. The last link between us and home was broken, and under all plain canvas the *Falcon* glided out of the bay, bound for Madeira.

Well off, at last, we four, the boy, and the kitten ; and it was with a curious mixture of sensations that we sailed out into the dark cloudy night on the choppy waters of the Channel. The last we saw of old England was the Lizard lights gleaming from the darkness. From these we "took our departure," and steered a course straight across the Bay of Biscay for Finisterre. At eight o'clock we lost sight of the light, and from that moment the routine of shipboard commenced. Eight bells was sounded ; the patent log, one of Walker's taffrail logs, was dropped overboard ; and the watches set ; for from now our life was no longer to be divided out into days and nights, but into spells of four hours up and four hours down—rather trying, at first.

There was usually a strong contrast between the expression of the faces of the watch coming down to turn in and of that about to turn out. To the latter the jovial and noisy way with which the former would rouse it from its slumbers was disgusting in the extreme. Arnaud's face, for instance, when he was turned out at midnight wore anything but a happy expression. He did not seem to see any fun in

Jerdein's boisterous "Now, then, you sleepers! Now, then, starboard watch; up you get!"

We met splendid weather all the way to Madeira; too splendid indeed, for we were becalmed for two days in the Bay of Biscay, rolling helplessly in the long swell; the redoubtable gulf treating us kindly, and sparing us all its terrors. We were also becalmed for nearly three days in the neighbourhood of Madeira. Notwithstanding these five days of enforced idleness, we accomplished the voyage of 1200 nautical miles in fourteen days, for the wind was right aft all the way. It is off the south coast of Portugal that the mariner may expect to fall in with the north-east trade-wind; but we carried the wind from that quarter all the way from Southampton, a great piece of luck.

It would be tedious, I think, for my readers were I to give the narrative of these voyages in log form; I will therefore but briefly jot down the particular events of each, especially such as may prove of interest or of service to yachting-men. The little *Falcon* gave great satisfaction on this her trial trip, and we got a much higher speed out of her than we anticipated—on some occasions she has logged as much as nine and a half knots an hour, running before a heavy sea. We were enabled to carry our spinnaker and gaff-topsail throughout this voyage, two days excepted.

On approaching Finisterre we got into a confused and nasty sea, in which the vessel rolled heavily—and these lively Penzance luggers do know how to roll.

Jerdein and myself had now to take all the steering through our watches, as Arnaud and Andrews could as yet only be trusted at the helm in fine weather.

On the evening of the 29th of August we sighted

the lofty cliffs of the Spanish coast ; and at dusk made out the light on Cape Finisterre.

This day we spoke the *Maria*, a Spanish barque bound for Coruna. In the night we lost a hand overboard ; we could not recover him, as it was very dark, and there was a heavy sea running.

The sad event occurred in the middle watch. I was steering, with Arnaud standing by my side, when we perceived the kitten crawl out of his lodging under the dinghy, which lay upturned on the deck. The poor thing had been pining ever since we sailed. The terrible liveliness of the little craft had made him very sea-sick—and perhaps tinned meat and preserved milk did not agree with him ; anyhow, he was a melancholy object, becoming thinner and sadder every day, as his chum the boy grew fatter and more contented-looking.

This particular afternoon the kitten had sighted the smiling downs of Spain, had smelt the land ; so he plucked up a bit, tried to purr, and evidently entertained hopes of soon setting foot on *terrá firma* again. But now that he saw us bearing away once more, and the Finisterre light fading away behind us, despair seized him. He climbed on to the bulwarks, and stretching out his neck, looked yearningly out towards the receding land. Now he gazed down shrinkingly at the black water, now back at the deck, evidently in doubt ; and just as the light became quite invisible, with a piteous mew and one last reproachful look at the cruel *Falcon*, and her crueller crew, resolutely leapt overboard—a deliberate suicide ; death, he thought, was to be preferred to this life of misery on the ever-heaving seas.

On the 1st of September, being in about latitude 38° N., and longitude $14^{\circ} 12'$ W., off the mouth of the Mediterranean Sea, we encountered our strongest breeze—a moderate gale from the N.E., before which we ran nearly 100 miles in twelve hours. On the 29th of August, we ran 142 miles; on the 30th of August, 118; on the 31st of August, 108; on the 1st of September 180; on the 2nd of September, 150—dead before the wind, so we had no reason to complain.

We were, on the 2nd of September, only 168 miles from the Madeira islands, but we did not drop our anchor in Funchal roads until the 7th of September; for we now encountered calm and light baffling winds, progressing but slowly under a leaden sky, across a long, smooth-swelling, leaden sea. Tepid, uncomfortable weather it was, with the thermometer standing at 85° in the shade.

Early in the morning of the 6th of September we sighted a rugged, rocky coast right ahead of us, which we soon made out to be the island of Porto Santo, the northernmost of the Madeiras. A wild enough spot it appeared to be; a small isle not six miles long, with an iron-bound coast, on which the Atlantic seas perpetually broke with a thunderous roar. It seemed to be barren in the extreme, merely a tumbled mass of rugged black mountains, in some places running sheer into the foaming sea, in others fringed at the foot by beautiful beaches of golden sands. Strange did these lofty mountainous islands of mid-ocean appear to us, after the low verdant shores of old England.

There was but a light wind blowing, and it was not till midnight that we sailed between the group

of barren rocky islets known as the Desertas (only distinguishable this dark night by the roar of the surf on them) and the east coast of Madeira. Then we bore away to the westward until we were abreast of the lights of Funchal, some four miles from the anchorage, and hauling the fore-sheet to windward, hove-to till morning.

The next day was cloudless, sultry, and with scarcely a breath of wind to fill our sails, but with the assistance of the sweeps we brought the *Falcon*, by about midday, to the roadstead of Funchal, and came to an anchor within hailing distance of the shore under the walls of the Loo Rock Fort.

And now, indeed, we could perceive that we had come to a summer land. On the shore in front of us was the white Portuguese city, and behind it the island rose in swelling domes of luxuriant vegetation and dark forests, up to the barren rocky mountain-tops, 6000 feet above the sea. It was pretty hot too; the Leste was blowing, the hot wind from the African Sahara, which brought the thermometer up to 90° in the shade.

As soon as the Customs' and the health boat had come off, and we were free to hold intercourse with the natives, a bum-boat came off to us from the shore—the regular old traditional bum-boat of Marryat's novels—laden with oranges, bananas, figs, mangoes, fresh butter, fish, soft tack, and other unwonted luxuries. But the bum-boat woman, the sweet little musical Buttercup, was wanting. In her place was a shifty-eyed, grave, dark man of unprepossessing countenance, one Marco, who undertook to supply us with water, stores, look after our washing, and so on.

He could speak some English, and was laden with certificates from all the English yachts that had visited Madeira for years. There are no ship-chandlers here, so one is left to the mercy of these irregular land-sharks. Marco is perhaps no worse than the rest.

Jerdein said, "He may prove to be an honest man, for he did not wince when swallowing the very strong tot of whisky I gave him." I have some doubts myself as to the general efficacy of this ordeal.

The yachtsman is compelled to employ a shore-boat during his stay here. There is no pier or landing-stage, and a perpetual surf breaks on the shingle beach in front of the town, which would damage or injure a yacht's dinghy. The native boats are specially constructed for beaching in a surf, being strong, and provided with broad bilge-pieces.

H.M.S. *Miranda* was at anchor in the roads when we entered. She was bound for Tristan d'Acunha, to look for a shipwrecked crew, on her way to the Australian station.

The town of Funchal we found to be very dull and uninteresting; but like all who visit this island of perpetual summer, we were astonished at the beauty of the surrounding country. From the steep, paved, narrow streets of the suburbs, over whose every wall hung large bunches of purple grapes, to the tops of the swelling hills, the land overflowed with an exuberant and lovely vegetation. Myrtles, large trees of grand geraniums in full flower, roses, vines, oleanders, bananas, covered the hill sides, while every lane was shaded with festoons of vines.

But who has not read a dozen descriptions of

Madeira—of the quaint sleighs drawn by oxen and laden with butts of rich red wine ; the convent, the Gran Corral, the dark-eyed beauties fanning themselves at the balconies on the sultry evenings, and so on. These latter we did not see ; by the way, I never have seen any pretty native woman in any Portuguese possession ; I suppose there are some though, carefully locked away somewhere, and yet the chances are the other way, for these stunted, withered, ape-like men, could hardly be the sons and brothers of handsome women.

Mr. Falconer, our host of the excellent English hotel known as Mile's Hotel, a beautifully-situated place built in the centre of a lovely tropical garden, made arrangements for us to visit the world-renowned view of the Gran Corral. He procured good horses for us—no easy feat in Funchal—and sent on to await us at our destination an irreproachable luncheon. The Gran Corral deserves its reputation, and a most pleasant ride we had to the sublime gorge, by a road which winds along the sides of mountains, sometimes precipitous and barren, but generally covered with verdure and flowers and noble forests of chestnut. The broad, blue Atlantic was always a feature in the scene ; so high were we above it that we could see the light clouds skimming over it below us like phantom ships.

On our return to the city we enjoyed a bath at the hotel, then an excellent dinner, then our cigarettes, liqueur, and coffee, on the verandah which overlooked the luxuriant tropic garden, the shrill cicada alone intruding on the stillness of the lovely evening. All this put us into a very happy state of mind ; we

felt quite civilized again. Suddenly one of the most horrid sounds that civilization knows burst on our startled ears. A gentleman in a neighbouring garden commenced to practise on the French horn, to play on which he was evidently learning, or rather about to begin to learn, for he was an awful novice of novices on this resounding instrument. This noise was too much for us; so remembering that there was to be a representation this night at the circus, we hurried thither; for dull Funchal just now boasted this excitement—a Yankee circus that was travelling among the Canary Islands and up and down the West Coast of Africa. We were already provided with tickets for the performance, for the shrewd American had already pounced down on us as likely people to be looking out for entertainment. We had made the acquaintance of some of this queer crowd of light-hearted wanderers in the following wise.

We were sitting in a café, indulging in glasses of strong red wine in which cream ices had been stirred up, a pleasant combination in vogue here. At another table was sitting a man who eyed us silently for some time, mentally taking our measure. He was a shortish man, with close-shaved head and keen Yankee features, with an eye ever twinkling with goodnatured fun, and a mobile, nervous mouth. After, no doubt, having pretty well gauged the character of the *Falcons*, and having detected some freemasonry of Bohemianism in the appearance of those great navigators, he came boldly up to us and with Yankee twang burst at once *in medias res*.

“Wall, strangers, and so ye’ve come all the way from England in that little craft in the harbour, eh? Proud

to make your acquaintaince. I'm the fi-nance man of Feely's circus, that's who I am. Now I guess you'll want a dash of moral recreation to-night after all those days of hauling and heaving, eh? Here you are (producing an envelope), just four places left—four box-tickets for to-night's grand representation of Feely's American Circus—right. Yes, I'll take a little *aqua pura* with whisky. *Evviva, senores.*"

We visited the circus and enjoyed it too, for the little company was clever. We all lost our hearts to a pretty and merry-eyed little Yankee girl, who gracefully did *la haute école* on a fine bay horse. I think our friend, the finance man, saw this, for he considerably spared us any further wounding of these too susceptible hearts.

He came off in a boat to call on us the next morning, and brought with him his "boss," Mr. Feely, and the Neapolitan clown, but none of the "fair artistes." "They are liable to sea-sickness," he diplomatically explained. This trio stayed to lunch, and we turned them out our best curry and minced collops, stimulating their appetites first with the world-renowned *Falcon* fog-cutter, a terrible beverage of the cock-tail species, invented by Jerdein in the early days of the cruise, but much improved by further research and experiment, as we progressed. It contains manifold ingredients, of which whisky and Angostura bitters form the base. What comes on the top of these depends much on the products of the clime the *Falcon* happens to be in, thus a detailed recipe is impossible. If you ask a denizen of British Guiana what a "swizzle" is, his reply will be "a Demerara tippie." He will not condescend to analyze further for you

that delicate pink foaming draught. So be it with the *Falcon* fog-cutter—it is a "*Falcon* tippie."

The circus boss, the clown, and the finance man, expressed great admiration for it. Said our old friend the latter, "Yes, I guess this is the stuff to straighten one's backbone. Yes! you can fix me another." Inspired by two or three fog-cutters, he gave us a long description of the psychological effects of various drinks on his brain :—

"Take whisky now ; that's the very rummest drink I know. Poets should drink whisky ; it's chock full of ideas, whisky is. Why, if I drink whisky for about a week, and then go to bed and turn out the gas, I see all manner of rum things, don't you ?

"Don't I remember all the things, too. I look up, eh ! and over the top of the door I see a great grinning crocodile, squatting with legs across—so. Then he gets bigger and bigger and bigger ; stretches out like one of those india-rubber balls with faces on them, you know. Well, of a sudden a great, big black bottle comes out of his mouth, and stands on the door, and away goes the crocodile. O Lord ! presto ! out flies the cork, bang ! and out pops, like a jack-in-the-box, an old nigger's head with great rolling eyes ; you know. Then I get riled, I do ; a joke's a joke, but this is going too far ; so I throw a boot or a chair, or anything that comes handy, at that darned head. Hit him bang ! Hurrah ! I always hit the head neat ; don't you ? Makes him feel kinder shaky and sick, so out drop his eyes, and roll about the room, two great fiery eyes, up and down and round and round ; up the bed-post, on the floor, against the window—everywhere.

"Now that's what I don't like, them eyes ; you can't hit them with a boot ; they are too cussed lively ; they dew dodge. No! no! I guess those eyes are too much for any man. When I get as far as the eyes I get up and light the gas ; don't you ?"

The earnestness, the flow of eloquence of the finance man when he told us all this were grand. He seemed to live the horrors over again as he described the to him familiar sensations, emphasizing the story with appropriate gesticulations, and pointing to the imaginary eyes as they rolled by him with great dramatic power. The "don't you ?" with which he constantly appealed to us was splendid. He evidently looked on such symptoms as experienced in the natural course of things, now and then, by every right-thinking man.

For two years this company had owned a small schooner-yacht, in which they travelled with all their paraphernalia from island to island of the West Indies, and up the Spanish Main. Then they were wrecked—whisky, I suppose : the rolling nigger's eyes could easily be mistaken for the Jamaica lights. Many a curious yarn these three Bohemians spun us of their roaming life on the warm Western seas among the pleasure-loving people of the Spanish Main. Mr. Leely was the gravest of the three, as became his responsible position ; circus proprietors always are more or less solemn. It must indeed be hard and delicate work to keep in order the curious little world of a travelling circus, with its artistic jealousies and squabbles.

CHAPTER III.

IN the afternoon of the 13th of September, having got a clean bill of health for St. Vincent, and laid in a good stock of vegetables and Colares wine, we weighed anchor, and sailed out of Funchal Bay before a light breeze. We did not get out into the strength of the fresh trade-wind until past midnight, as is generally the case on the lee-side of this island, with its lofty mountains.

Our next port was to be Porto Grande, in the island of St. Vincent, Cape Verde Islands, a distance of 1026 nautical miles. This voyage we accomplished in seven days and twenty hours, notwithstanding that we had in all about forty hours of light winds and calms, and twelve hours of head-wind. But during the rest of the voyage we had strong north-east trade winds. In three consecutive days we made the following runs: 169, 166, and 183 nautical miles, which is not bad work for a tubby, jury-rigged craft like ours.

We were now sailing over a lovely sea. The old Spanish discoverers named this vast region of the north-east trade-wind, that extends almost from 36° N. to the Equator, the Ladies' Gulf. Well named it is

too. A tropic sea where storms are very rare, where there is a perpetual summer, tempered by the fresh, strong trades.

In these warm latitudes the four a.m. to eight a.m. watch is the pleasantest of the day. There is first the matutinal coffee and pipe—for on the *Falcon* smoking on duty is not absolutely forbidden. You steer the gallant little vessel as she reels off her eight knots an hour before the steady breeze, rolling and heaving gently as the great green seas pass under her, sometimes playfully dropping a bucketful of salt water over the bulwark. You watch the gradual approach of dawn: there comes a pale flush with bright emerald streaks in the eastern sky; and far quicker than in our northern climes, the sable night is driven back, and the stars put out; and gloriously the tropical sun rises from a throne of rainbow clouds over burning Africa.

During our voyage to St. Vincent, the thermometer ranged from 80° to 85° in our cabin. On September the 14th it rained for the first time since we left Southampton, but not for long.

On the evening of September the 16th, four full-rigged ships were in sight of us astern.

The following morning the wind freshened from the south-east quarter. We held our own against three of the four ships, still keeping them astern of us. Only one could gain on us, and at two p.m. she was alongside. She was a magnificent British ship with all sail set. We were in company with her for some hours, during which we kept up a conversation with her by means of the international code of signals. She hoisted her number, H.F.S.R., and we found

she was the well-known fast London clipper, the *Paramata*, of 1521 tons, bound from Plymouth to Sydney.

Her passengers crowded her decks to look at us, the sight of so small a craft as the *Falcon* in mid-ocean evidently surprising them. The flag conversation went on in an animated manner, until we bade each other farewell, dipped our ensigns and separated, she taking a course considerably to the westward of ours. This pleasant little encounter was in latitude $26^{\circ} 24' N.$, longitude $20^{\circ} 30' W.$ The other three ships did not overtake us.

On September the 18th, we boomed along merrily before a fresh breeze. It was Saturday, so at eight p.m. as is the old sea rule, we drank to sweethearts and wives, and even found occasion for another toast, so merry were we at our luck and prospect of a smart run. This was to the tropics, for it was this evening we entered the torrid zone, crossing the Cancer at sunset. This night the wind freshened considerably, but blew steadily.

At daybreak, as I was steering, it being my watch, the spinnaker outhaul carried away, so I had to call up the watch below to muzzle the sail and repair the damage. A curious and undignified spectacle the port watch presented as they hurried up *en déshabille*. Andrews was arrayed in a blanket and a pair of hideous blue spectacles which he considered to be necessary for his eyes when in tropic seas.

On the 19th, we had reeled off another 166 knots. And now the gallant north-east wind blew fresher and fresher still; at times we made eight and a half knots an hour, driving showers of spray from our

bows as we plunged "like a frightened steed" from one great sea to another.

Top-sail and spinnaker were stowed in the afternoon; by evening the wind had increased to the force of a gale, and we reefed the main-sail and shifted the jib.

Jerdein and myself had now to do all the steering, as was usual when the tiller required delicate handling. The old boat behaved splendidly, and in twenty-four hours we had made another 190 miles on our course. On the morning of the 20th, we sighted a brig steering W.S.W., with topgallant mast gone.

Nearly every morning about this time we had a little fresh fish for breakfast, for many flying fish would jump over our low bulwarks by night, attracted by the glare of the bull's eye and side lights (when we carried them).

On the night of September the 20th, we knew that we were in the close vicinity of those dangerous rocky islands, the Cape Verdes. As the weather was very thick, we first shortened canvas, and later on, during the middle watch, hove to, so as to keep off the land till daybreak. At four a.m. I relieved Jerdein on deck, made sail and proceeded on our course. We were unfortunate in having an exceedingly unfavourable morning for making a landfall. It was squally, drizzly, thick weather, in which it would be impossible to distinguish the highest land at the distance of two miles; a not uncommon state of things to encounter off these lofty, cloud-collecting islands. At seven a.m. we perceived through the drizzle a dark, undefined mass on the port bow that might be a lofty coast, so we bore down towards it.

Then a violent squall came down on us, which

compelled us to lower the main-sail. At eight p.m., of a sudden, a great rift opened out in the thick atmosphere, and lo ! right ahead, for a moment only appeared a mass of inky rock filling up the rift, its edges and extent not yet discernible. Then the rift in the mist closed, and we were left again in uncertainty for a while. But soon, with the strengthening sun, the thickness cleared once more, and we perceived before us, not three miles off, a dark threatening mass of mountains which we recognized as the island of San Antonio.

This is the most northward of the Cape Verde Islands and one of the most fertile of the group, though it looks barren and inhospitable enough from the sea. These islands lie at the southern limit of the north-east trade-winds, and are about 200 miles distant from Senegambia on the West Coast of Africa. They belong to Portugal, and are for the most part inhabited by a fine-looking race of negroes, giants of their kind, who are good sailors and farmers. The whole group is volcanic—a congregation of curiously-serrated, dark mountains, that look as if vomited out from hell itself, so weird some of them appear.

The island of San Antonio presents a fine appearance from the sea. It is a grand volcanic mass of dark rock, whose peaks rise above the clouds (it attains an elevation of 7100 feet), and at whose feet is a perpetual white line of heavy surf. Bleak and uninhabited as it appears to be, this island has a considerable negro population, and they say contains fertile vales between its precipices, where vines, coconuts, plantains, indigo, and cotton, are cultivated by a mild and industrious coloured people.

The island of San Vincente is separated from that of San Antonio by a channel seven miles wide.

After close-hauling the *Falcon* on the port tack so as to double the north-east Cape of San Antonio, we then bore away down the channel for Porto Grande—the harbour of St. Vincent.

This is the most important island of the Cape Verde Archipelago, having been selected as a coaling station and place of call for several lines of ocean mail-steamers. But of all the group, none I imagine is so barren and burnt-up a desert as is this little islet. As we approached it we could easily distinguish its volcanic origin. It is merely a burnt-out volcano. From the golden sands that divide it from the blue tropic sea it rises a confused mass of utterly bare, fantastic mountain-peaks. Steep and profound ravines descend to the sea in places, black and lifeless some of them as if they had been cloven but yesterday with a great pickaxe out of a mountain of coal. It is not a cheerful-looking place, this arid African crag.

At midday we dropped our anchor in Porto Grande Bay, close to the wretched little Portuguese town. A splendid and well-sheltered harbour is this, capable of holding at least 300 sail. The entrance which looks out toward the island of San Antonio is about two miles wide. Once within the bay one finds himself in clear, smooth water, surrounded on all sides by shores of beautiful yellow sands and coral rocks, from which rises the amphitheatre of barren, tooth-shaped mountains. The only objection to this land-locked basin is the almost daily occurrence of furious squalls, which sweep down on it from the ravines.

Twice during our stay here we dragged our anchor in consequence of these.

The little town on the beach, with its whitewashed houses and bright red roofs, looked cheerful against the dreary background ; for from the domed mountain-tops to the shore sloped down the *coulours* of black lava and *débris* of old volcanoes. Travellers have likened this aspect to that of a raked-out coal fire of giants—a Titanic heap of cinders—and this exactly describes it. One could almost imagine that the fire still smoulders below, so intensely hot is it in this land-locked bay ; an atmosphere of a furnace at times envelops the town. On the desolate land there is no green to relieve the eye, no trees to keep off the burning rays of the tropic sun. They say that the natives are strict Catholics and very pious. I am in no wise surprised at this. The contemplation of such scenery, the sensation of such a temperature, must often suggest thoughts of the next world to the most frivolous mind.

The health-officer came off in a boat rowed by sturdy negroes clad in white, and gave us pratique ; then in his turn came off the Marco of St. Vincent in his bumboat—a merry little Portuguese, with a ne'er-do-weel twinkle of eye and cock of hat, José by name ; he spoke English fluently, and offered to find all we wanted in the way of provisions during our stay. Very well he did it too ; and, to our surprise, without swindling us in the least. Let me recommend little José to future callers at this port.

It is easy to procure any quantity of bananas, mangoes, cocoanuts, and other fruits here. They are brought over from the other more fertile islands in

small craft by the negroes. A merry, prosperous people these same islanders appear to be, perpetually jabbering and grinning like so many monkeys. Some of these islands, they tell me, are very negro and half-caste Eutopías. Each man owns his little plot of land, which produces more than suffices for his needs. Coffee, papias, sugar, bananas, &c., are cultivated in the fertile vales beneath the volcanic crags. Yankee schooners carry on a brisk trade among these people, bartering cheap and gaudy cottons, knives, and such goods, for agricultural produce. San Vincente is not self-supporting even in the way of water, of this necessary there is little, if any. Some is brought over from San Antonio in schooners, but the shipping is chiefly supplied by Miller the coal-king, who condenses large quantities of sea-water in giant tanks.

San Vincente is one of the stations of the Anglo-Brazilian Telegraph Company, so there are about fifteen young Englishmen in the company's employ, resident here. It was chiefly owing to the companionship and hospitality of these gentlemen that we lay at anchor off this cinder-heap for so long as nine days. Every naval and royal mail officer knows the telegraph station and the telegraph men of St. Vincent. These all live together in one large building, by far the most luxurious place on the island, with a spacious verandah surrounding it, libraries, reading-rooms, billiard-rooms, and all the other luxuries of a club. Were it not for the number of the company's *employés*, and this pleasant system of half-club, half-college fellowship, I should imagine their life in such a hole as Porto Grande would be intolerable, so utterly

destitute of all society or amusement is it. As it is they live jollily enough. They give their little dances to the officers and passengers of passing mail-steamers ; play at cricket on the blazing sands ; keep their four-oared boat, and so on. The arrival of a steamer with a good supply of first-class passengers of the fair sex, is generally the signal for a ball, for St. Vincent can turn out little in the feminine line—save negresses and mulattoes. Sadly were the telegraph men, and we mariners of the *Falcon* too, for the matter of that, disappointed, when the SS. *Coto-paxi* called here on her way to Australia, with a full complement of passengers. We had eagerly looked forward to her arrival. There would be English papers, the faces of English girls again, a jolly ball. But, alas ! there was a case of scarlatina on board, so she was put into quarantine during her stay. A great disappointment for all parties—the passengers perhaps not least ; the emigrants hung over the bulwarks all day, gazing sadly at the forbidden *terra firma*.

Of the native population of St. Vincent one cannot speak in very high terms. The whites, or rather mulattoes, for pure whites are rare, are for the most part the descendants of the lowest scum of Portugal ; for this island was till recently a penal settlement, and a Portuguese felon is not the brightest specimen of felonhood. The negroes are physically a splendid race ; the women carry enormous burdens that would put to shame a porter of Stamboul. Morally, the least said about the darkies the better. They have acquired all the vices of the white man, but none of his virtues—if their Portuguese masters ever had any

virtues, by the way. Some of their customs are very curious; they hold drunken wakes over their dead, and with the Christianity which they profess, mingle all manner of barbaric rites, handed down from their African ancestors.

One fine morning Arnaud and myself started off in our Berthon collapsible boat to explore the other side of the bay under Washington Head, where the sands, piled up in huge dunes, glittered like pale gold under the vertical sun. Smooth enough was the outward journey in the little ten-foot canvas boat, but on nearing the land we found, what we could not perceive from the *Falcon's* deck, a heavy surf breaking on the shore. The edge, too, of the beach was thick with sharp, ugly-looking, coral rocks.

Anyhow, here we were, and land we must to explore those great slopes of glaring sand. As soon as we had reached the breakers, and were, as we imagined, in sufficiently shallow water, I gave the order to jump overboard, so that we might lift the boat safely on shore without running a hole in her bottom. To Arnaud's astonishment the water was well over our heads; so when we had at last successfully landed and carried the boat out of reach of the breakers, he upbraided me sadly. "You told me we were in shallow water—do you call that shallow water?"

We sat down on the burning sands under the sun to dry, and forthwith entered into a fierce discussion as to whether ten feet was shallow water or the reverse; I holding the former, Arnaud the latter view. Shallow, I said, was a purely relative adjective, and in these circumstances ten feet was shallow. Arnaud held that water could not be shallow for walking and

fording purposes, when there were three or four feet of it above your head.

In five minutes the tropical sun had dried us, so we postponed the discussion, and wandered about collecting shells and specimens of coral, enjoying this amusement, I verily believe, as much as we used to do when we were small imps with spade and bucket in the olden times.

The trade-wind blows all the refuse of Porto Grande across the bay to this beach, and so stalking about on the sands, greedily gobbling, were the ugliest and most mangy-looking vultures I have ever cast eyes upon. They were quite tame, and allowed us to approach them within a yard or so. These useful scavengers are protected by law, and a heavy fine is inflicted on any one who kills one of them—hence their tameness. They are evidently quite aware of this law, and insult you with impunity. They are most insolent beasts, worse than Barbados niggers. One annoyed me so much that I threw a stick at him ; whereon he flapped his wings, made ugly faces, swore at me in the most horrible manner, and then picking out two witnesses from his fellows, marched off with them doubtlessly to inform the authorities of Porto Grande of my conduct.

Arnaud and myself now proceeded to re-embark—no easy matter, for the surf had increased considerably. Our naked feet suffered a good deal during the process, for the shore was covered with sea-urchins, whose hedgehog-like bristles pierced and broke off in them. We waded in quickly after a returning wave, carrying the boat with us, jumped nimbly in and paddled out ; but alas ! we were not sharp enough,

for before we had got beyond the second line of breakers a roller caught us, slued the boat round, capsized her, rolled us out, and we had to draw her up on shore, bale out, and start again. Five times in succession we were thus capsized, but always managed to save the boat and keep her off the coral. We knew that there were ground sharks in this part of the bay—not a pleasant matter to think of. The sixth time we altered our tactics and succeeded. We followed a breaker, carrying the boat with us; Arnaud jumped in, seized the paddles; I held on to the stern and managed to guide her safely over the next breaker; then he rowed with all his energy till he was well outside the surf in deep water. It was now my turn. I swam out till I came to the boat, put a hand on either side of the stern, and jumped in between my hands. My weight pulled her under, and half-filled her with water, but she did not capsize, and we soon baled her out.

I have mentioned this to show what can be done with a Berthon's boat; no wooden dinghy could have got off from that shore then; she would have most certainly been stove in. But two men with practice and a little activity can carry this little light canvas tub through the broken water and safely embark as we did on this occasion, without scratching a particle of paint off her fragile sides.

We carried a fourteen-foot boat besides the Berthon, and in my opinion both are necessary in their different ways for a cruise like this of ours.

Two more emigrant steamers touched at Porto Grande during our stay, both got pratique, and so the town was flooded with these travellers, who were

enabled to stretch their legs on shore for a few hours. One was the French mail from Marseilles to the River Plate, with a motley crowd of French, Gallicians, Basques, and Italians, for Buenos Ayres and Monte Video. The other was a Money-Wigram's with English emigrants for Australia. Curious it was to contrast the foreigners with our own countrymen. The foreigners were noisy enough, raising merry and boisterous choruses of their native lands in the cafés and in the streets, but they did not go out of the way to make themselves objectionable: on the contrary, the Britishers, who seemed to belong to the 'Arry class for the most part—what on earth does he expect to do as an emigrant?—were inclined to insult and ridicule all they met, in their supreme contempt for the "blank" foreigners. The niggers as usual crowded round the new arrivals with all manner of odds and ends to sell—tropical fruits, sea shells, coral necklaces, and the like.

Of course one of the 'Arrys thought it high fun to snatch the stock of bananas from one poor old white-haired nigger without paying for them, and divide the spoil among his sniggling 'Arry friends who stood round admiring his wit and pluck. Ah, 'Arry! brutal, brainless coward that you are, how often one itches to kick you well, thou foulest product of our insular civilization!

Sunday, the 26th of September, was a hot day, a day of oppression and irritability, which found vent, as far as the *Falcons* were concerned, in two fashions. The morning was too sultry to do anything; we lay about the cabin lazy and sulky, sleeping and wrangling alternately. First we entered into

a most fierce discussion on some subject of dynamics, in which all parties waxed savage; as a matter of fact, none of us knew anything about the question in point. Then came lunch—curry and Collares wine; this mollified us somewhat, and the talk veered round to a more gentle discussion as to the comparative beauty of the fair sex of different nations, over our pipes. But, alas, from that we got on to some profound metaphysical question, which stirred up all our latent irritability again. At last, unable to convince each other, we went to sleep.

In the evening we were engaged to dine with the telegraph men. Arthur put us on shore, then pulled back to the *Falcon*. When we reached the verandah of the telegraph station, just as the sun was setting, Jerdein's sharp eye detected a suspicious circumstance—a boat with three men in it was rowing off to the *Falcon*. Yes! there could be no mistake; they were now alongside; now they had boarded her. Then the rapid night of the tropics fell, and all was obscure. Jerdein and myself ran down to the beach, found a boat with two negroes, and engaged them to row us off. We told them to go off quickly, but noiselessly, explaining our plans to them. They greatly enjoyed the situation.

We found a boat made fast to the *Falcon*, but no one suspected our arrival; our foemen were all in the fore-castle, where we heard them laughing boisterously. Jerdein and myself jumped down the companion, passed through the main-cabin, and so into the fore-castle, where we surprised three Portuguese sailors. Without parley we proceeded to belabour these fellows; there was a fine scrimmage. They were

driven on deck ; one fell into the boat they had come in, and alone managed to escape with her ; the other two we knocked overboard, to find their way to their vessel as well as they could through the sharks ; the latter, by the way, are too delicate in their tastes to feed on Portuguese mulattoes unless very hard pressed for a meal, so I suppose they returned safely to whence they came.

Arthur told us that he was below when they came on board ; they paid no attention to his remonstrances at their uninvited appearance, but seized him, prevented him from going on deck, and commenced to inspect the vessel for grog, and anything else, I suppose, that might come in handy. After our victory, which proved a fine safety-valve for the irritability caused by the sultriness of the day, we handed over a loaded six-shooter to Arthur, in the presence of our two grinning negro boatmen, with injunctions to challenge once, and then shoot, any other visitors who might come off that night. The boy was proud of his post, he took the revolver with a grin and meaning gesture that made the niggers shudder. I did not think that we should be troubled any more after this.

He is a bloodthirsty boy, this Arthur. He has, I think, fed his youthful mind with literature of the "penny dreadful" class. At every port he would ask such questions as, "Be there savages here, sir?" "Be there Indians in these parts?" Very disappointed he used to appear on receiving an answer in the negative, but used to solace himself with dreams of future bloody encounters. "With all these guns and cannons we ought to do for them when we do see

them—eh ! sir," he would say. He used to look at our little brass cannon with great respect and admiration, as being a wonderful piece of ordnance ; was very fond of it, indeed, save when he was set to polish it. When, later on, we did come across his long looked-for Indians and savages, I fear one of the cherished illusions of his life vanished, a fragment of his youth was gone ; for lo ! they were not cannibals ; neither did they scalp him ; neither were they, as a rule, even naked—simply a drunken, dirty, very ugly set of uninteresting ragamuffins.

The morrow after this night of wrath was a busy day for all hands ; we were employed in oiling spars, taking in stores and water—in short, preparing all for sea. But after all this work we did not sail on the following day after all, but indulged in a holiday ; for the SS. *Thales* was in the harbour, with the latest English papers on board, so we went in for a grand read at the telegraph station. The same steamer had also landed in St. Vincent a small quantity of that unwonted luxury, ice. One of the storekeepers near the beach had obtained a supply of the precious article, so most of the white population were in and out of that store a good deal during that day. The Anglo-Saxon hates to see waste, so he consumed a fair amount of iced brandy-and-soda and bottled beer, in order to save that ice from melting its coolness away on the desert air, as it otherwise would rapidly have done.

CHAPTER IV.

OUR first long run was now before us; Bahia dos Todos os Santos in Brazil, across the broad Atlantic, was to be our next port. The time this voyage might occupy was rather uncertain, for we were now towards the southern limit of the north-east trade-winds. We had to traverse the region of the south-west African monsoon, which blew in our teeth, and that broad belt of equatorial calm, so terrible to sailors—the sultry doldrums, where a ship may lie for weeks on the hot, smooth water under a cloudless sky, with the pitch oozing from her decks; a region of unbearable calm, broken occasionally by violent squalls, torrential rain, and fearful lightning and thunder. All these difficulties conquered, we should be in the pleasant realm of the strong south-east trade-wind—the trade-wind of the southern hemisphere—which blows fresher and steadier than the north-east trade, and under whose favouring breath we should be able to reel off the knots right merrily.

We steered so as to cross the equator in longitude 24° W., which Jerdein considered to be the best route at this time of the year.

As this voyage will be of some interest to yachting

men, I shall, contrary to my usual custom, narrate it in the form of a diary. It will be observed that we were thirteen days reaching the equator ; that for the greater part of that time we encountered calms and south-westerly monsoons, so that sailing as we generally did, close-hauled on the starboard tack, we were driven considerably to the eastward of our course, on the tenth day being as far east as $21^{\circ} 30' W.$ Not till we were on the equator did we fall in with the south-east trade, which then stood by us pretty steadily till we reached Bahia.

Throughout the voyage the thermometer ranged between 85° to 90° in the shade. In the following diary I divide time in the civil fashion for convenience, but the positions and distances are extracted from the log, and given at midday, nautical fashion.

October 1st.—Weighed anchor at midday. Light N.E. wind. Ran down the San Antonio channel under all canvas. On our left were the bare volcanic masses, the forbidding gorges of San Vincente ; a thundering line of breakers dashing against the shore everywhere : on our right the more smiling mountains of the isle of San Antonio. The lofty summits of both islands were hidden in the clouds. At night wind dropped ; calm, and vivid lightnings.

October 2nd.—Dead calm ; nasty drizzle ; hot, debilitating weather ; vessel rolling uncomfortably in the swell. Through the haze perceived the lofty mountains of Brava, the southernmost and most beautiful of the Cape Verde Archipelago. Towards evening an E.S.E. wind sprung up, which enabled us to average six and a half knots an hour during the night.

October 3rd.—Glorious sunny weather ; wind E.S.E.

Eleven a.m.—one of the crew was caught in a serious breach of discipline ; man at the helm, too, at the time. He was sitting down to his work ; was wearing blue spectacles, and, worst of all, was reading a play of Sophocles in the original. Fancy a man at the wheel reading Sophocles ! He was seriously rebuked by the officer of his watch, Jerdein, who is a martinet in his way, and who gazed at him for fully five minutes, speechless with dismay, ere he could find voice for vituperation.

October 4th.—Wind E.S.E. At midday in longitude $25^{\circ} 1'$ W., latitude $10^{\circ} 32'$ N. ; distance made this day 152 miles. During the day the wind came round, till it was quite aft. The glass fell rather suddenly—more than a tenth in a few hours. In the evening there was a wild appearance in the sky, slight squalls of wind and rain, and signs of worse weather coming ; then followed a magnificent sunset, ominous of storm, and a calm for a while.

So threatening was the appearance of the heavens to windward, that all hands stayed on deck, to see what was coming. Right aft we perceived an inky mass of cloud rising from the horizon. It had huge, rugged, black streaks diverging from it in all directions, like the claws or arms of some great monster crab or polypus. Bigger and bigger the threatening mass swelled, and the evil-looking arms stretched half round the horizon and to the zenith, as if the monster was about to inclose the whole world in its grasp—a wonderful and awful appearance. Our sails flapped as we rolled in the calm ; we lowered the main-sail, made all snug, and awaited. First constant and vivid sheet and forked lightning of a blue

colour came out of the cloud, and then down burst the squall on us, and such a squall. The cloud had enveloped all the sky, had blotted out all the stars ; never have I experienced so complete a darkness on the seas. The wind blew with great fury ; and we could not turn our faces to the stinging rain, so smartly it struck. We scudded on before the heavy gusts. As I steered I had to keep the vessel right before them, judging the direction by the feel of the wind on my neck, for the binnacle-light was blown out. Certainly it was an awful and mysterious sensation to be out in this small boat at the mercy of this tropical storm of the Atlantic. The roar of wind and rain rendered even our loudest shouts inaudible to each other across the decks.

It was, as I said, pitch-dark. As I steered I could only see two whirling masses of foam on either side of our bow like two great wings, thrown up by our speed. Our side-lights were lit. On the foaming mass on our port side fell the red, on that on our starboard side fell the green light, lending a spectral horror to the scene. With this exception, the occasional lightnings alone threw a fitful light on the noisy darkness around. Above the roar of wind and water but one sound was heard—our bell pealed forth loudly, with each exceptional pitch of the vessel, a deep funereal tone that added to the solemnity. This squall lasted nearly an hour ; others succeeded it throughout the night from various quarters, but none coming nearly up to it in fury.

October 5th.—Cloudy, warm, no wind. We were in that most uncomfortable position for a vessel, becalmed in a heavy sea ; for last night's weather

had raised a confused tumult of choppy waves, in the trough of which we rolled and pitched horribly with all sail stowed. It was a lazy day for all, our chief employment being eating bananas and vainly attempting to catch a large shark who was prowling round us, a wary old ruffian who refused the most tempting bait. The calm continued throughout the day. As usual, ill-temper resulted. Two of the crew entered into a fierce discussion as to whether the plantains which were to serve as one of the courses for dinner should be cooked and eaten with salt like potatoes, or be treated with sugar like fruit.

At eight p.m. there were signs of squally weather in the sky, so the crew waxed hopeful and good-tempered again. During the night we had occasional showers and light squalls from S. to S.S.W., at which we put the vessel close-hauled on the starboard tack. Then came the calm again. We were now having an experience of that tantalizing, wearisome region where the doldrums and south-west African monsoons fight for mastery over the equatorial sea.

All this time we were being drifted a considerable distance daily out of our course to the eastward, for we were now in the Guinea current, an equatorial stream of hot water (its temperature is about 84°) setting into the Gulfs of Benin and Biafra. So warm is the water that the morning douse with the bucket, which took the place of the tub, was no longer refreshing as it used to be, for the temperature of the sea was of course higher than that of the night and morning air. When a sea came on board in the night it felt like hot water to our faces and bare feet.

October 6th.—Again a dead calm; 88° in the

shade ; a high sea running ; a fearful rolling, creaking, and groaning of ship ; all our canvas was stowed ; a barque in sight in the same situation ; for forty hours we did not lose sight of her, though we were bound in different directions ; lat. $9^{\circ} 14' N.$, long. $24^{\circ} 30' W.$ As no sharks seemed to be near, I jumped overboard for a short mid-ocean swim. At midday there came on us a slight squall with rain. We hoisted the canvas, but in half an hour it was as calm as ever.

October 7th.—A light northerly air and very heavy equatorial rain. We stripped and enjoyed a freshwater shower-bath ; also blocked up the scuppers and collected enough water to refill some of our empty breakers. We only made seventeen miles this day, so light was the wind.

October 8th.—Calms and light northerly airs. There was a haze to the S.E. as if portending our entrance into the region of the trades. This day we made seventy-two miles on our course.

October 9th.—Tacking very slowly against head variable winds, divided from each other by hours of dead calm. In the afternoon we came to a disturbed sea, where it had evidently been recently blowing : 87° in the shade. Spoke an English barque homeward bound. At night passed very close to another vessel. Neither of us were carrying side-lights, and the night was dark, but we showed them our bull's-eye, to which signal they responded by showing another. A night of calm with occasional squalls from every point of the compass.

October 10th.—A strong and squally S.W. monsoon

sprang up. We sailed close-hauled on the starboard tack. The vessel was very lively but not wet. At noon the wind freshened to a half-gale from the S.W., with heavy squalls at intervals. We sailed under close-reefed main-sail, fore-sail, and storm-jib. In the night it was blowing a moderate gale of wind in our teeth. The *Falcon* was livelier than ever; the way she jumped, first her head and then her stern into a sea, was a thing to experience. At midnight the vessel was labouring so heavily that we hove her to, for it was a shame to tax too much the endurance of the brave old boat.

October 11th.—At dawn the great seas looked most imposing, with the fiery sunrise lending a weird colour to them, as they charged on towards us. At eight a.m., as the wind was moderating, we proceeded on our voyage. We put the vessel on the port tack, for the wind was S. by W., and we had been driven considerably to the eastward of our course. At mid-day our position was lat. $4^{\circ} 58'$ N., long. $21^{\circ} 49'$ W. All hands were now well weary of this S.W. monsoon blowing in our teeth, with its heavy, confused seas and squalls.

October 12th.—Fine, sunny, but disagreeable day; for the wind, though still as a rule from the S.W. quarter, seems to come at times from everywhere and anywhere, hence a troublesome sea. There was a curious hazy appearance to-day to the S.E., which cheered us somewhat as indicative of change. We had now reached a locality between the S.W. monsoon and the S.E. trade, where these winds contend continually for the mastery. They certainly have ploughed up their battle-field with their rival artillery

into short, choppy furrows, very nasty for small vessels like ours that have to cross them.

At midday we were in lat. $3^{\circ} 56'$ N., long. $22^{\circ} 50'$ W.

October 13th.—A marvellous sunrise ; on the eastern horizon lay a bar of bright gold, with a mass of fiery red above, like a coast of golden sand lit by an intense light, and backed by mountains of half-molten iron. The wind blew fresh to-day from S. by W., to S. by E. At noon our position was lat. $1^{\circ} 47'$ N., long. $23^{\circ} 8'$ W. ; distance made in the twenty-four hours, 146 miles.

During the night, of a sudden, with a squall, the trade-wind burst down on us at last, then settled down strong and steady : so we rejoiced exceedingly.

October 14th.—A glorious morning, no cloud in the sky, and a fresh trade-wind. At seven a.m. we crossed the line. At midday we had reeled off a hundred and sixty miles on our course, and at lunch were glad over our last two bottles of Collares wine from Madeira, which we had reserved for our arrival at the equator. Our luck had changed as we entered the southern hemisphere, after thirteen days of calms, squalls, and head-winds.

Jerdein reported a most curious phenomenon in his morning watch. The sea about a mile from us became suddenly disturbed, boiling up violently, as from a subterranean spring. This lasted for about two minutes. He said he thought it would have been highly dangerous had we happened to be over the spot. Throughout the day we observed great patches of discoloured water, having exactly the appearance

of shoal water. These and similar phenomena are frequently observed in this part of the ocean. Often a ship reports that hereabouts she has experienced a violent shock, similar to that which is felt when a rock is struck. Sometimes a great rumbling is heard like that of a heavy chain running through the hawse-pipes, and the vessel quivers like a leaf in the wind. Another time in smooth water a vessel has been known to heel right over suddenly, as if she had run on a sand-bank, for this is a region full of most uncanny apparitions for the mariner—a sort of haunted corner of the sea.

Before this ocean had been as thoroughly sounded and surveyed as it is now, these phenomena were attributed to the presence of unmarked sand-banks and rocky shoals, and are thus put down as *vigias* in the old charts. But it must have astonished the mariner somewhat to find that he got no soundings with his deep-sea lead, immediately after experiencing one of these shocks! It is now known that there is no less depth than 2000 fathoms anywhere in this neighbourhood, and submarine earthquakes are acknowledged as the true cause of these convulsions. So frequent are these manifestations of suboceanic disturbance, that this is now termed “the volcanic region of the Atlantic.” Fearful indeed must be the forces that can transmit such violent action upwards through three miles of water.

This afternoon we noticed that the sea changed to a light green colour, and the thermometer suddenly fell six degrees. These, I believe, are also usual phenomena on this mysterious tract of ocean.

October 15th.—We sailed to-day through an enor-

mous fleet of Portuguese men-of-war (Nautilus), under full canvas. Pretty these little creatures (I don't suppose I can call them fish, and creature is a safe term) appeared, with their delicate pink fairy sails spread to the favouring wind. This day we logged 160 miles. Position at midday, lat. $3^{\circ} 15' S.$, long. $24^{\circ} 39' W.$

October 16th.—Day's run, 175 miles; lat. $5^{\circ} 45' S.$, long. $25^{\circ} 55' W.$ Spoke a full-rigged ship bound for the Cape of Good Hope.

October 17th.—We generally hold our own against the trading-vessels we come across, and on many occasions have shown some barque or ship a clean pair of heels; but this day we were ignominiously beaten, but by so beautiful a vessel that we forgive her. She was a clean, bright Yankee barque, the *Golden Cross*. Her sails were as well cut as a yacht's, and as snowy. By noon we had added another 169 miles to our score.

October 18th.—The wind was now so much to the E. of S.E., that we were enabled to hoist our spinnaker with advantage. A very hot day. The wind was lighter, so our day's work was only 141 miles.

October 19th.—Wind still lighter; day's work, 118 miles; passed a jackass-rigged craft.

October 20th.—Thermometer 90° in cabin, 125° on deck; wind light and variable; day's work, 89 miles.

October 21st.—A light breeze from S.E.; barometer fell a tenth. We observed three interesting phenomena this day. The first was a huge waterspout, which crossed our bows at about two miles' distance; the

second phenomenon was America ; the third a bottle of Collares wine.

I was at the tiller ; Arnaud was sadly contemplating a small whale, which was floundering about near us ; Arthur was, as was his wont, at the mast-head, looking out for passing vessels—this and fishing for flying-fish with a bull's-eye at night being his chief diversions on board. Suddenly the boy cried " Land right ahead, sir ! " I was incredulous, for I did not expect to sight the coast for many hours. According to Jerdein's calculations—he navigated during this part of the cruise—we ought now to have been some thirty-five miles off the land. He laid the blame afterwards on the chronometers ; but I am inclined to think that he made some error in his calculations, for they were good chronometers, and never played us such a trick on any other occasion.

On going aloft with the glasses I saw that the boy was right ; there was no mistake about it at all. There before us lay a long line of low sandy dunes, fringed with cocoanut-trees. I rather surprised Jerdein, who was sleeping below, when I touched him on the shoulder and remarked quietly, " Here is America."

It was a dreary coast—and so it is all the way from Bahia to Pernambuco, low and monotonous, but strange and of the tropics to one coming from the northern lands for the first time. A treble belt of striking colour clove the vast blue spread of sea and sky. First was a band of bright white, the foam of the perpetual breakers on the coast ; then a long strip of golden sand, and above, a broader green belt of waving cocoa-palms, dark against the pale blue sky.

The third phenomenon I spoke of was a bottle of Collares wine. Having had a good look at the American coast, our storekeeper took a dive below, and soon reappeared on deck with a smile and this same bottle. He was greeted with a shout of surprise. The existence of such a treasure on board had not been in the least suspected by the rest of us; but this wary member of the crew had secreted this last bottle of our Madeira cellar, in order to produce it on our first sighting the New World. It was formally uncorked, and with its assistance we saluted the Western Continent. We had made the land about 100 miles to the northward of Bahia.

October 22nd.—A hot sun and a light breeze. We slowly followed the coast, at a distance of about two miles from it. A line of sand fringed with cocoa-nuts, and—visible from the mast-head only—dense black masses of forest behind, unrolled themselves before us in monotonous panorama as we sailed by. We perceived no signs of human life on the shore, save here and there what appeared to be a negro hut.

At last we sighted the lighthouse of San Antonio, and the scenery changed; gently sloping hills came down to the shore, covered with all manner of tropical forest and garden, among which nestled the villas and palaces of the wealthy merchants of Bahia. A wonderful sight this brilliant tropical verdure to us fresh from the barren seas: a luxuriant growth pouring right down to the narrow merge of sand, where stretched the long line of graceful cocoanut-palms, casting dark shadows on the clear water. We rounded the point of San Antonio with its pic-

turesque fort, and sailed into the smooth waters of the beautiful bay of Bahia. At seven p.m. our chain once more rattled out through the hawse-pipe, and we came to an anchor off the city.

We were twenty-one days and seven hours out from San Vincente, a much shorter voyage than we had anticipated. The distance by the route we had taken is 2538 nautical miles.

As soon as we had stowed our canvas, we brought out from hidden places, white shirts, neckties, clothes, boots, and other articles of civilization,—for our sea costume was barbaric in the extreme,—and awaited the authorities.

Two boats soon came off ; first, the pratique boat. The doctor was satisfied with our hygiene and gave us permission to land, as far as his department was concerned. Then came off the steam-launch of the captain of the port. The officer informed us that we were anchored in a prohibited spot, and must move farther in.

And now for the first time we experienced that universal courtesy which so pleased us in all the authorities we had dealings with in Brazilian and indeed in all other South American ports.

As we were flying the blue ensign, man-of-war rights were granted to us ; the captain of the port gave us permission to anchor in the man-of-war ground, and to land with our boats at the naval landing-stage at the arsenal.

As the wind had now dropped, he very kindly towed us up to our anchorage with his launch, and offered to give us every assistance in his power. The above privileges are of the greatest value in a

Brazilian port, where the custom regulations for merchant-vessels are so strict. One cannot go off or on one's vessel, if she be a merchantman, after eight p.m., without a special permit from the custom-house. Now, we had the privilege of rowing to and fro at any hour; we could leave our boat alone and in safety at the arsenal steps. All we had to do when coming off late at night was to call the sentry at the arsenal gates to open them for us, telling him the name of our vessel. Again, an insolent negro guard is put on board every merchantman by the custom-house. There he has to be fed, lodged, bribed, and made much of generally, during the vessel's stay in the port—a horrible nuisance which we were also excused, by virtue of our blue ensign.

Ours was a nice snug anchorage in four fathoms, under the antique fortress of Fort la Mar, a round, grey mass built on a rocky islet. We were close to the beach and could see all the busy life of the Praya from our decks.

A picturesque place is Bahia as viewed from the sea. First along the shore is the Citade Baxa, or lower town, the more ancient portion of the city. Here are the lofty stone houses of the old colonists, with antique churches of massive and quaint architecture. For Bahia is one of the most antique cities of South America. It was founded in 1511, and is now the second city of Brazil.

The lower city is built on a narrow strip of land along the water, at the foot of a steep, black cliff some 240 feet high. One great street stretches along the beach, known as the Praya—it is four miles long, with a tramway running down its length. This Praya

presents a very animated appearance. For here are the huge stores, magazines, and warehouses, and along the quays are moored the native craft, the queerest imaginable, with their gaudy paint, lofty sterns, strange rig, and semi-nude negro crews. Here are to be seen the giant blacks with glistening ebon skin, rolling down the bales of cotton, coffee, and sugar, and other produce of this rich province. At first sight, this is evidently one of the busy marts of the world. Along the front of the Praya is a fruit, vegetable, and odds-and-ends market, where at their stalls sit the fattest and most voluble of negresses, with the gaudiest and most voluminous of turbans on their heads, and a rather liberal display of their large charms.

A hot place is this Praya, and somewhat inodorous at times, for the fresh breezes are kept off by the steep cliff. Here the English sailor, too, rolls about red and sweating, drinking the vilest of new white rum, and eating half-rotten fruit under the tropic sun, till of a sudden a sickness and a dizziness comes upon him, and in a terribly short time he falls, another victim of the invisible fiend Yellow Jack.

Behind this Praya, as I said, rises a cliff, but not a smooth, bare cliff, but rugged, with quaint houses let into it, and rich vegetation filling each crevice. Most striking is the contrast between the two. For the houses are antique with gloomy arches, dingy, many of them, as if they had stood through centuries of London smoke, whereas the vegetation—who can describe its freshness, its marvellous exuberance of youth! its fairy-like beauty! Graceful palms, luscious-leaved bananas, wonderful creepers of rainbow colours, overflow the cliff, forming a luxuriant curtain of

tropical verdure, flower and fruit, depending from the upper to the lower city.

On the summit of this cliff is a plain on which is built the Citade Alta, or upper city, with its crowded narrow streets (nearly each with its tramway line), its broad squares, and the cathedral.

On either side of the town, on the hill-sides overlooking the bay, are the most beautiful suburbs imaginable, with palatial villas nestling in gardens of such colour and aroma as intoxicate the senses. No wonder if the Brazilian is voluptuous and lazy, living as he does in such a Paradise as this.

A steep road winds from the Praya to the upper city, but there is also another means of ascent prepared for an indolent population that will not walk ten yards if such exertion can be avoided. From the sea an imposing-looking tower is observable, built from the lower town to the upper, along the cliff-side, and terminating in a broad platform on the summit. This is the elevator, or *parafusa* as it is here called, being merely one of our now common hydraulic hotel-lifts on a large scale. A smart Yankee hit upon this speculation, and it has proved successful. Any invention that can save a Bahian a ten-minutes walk must pay well. The network of tramways in every Brazilian city is almost incredible; even small villages inland, like S. Amaro, have their tramcars; and fine dividends the directors show too.

There is in Bahia another means of locomotion which I have never seen elsewhere. Nothing less than the good old-fashioned sedan chair of Queen Anne's day, carried by two stout negroes. The model is exactly that of the queer box in which our

great grandmothers were wont to be carried to rout and ball. Such is Bahia, a city of about 230,000 inhabitants, of whom nearly three-quarters are mulattoes, native negroes, and Africans, the remainder Brazilians, Portuguese, and foreigners. On the morning after our arrival we prepared to go on shore to stretch our legs after our long confinement.

I can thoroughly understand the exuberant spirits of the Jack-ashore that seem such madness to the landsman. I am sure we *Falcons* felt something of the kind tingling in our veins as we landed at Bahia, clean shaved, polished up, clothed, with the novelty of streets and human faces around. Even before we landed we gambled as to who should treat the rest of the crew to the luxury of bottled beer on shore. Two boats moving off to us gave occasion for the above bet. A white man steered each boat; each white man wore a broad straw hat and white clothes, and each urged on his negro crew to greater exertions. It was an exciting race, and we were not only the judges of it, but also the goal and prize, for these were the boats of two rival ship-chandlers who had observed us from afar off. Some of us backed Port-light, others selected Yellow-face—for thus we termed the rivals in the excitement of the race, the difference of complexion of the two coxswains being the sole way of distinguishing the boats. Port-light was alongside first—won in a canter—so we surrendered to him without parley, and invited him on board, while we drew out a list of our wants. The yellow-faced Portuguese gentleman retired in discomfiture.

Port-light—so called by us on account of his fresher English complexion, not of any special suspicious

rubicundity—sat in our cabin and told us all the news. He told us that Brazilians on shore were asking whether “all the English milords are going mad, that they have taken to travelling about in these cockle-shells?” for the *Red Gauntlet* put in here lately, and she, though much larger than the *Falcon*, is, after all, a not very big vessel.

There was, anyhow, one “Milord Ingles” in this port whose yacht cannot be called a cockleshell. On entering the bay we had observed a fine vessel flying the white ensign, and now Mr. Wilson informed us she was the *Wanderer*, Mr. Lambert’s noble schooner, that I had last seen fitting out at Southampton. I little expected to meet her next out here.

So here we were at last on shore in South America, with plenty to see and wonder at. I am afraid the first thing we did was to enter Freitas and Wilson’s store, and have dealings with sundry bottles with triangular red hieroglyphics on them. And now that I am on the subject, let me strongly recommend this firm of ship-chandlers to any yachts that may come into Bahia. I shall not soon forget the courtesy and kindness they showed us.

A ship-chandler’s store in a foreign port offers no small opportunity for the study of character, for it is the loafing-place of the merchant captains. Here they sit, drink, and gossip through half the tropic day. Quite at home, sitting astride his chair, is the Yankee skipper of the smart schooner, with broad Panama hat and long cigar. That bluff gentleman, who sports a white helmet, is the captain of the fine English barque that came in yesterday. The jovial German in the straw hat is the master of the

ship *Fräulein* from Hamburg. Somewhat savouring of shop is their talk as a rule. Freights are discussed ; the best longitude to cross the equator in ; and the law is laid down with a thump of a horny hand on the counter. Then crews are disparagingly overhauled, somewhat in the manner of women talking over the much vexed subject of domestic servants.

We were introduced to an old American skipper with a snowy goatee, who hailed from Virginia, a tough old sea-dog of the Spanish Main and the Southern Seas. He had been a whaler in the great South Pacific, and was full of strange yarns of islands where one white lives alone—a king of savages. He was a walking pilot directory, and gave us a long string of directions as to where we should go and what we should do. Said he, “I guess you should go to the Solomons ; they *are* fine. If you dew, don’t land at such or such an island, for they air a queer people thar ; they’d treat you just as you would a fat bullock as walked on board your vessel. No ! you visit the little bit of an island just south of that, so-and-so isle. Now ! you mind me ; keep the big hut in the east bay in one with a tall palm you’ll see all by itself on a hill, east by south, and steer bold in and bring up in four fathoms, two cables off the shore. There you land ; tell the people you want the white man—say Jake. They’ll know then that you’ve smelt him out, and they’ll fetch him for you ; for he is shy, is Jake. Rather queer ; can’t abear a white man ; ain’t accustomed to him. When you see him, say you know me, and he’ll show you round that thar island, I bet. You’ll have high old times. Shouldn’t wonder as you’ll stay there altogether,

you'll like it so much. I guess you'll take half-a-dozen wives each and fix ; and they air fine women, young men. For that there island is a paradise ; what with the fruit and the flowers and—the women ; whitish, too, whiter than I am, with long black hair. Why, Lord ! see Jake sitting under his palm-tree smoking all day, while his wives do all the work there is to do—do it willingly too, singing all the time, not like them darned sailors we were talking of just now."

We start for an expedition to the upper town. We take our tickets for the elevator, and enter a half-dark sort of wild-beast cage, where we sit down beside several of the gorgeous fat negresses, for the production of which Bahia is celebrated, and a few dark gentlemen smoking huge Bahia cigars. A strong and not delectable aroma pervades the cage, which strikes me as being somehow familiar, and seems in some strange way to call up reminiscences of my innocent childhood long ago. I have it—it is castor oil ! The machinery of the elevator is evidently lubricated with this horror of my youth. The pretty tree from whose berries this useful drug is extracted grows in great profusion in Brazil ; and this oil is here the cheapest of all lubricators, and is therefore extensively used for this purpose.

At last our smooth, well-castor-oiled journey is completed, and the cage stops suddenly. We effect our exit and find ourselves on a platform on the summit of the cliff, an extensive square open on the sea side, and surrounded by lofty hotels and houses on the other three sides. We pause awhile by the railing on the edge of the precipice to admire the marvellous

scene that stretches before us. The cliff with its curtain of tropic verdure falls perpendicularly from our feet. Below are the roof-tops, the narrow streets of the lower town, the busy Praya, the shipping; and then beyond, a great, blue inland sea, with islands of waving palms and dense mangoes scattered over it, a sea indented with many a beautiful sandy bay, and with many a forest-clad promontory jutting out, noisy with the cry of parrots, and bright with many jewel-winged birds. On the further side stretch ranges of great purple mountains, scarce visible even in this clear air, for the distance of them.

And many a great river is seen pouring in from the inner lands, and many towns and picturesque whaling villages are scattered here and there round the wonderful coast, which is one ever-changing tropic garden. For this is the world-renowned Reconcava of Bahia, surely one of the wonders of the world. A bay seven miles broad at its mouth, then opening out into this land-locked sea of more than one hundred miles in circumference, where all the fleets of the world could find safe anchorage, free from any danger, and opening out with its many tributary rivers one of the richest regions of Brazil, that wonderful country of tropical prodigality—a gulf which seems as if formed by nature to be the emporium of the universe. All these shores are famous for the production of tobacco; for Bahia is the great tobacco port of Brazil, just as Rio Janeiro is the coffee, and Pernambuco the sugar port.

Interesting it is for a stranger from the old world to stroll for the first time through the Citade Alta of Bahia; the streets are narrow, some of the houses are

of antique architecture, built of solid stone, the gloomy mansions of the old merchant-princes of the land. The more modern are plastered, gaudily painted, pseudo-classic and Byzantine gingerbread—which, however, harmonize well with the brilliant air and vegetation. Most of the buildings here are five stories high, thus utterly differing from the *patio'd*, one-storied, flat-roofed houses in the cities of the Spanish people to the south.

A busy life, too, throngs these narrow streets, tramways rattle down the principal thoroughfares, a mongrel crowd of black and white and yellow jostles and jabbers. Towards evening, it is the custom for the women to come out on the balconies to enjoy the fresh breeze that then springs up. Up and down a long street, at every balcony, up to the fifth story, they hang over—mulatto and negro belles, in orange, green, white, scarlet, every gaudy colour, fanning, flirting, laughing, chattering vigorously. Above the shrill scream of the tram-whistle rises their shriller Babel; a bewildering pandemonium of extreme light and sound and colour and motion, mellowed slightly as a rule by an all-pervading, mysterious, heavy odour.

There is not in Brazil that prejudice of colour which distinguishes our own ex-slave colonies. The negro here is on an equality with the white as soon as he becomes a free man, not only in the eyes of the law but of society.

A very easy time some of these darkies seem to have here, enjoying life amazingly. Many of them have every outward appearance of prosperity, but of course we must remember that a negro will spend his

all on finery. In the cafés is to be seen the coloured swell, a self-satisfied, pompous giant, with stove-pipe hat, glossy and new, black coat and trousers, the smallest patent leather boots he can manage to squeeze his clumsy feet into, white waistcoat, half an acre of snowy shirt-front, huge studs, and a watch riding to a fathom of gold cable. Not to be humbugged by the waiter is our gentleman either. If there be any delay in the bringing of his absinthe, he will very demonstratively hurry up the menial. Truly he is a man and a brother, a very brother of brothers, only just acknowledged as such, and so expecting to be treated as a sort of prodigal returned to the human family, and ready to enjoy his fatted calf.

Now that we have found our way into a café, let us have a dip into the local papers. The slave question is evidently the topic of the day, and all the illustrated papers have rather feeble, lithographed caricatures on the subject. Slavery is doomed in Brazil. The present generation of slaves will be the last: all children born of slave mothers since 1871 are freed after serving an apprenticeship of twenty-one years. This method of gradual emancipation is not enough for the abolitionist party. It is averred that the clauses of the Act of Congress are not properly observed, and never can be; that it is easy to falsify a child's age; that in the remote districts no one pays any attention to the Act.

Bahia is a great slave province, an enormous number of freed blacks also occupy the country, and the way in which they enjoy their new liberty is not encouraging to the well-wishers of the empire.

The African in Brazil refuses to work at all, as

soon as he becomes a freeman ; there is no pinching necessity to compel him in such a land as this. He retires to the forests, builds him a hut of palm-leaves, and lives contentedly, in a state of barbarism, on manioc and bananas, for under this benignant climate a sufficiency wherewith to live like an animal is easily obtained in return for a very small modicum of labour.

There are communities of runaway slaves in the dense forests, who live in this way, herding together for protection against their hunters. They generally successfully resist the troops that are sent against them, but it is said are peaceable enough if left unmolested. The good old plantation days are doomed in this last stronghold of the peculiar institution, and how and where to procure coolie labour is the problem of the day for the statesmen of Brazil.

On the morrow Arnaud and myself took tram to a certain ancient convent, whose nuns are famous for their skill in the manufacture of feather flowers. All manner of precautions are taken to keep the male sex from intruding on these gentle recluses. We were not admitted within the precincts at all, but had to stand outside a stoutly-grated window, and hold parley through it with the caged inmates. Indeed, one grating was not deemed a sufficient barrier between them and the outer world. The wall was about seven feet thick, and there was a double grating in the recess, one at each side, so that a partition seven feet deep was between us—an unnecessary precaution, a biting sarcasm, I should imagine, to the poor nuns, for in carnal attractions they were sadly, hopelessly deficient. They passed the flowers through the

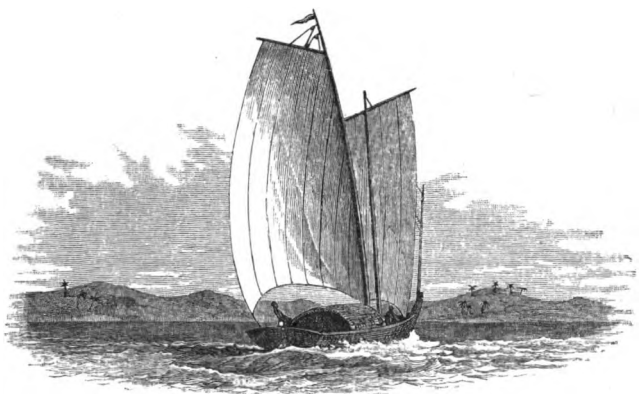
gratings to us in long-handed ladles. Very beautiful some of these flowers were, of metallic-lustred, rainbow-hued feathers of humming-bird and parrot. Very keen at a bargain were the ladies; they jabbered and wrangled and pushed each other aside in the excitement of their rivalry. It was an unpleasing sight, so we purchased a few flowers and departed.

CHAPTER V.

DURING our stay in this port we organized several pleasant expeditions up country ; but to describe all these would swell this work to a size far greater than I mean to trouble my readers with. I should like to tell you of the pretty village of Rio Vermilio, where the fresh trade-wind blows full on the shore, driving the great Atlantic seas till they break grandly on the rocky beach, scattering showers of spray over the bending cocoanut-palms, whose leaves glisten like diamonds with the salt crystals.

I should like to narrate, too, a five-days trip of Arnaud and myself, when we crossed the bay, steamed up a river through jungle and forest, then progressed higher still in a negro dug-out to the little town of St. Amaro ; how on the muddy banks the pink crayfish gambolled ; and how the branches of the mangroves were thick with oysters hanging like fruit ; and how from St. Amaro we rode across fifty miles of roadless country to Faira St. Anna, now by the palatial mansion of some rich sugar-planter, surrounded by its slave village and sloping hills of waving cane, and now through virgin forest, where the tall palms rose high above the lesser growth of

trees, linked by intricate creepers, lianas, and convulvi. I should like to linger over the description of the wonderfully-plumaged birds—parrot, humming-bird, canary, and a hundred others; of the fruits growing wild and in profusion in the woods—pine-apples, bananas, mango, jachas, bread-fruit, and the rest. I should like to tell you of the people we met, the half-naked slaves, standing outside their huts, with their curious little, pot-bellied, wholly-naked children ;



A BAHIAN TRADER.

of the proud planter, with poncho and massive silver spurs, galloping across his lands : how we journeyed on from Faira St. Anna to Cachoeira by train through plantations of sago and coffee, and thence by steamer again down a broad river to the Reconcava. But all this would fill a volume by itself.

There are some quaint features of the Brazilian water-scape, however, that I must dwell upon—the native craft. Nothing is more curious in the way of ship-

building than the trading-vessel that brings the produce of the interior down the rivers to Bahia. Imagine a huge, clumsy, barge-like construction, with a gigantic excrescence of a poop rising aft, something like that of a man-of-war of Henry the Eighth's reign. One slight, very lofty mast is stepped well forward, which supports a large main-sail. This mast is not stayed, and bends nearly double when the wind is fresh, but seldom breaks. Before this mast another shorter one is stepped, on which a square sail is set, from which a bowline is carried to a perpendicular bowsprit. It is a quaint rig, but serviceable, and these boats are exceedingly handy.

But the Brazilian catamaran is a still more wonderful specimen of naval construction. It is a mere raft of rough logs, with one slight mast and a triangular sail; a wooden plank is dropped through the middle of it, when going to windward, as a centre board; a little platform is built on the deck, on which the stock of cassava flour and other necessities for the crew are kept dry, for every sea of course washes over the rest of the strange little vessel. It is steered with an oar. Everything about a catamaran is of the roughest and clumsiest description. It looks as impossible a thing to go to sea in as a wash-tub would, and yet you will see these rafts, with their two or three naked negroes, far out of sight of land on the broad Atlantic. In this absurdly frail-looking craft voyages of many hundreds of miles are undertaken. It sails with amazing speed, goes well to windward, can be safely beached through a heavy surf, and is in fact a very paradox of boats.

A very pleasant time we spent at Bahia. We were

made members of the English club, and received almost too much hospitality at the hands of our jovial fellow-countrymen who are settled here.

Having been now a fortnight in port, we once more prepared for sea. We refilled our rum barrel with white rum, laid in a stock of pine-apples, yams, and other vegetables; and on the 6th of November weighed our anchor and sailed out of the Reconcava. Salvoes of crackers and rockets, and the tolling of manifold bells from all parts of the city, seemed to be bidding us a farewell as we dropped slowly down the smooth bay.

In Bahia every day of the year seems to be a *fiesta*, and dedicated to some saint or other; keeping a saint's day here implies a terrible waste of fireworks, and clanging of church bells. All day long, for they do not even await the shades of night, the rockets ascend. There is no place in the world like Bahia for these amusements. Far out to sea you know when you are approaching this port by the sound and the blaze of the worship of its inhabitants. It is called Bahia dos Todos os Santos—the bay of All Saints—of all of them with a vengeance. It is the most religious and most vicious city of religious and vicious Brazil.

The eve of our departure there stood forth an omen in the sky, which, said the sailors on shore, is but rarely seen, and only when some terrible hurricane is imminent. Inside the thin crescent of the moon was one solitary, bright star, the only one in the heavens. It was a curious appearance; but it seemed to me not likely to be connected with terrestrial storm.

Our next port was to be Rio de Janeiro, the beautiful capital of this empire. We had fresh winds

from the E. to N.E. and so completed the voyage in four days and twenty hours. We carried our spinaker and gaff-topsail nearly all the time. At 5.30 p.m., the 6th of November, we were outside the Reconcava, off Point San Antonio. By midday, the 7th of November, we had logged 116 miles; the 8th of November we made 174 miles; the 9th of November 152 miles; the 10th of November 167 miles; the 11th of November 164 miles. It was glorious, sunny weather, and bracing and pleasant was the fresh Atlantic breeze, after the rather debilitating climate of Bahia.

The second night out would have seemed to some pilot of old as full of alarming portents. The mariner at times does encounter such nights, weird and awe-inspiring, that fill his breast with vague, superstitious terror as he keeps his midnight watches. It was an exceedingly dark night and still; the long ocean swell rolled on smoothly, only at rare intervals breaking into phosphorescent spray. The air was hot and stifling as before storm. The clouds that passed overhead were utterly black and assumed fantastic shapes. Arnaud recognized Gambetta's head, and a fiend riding across the heavens on a black horse, in the slowly-floating masses of vapour. It seemed at times as if the whole sky was full of uneasy spirits, fixing up everything ready for a good old hurricane. The moon only appeared at intervals through rifts in the cloud. It was surrounded by a beautiful triple halo of green, yellow, and pink circles. In the middle watch the sky cleared somewhat, and Arnaud and myself became the amazed spectators of several most remarkable phenomena, meteoric or electric—I can-

not be certain which. We saw first in the midst of a cloud an appearance like that of a great shell bursting. It illuminated the whole cloud and the sea for a moment, and its explosion was accompanied with a dull thud. Again we observed several meteors that sailed across the sky like rockets, with bright tails of fire, and then burst. A mysterious night this on the warm tropic sea, and ominous of tempest, which, however, did not overtake us.

On the fourth night out, we kept a sharp look-out for Cape Frio, in whose neighbourhood we knew ourselves to be. There is a lighthouse on this point with a powerful light ; we made it out about two a.m. As we neared the cape the thermometer fell rapidly, till we really felt quite cold for the first time since we had left England. This sudden fall of the temperature is always experienced near Cape Frio, hence its name, the Cold Cape. I believe the phenomenon is attributed to the presence of some oceanic current of cold water which comes to the surface hereabouts. This cape is also famous for the furious squalls that sweep down from it seawards.

When daylight came we discerned land once more on the starboard bow—a distant range of blue mountains, which we recognized from their sharp spire-like peaks to be the Organ Mountains, which lie to the back of the Bay of Rio. On approaching the entrance of the gulf the water shallowed and became light-green in colour ; the sea, as is not uncommon on this bar, was coming in in heavy breaking rollers, which would have proved dangerous to many a yacht of the *Falcon's* tonnage, that I know of. We heard that a heavy pampero had been blowing for

three or four days to the south of Rio, hence the exceptionally disturbed condition of the sea when we arrived.

Who can describe the grandeur of the gates of the Bay of Rio, and the wonderful beauty of the bay itself? I thought nothing could be so beautiful as the Reconcava of Bahia; and, lo! here is a gulf that transcends all one's wildest dreams of the magnificence of tropical scenery. Not here are the gently sloping hills of the Reconcava. The entrance of this bay is between stupendous and fantastically-serrated mountains. Steep and forbidding domes of granite fall sheer into the boiling surf. The aspect of this coast from the sea is grand and terrible in the extreme; but once within the bay, all changes. One moment we were running before a cool, strong breeze, rolling heavily in the steep seas, the next moment we had passed between two walls of rock—we had entered the inland sea. Immediately the water fell smooth as glass—the wind died away, and the bracing sea-breeze was changed for the sultry atmosphere of the tropic harbour. We came to an anchor inside the island and fortress of Villegagnon.

What a scene was there round us, what a variety of beautiful form and colour! To give any adequate description of this bay is quite impossible. It is as extensive as the Reconcava of Bahia, and is studded with the most beautiful islands, whose beaches are lined with cocoanuts and stately palms. All round the bay rise the stupendous mountains; some covered with gorgeous-coloured forests, others of barren crags and lowering precipice. And there stretching far along the shore is the empire-city, Rio Janeiro—

the queen of South America, lying at the foot of an amphitheatre of great mountains. There is the huge granite crag of the Sugar-loaf, seeming ready to fall down on the suburbs at any moment. There is the Gavia, a square-headed mass of rock with a flat top like Table Mountain; there the Tajuca and the forest-covered Cocovado, with its springs of sweet water. And all round the inland sea are little sheltered bays, the most beautiful imaginable, with beaches of silver-sand, and wonderful tropical forests covering the mountain sides, where the guava and mango grow in wild profusion, and there are islands in these bays too, like little gardens of Eden.

We came to an anchor at 1.30 p.m., November 11th, and went on shore as soon as we had received pratique. At Penheiro and Tront's, our ship-chandlers, we learnt all the news of the port, and found that our old friend the *Wanderer* yacht was here.

Our first stroll through the city gave us a very favourable impression of it; we were evidently in a civilized and luxurious capital, where we could recreate and relax very pleasantly for a few days.

Rio Janeiro is a fine city of about 500,000 inhabitants, and is thus much larger than Bahia; it is also much "whiter" than Bahia; the negroes here are not in so overwhelming a majority as in the former city.

Tramways of course are everywhere; gas and tramways are the specialties of Rio; no town in the world is so well lit. Far beyond the city, up to the mountain-tops, through country lanes, are the tram-metals laid and the lamps planted. Far out to sea is the city visible at night by the great glare of it.

Five minutes after landing, instinct led us to the

establishment of Jimmy Graham, the well-known Yankee barman. A smart man is Graham ; as you enter his place the first thing in the morning, uncertain as to what your eye-opener shall be, do not, if you be a wise man, tax your brains on the subject, Jimmy knows what will fix you up better than you do ; simply say,—

“Graham, I want you to prescribe for me.”

“Take a seat,” he will reply. He will look at your face for a moment or so with his shrewd eye, then a gleam of intelligence will flit over his expressive face. He has diagnosed your case.

“Wall, I guess I can fix you up what you want,” and forthwith he will arrange for you some iced delectable poison, long or short as the case may be, which you find will exactly suit your disease and make a new man of you. But if you are that rare bird a wise man, you will forswear strong drinks in this climate, and patronize Jimmy only for the prawn curries he knows how to prepare, and the delicate rock oysters from the bay.

This first evening we went up to dine at the Hotel Vista Allegre, which is out of the close city, on the healthy hill-side. Thither we travelled partly by train and partly up a very steep, inclined plane in a car which is hoisted by a chain, just like the railway from Lyons to the Croix Rousse.

It was now night, and the aspect of the city and the bay from the elevation at which we were, was very strange and beautiful. Steep ravines and hill-sides sloped from our feet to the city, mountains were around us, and all were lit by myriads of gas-jets. The crags were covered with the rich vegetation of

the tropics. Tall palms towered above the houses. A most fairy-like view, a wonderful contrast of city-streets and nature at her grandest.

Rio is a lively town enough after dull Bahia, for here we have theatres, an opera-house, an alcazar, concert-gardens like those of Paris, and other dissipations. The Rua Ovidor is the Bond Street of Rio. Carriages are prohibited from traversing it after dark ; for it is then that the Brazilian ladies promenade this narrow thoroughfare to do their shopping. Ten p.m. is the fashionable hour.

The street-sights of this city are quaint enough, some of them. The niggers live a very out-of-door life, and one thus acquires a very fair insight into the habits of their private life, or rather what would be the private life in the case of a white man. The negro barber carries on his profession in the middle of the street ; when a customer comes, he simply sets him down on the pavement, if no other seat be at hand, and lathers his chin and shaves away, undisturbed by the crowd of little niggers that generally admiringly surround the artist.

Here sitting in a long string on the kerb-stone of a crowded street are negro slaves weaving straw hats ; listen to them ; that barbaric tongue cannot be Portuguese ; no, it is an African dialect. For these are not creoles of Brazil like most of the slaves here, but Africans, men who have once known freedom.

I had noticed that one of these half-naked hat-weavers was always treated with great respect by his fellows. He was a giant in size and had evidently been a man of uncommon strength, but he was now of great age, his back was bent, and his curly wool

was white as snow. I was informed that he had once been one of the greatest kings of Africa, and that all Africans from his part of that continent, even over here in America, after years of slavery, observe the same form of etiquette when approaching him as they perforce did in the old times, when he was every inch a king, and the life and death of his subjects were in his hands. Barbarous indeed these savage courtiers must be thus to still revere their prince and be loyal to him, knowing well that there is not the slightest chance of his ever again recovering his freedom and his kingdom, and being in a position to reward them for their fidelity. For it is not only by mere courtesy that they show their devotion, it is customary for them to quarrel among themselves as to who shall complete the aged sovereign's daily hat-weaving task, when their younger and nimbler fingers have completed their own. You can observe this amiable squabble among the poor fellows every afternoon, the old king, sitting the while blinking sleepily, taking no interest in the proceedings, apathetic beneath the burdens of his many years, and now, I should imagine, hardly remembering and regretting those days when—

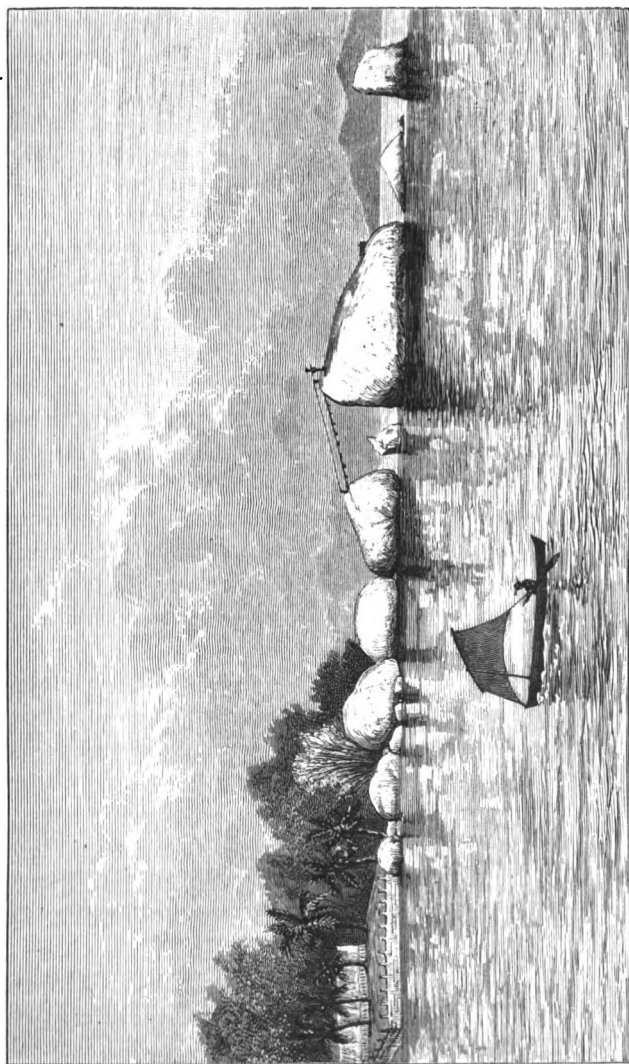
“ At furious speed he rode
Along the Niger's bank.”

Two days after our arrival at Rio, we got up anchor and sailed up the bay to the island of Paqueta, a distance of about ten miles. This is a pretty little, wooded, hilly island, with a population of about 1700. A friend of Jerdein, an ex-royal-mail officer, and now superintendent of that company in Brazil, was living

here with his family, so we came to an anchor off his house, and remained there until we sailed for the River Plate. A beautiful spot it was, nestling among the stately palms and bamboos, tamarinds and almonds. And very pleasant it was for us after our semi-savage life to see once more in Mr. May's hospitable home the faces of English ladies and English children.

A lovely little corner of earth to pass a lazy time in is this islet of Paqueta. Here we are, for instance, in the evening sitting in Mr. May's verandah, puffing at our post-prandial cigars. The too short tropic dusk has passed, and it is night ; all round us is the tropic garden of rare fruits and palms and creepers. The garden terminates on a sandy beach, on which break, with gentle splashes, the small waves of the sheltered bay ; along the sand is a fringe of cocoanut-trees, waving their great leaves gently in the evening breeze. A promontory of round boulders projects, a dark mass, into the water gleaming in silver arrows under the moon. Beyond the rocky islets and palmed promontories, across the broad bay is seen, looming dark against the sky, the opposite coast, with the mountains of the interior still further back, vague and misty.

The faint lights of the charcoal-burners' fires are seen here and there on the far-off hill-sides, where the virgin forests are ; and to return once more to the foreground, there within a stone's throw rides the stately old *Falcon* at anchor. Now add to this the still, warm night-air, heavy with the odour of flowers and fruits and spices, the flight of bats, the perpetual shrill cries of cicadas, the sad splash of the waves on



Paqueta.

[Vol. I., page 80.]

the rocks, and you have the very surroundings for an indolent man who loves to ponder silently over his cigar and coffee, or rather not even to ponder at all, but sink into that *rêverie qui ne pense à rien*, his mind intoxicated with the beauty of all that fervid yet lazy nature around him.

But after all there are few lotos-eaters at Paqueta. Certain perspiring black savages, with a rag round the waist as their sole clothing, here pass anything but a life of *dolce far niente*. Above the cry of cicada, and the moaning of sea, and the rustling of palm-leaves, all through the long night, from the time that the sun sinks into the fiery crimson clouds that crown the Organ Mountains to when he rises again from the Atlantic—you can hear a strange and melancholy song rising in wild bursts on the night-air; a barbaric, monotonous and sad chorus, such as Israelite bondsmen might have sung long ago in Egypt. And this too is a chorus of bondsmen, of African slaves. For there are lime-works on Paqueta Island, and by night and day, unceasingly, the naked blacks toil on in batches. The night-watchers are obliged to sing this chorus at intervals, so that their master in his bed, if he chance to awake, may know that they are toiling and watching, and not falling to sleep with weariness.

This lime is made from the shells of the oysters that so thickly cover every rock in the Gulf of Rio. About Paqueta can be seen daily a regular squadron of quaint native craft, manned by naked slaves, dredging for the bivalves.

The process is a very primitive one, involving a great deal of labour and very little proportionate

results. The slave has a long bamboo with a small cradle fitted to one end ; this he scrapes along the rocky bottom, raising each time only a handful or so of shells, I should imagine.

I will not inflict on my readers a description of the lions of Rio and its neighbourhood, which of course we *did* : and what city on earth has such marvellous scenery in its immediate neighbourhood? Why, even in the narrow streets of the city itself you come suddenly on the most lovely little oases of tropic vegetation. Here, for instance, is a gloomy and ugly old mansion in a squalid lane. It has some pretensions to architecture, and it is the palace of some merchant-prince, maybe, but it is as dingy and uninteresting-looking as are the houses near Fitzroy Square. You are passing it, when suddenly the portal of it is opened, and there is revealed a glimpse of Paradise itself. Under that dark door as a frame is seen a bit of bright azure sky above, and below, a garden ; but what a garden, what colour, what form ! among the dazzling creepers and bushes, stone fauns and nymphs disport themselves, and fountains splash on cool marble and tessellated pavements. And down the great garden is a drive through an avenue of immense palms, smooth and straight as columns, with their leaves joining overhead like the aisle of a cathedral of giants. It is a glimpse into fairyland ; then the portal closes, and we might almost be in dingy London, save for the sky above and the niggers around.

So pleasant was found our stay here that it was not till forty days had passed unnoticed by, that we sailed from Rio. We came in on November 11th

and left on December 21st. It was the midsummer here south of the line, but the heat on the Brazilian coast is rarely oppressive. Our thermometer in the cabin only once, as far as I remember, registered more than 95°. We found lots to do. Sometimes in the city, sometimes making pleasant excursions into the interior, sometimes organizing cruises and picnics with the *Falcon* in the bay, and, best of all to my mind, sailing about in the dinghy among the beautiful islands near Paqueta. Those little exploring expeditions were most delightful. Often I wished that some of my friends in the Temple could have been suddenly transported out of dingy Fleet Street and its November fogs and drizzle to join us in some of them. There is a little archipelago of islands near Paqueta, all beautiful ; some large, with pleasant villages of peaceable mulatto folk ; others uninhabited, but overflowing with a glorious vegetation ; others bare, mere boulders rising from the clear water with, maybe, a solitary cactus growing on the summit. Nowhere on earth is there an inland water so adapted for a cruise in a small boat. One could travel on for months, and anchor each night off some new picturesque island, or in some new bay, so extensive is this great winding gulf.

Here is the log of one of these little cruises :—One glorious morning I put the mast and sail in the dinghy, provisioned her with a keg of water, a bottle of wine, bread, oranges, pipe, tobacco, matches, and sketching materials, and started for a solitary sail. First I circumnavigated Paqueta, keeping close to the shore, where the palms overhang the water, steering among great boulders. These boulders that rise out

of the Gulf of Rio are of interest to the geologist ; they are smoothly rounded, by the action of water, into a dome shape, and nearly all of them are split down the middle as by a wedge, so that they present the appearance of so many episcopal mitres. Then passing several islets, I reached one—an uninhabited little paradise which I named Cocoanut Island, from the multitude of those graceful trees that lined its shores—and beached the dinghy in a little sandy cove. If that island could be transported as it is to Kew Gardens, it would be one of the sights of Europe. It was hilly, and about a mile or rather more in circumference, and covered with a dense vegetation. Mangoes and tamarinds, and the most gorgeous flowers grew on its slopes, all bound together by intricate network of lianas and purple-flowered convolvuli. Brilliant-plumaged humming-birds, and rainbow-hued butterflies seemed to be the sole inhabitants. From the summit of the islet one looked over the broad many-islanded bay and the far mountains, glowing under the blue tropic vault. In order to acquire an appetite for my picnic, I treated myself to a plentiful feast of oysters. All the rocks were covered with these up to high-water mark ; small and delicate they were too ; so I waded about in the tepid water, cutting them off in clusters with my knife. Then came lunch, for which the mangoes on the island provided a dessert. Then off again to explore further islets, all uninhabited, till I felt like a sort of Robinson Crusoe of half-a-dozen isles instead of one ; and the sun was low and it was time to beat back against the fresh sea-breeze to where the *Falcon* lay at anchor by the stately row of palms.

One of the things to be *done* by the visitor to Rio is Petropolis, a model highland village founded by the Emperor of the Brazils, and in the midst of which he has built to himself a summer pleasure-palace. Thither one fine morning we proceeded, and a pleasant journey it was. First, a steamer took us across the bay to a point where a train awaited us. After but a short voyage on the line, we again changed our mode of conveyance, and entered one of the six coaches that were intended to carry the passengers across the mountains to the imperial village. In single file they slowly ascended the pass—a fine road in sharp zigzags, reminding one of “*Les Échelles*” of the Mont Cenis—but the view around was somewhat different ; not the grey crags and the snows and sombre pines of the Alps on this tropical mountain-pass. On either side of us were palms, tree-ferns, lianas, and all manner of unknown plants and flowers, with colours such as no orthodox plants should have, stolen from the minerals. Great leaves of burnished copper strewed the ground, and the green, and silvers, and yellows, and reds of the twining creepers and flowers were as of molten and incandescent metals. The parrots, humming-birds butterflies, and beetles, gaudy-hued as they were, were not more so than this glorious vegetation they inhabited. From the summit of the pass the view was grand in the extreme. A vast expanse of country lay beneath us like a plan. The mountains sloped down from our feet to a dark, wooded plain ; beyond that was all the Bay of Rio, with its islands and mountains, the Sugar-loaf guarding the entrance ; and then still farther the Atlantic horizon-line.

Descending again, we soon reached our destination, the luxurious village nestling in a hollow of the forest-clad hills. We rattled down the main street by which flows a babbling river shaded by avenues of willows, and dismounting, introduced ourselves to Mr. Mills of the comfortable English hotel, who forthwith proposed to mix for us the refreshing cocktail of the New World, the while dinner was preparing.

Petropolis is built in the centre of a large imperial estate, the emperor, who is, as every one knows, not only one of the most hard-working monarchs in the world, but one of the most active in every scheme of benevolence, is, if nowhere else, popular in Petropolis. Some years ago, some pseudo-philanthropist sent over to Rio a large batch of German colonists. When the unfortunates landed, they found they were not wanted, there was nothing for them to do; they lay about the quays, living on garbage, till yellow fever thinned their ranks woefully. They would probably all have perished had not the emperor taken up the matter. He transported them *en masse* to his highland estate, where the cooler climate permits the white man to work without danger in the fields, and founded Petropolis. And now it stands a model village in which there is no sordid house, no poverty, all is clean, tidy, and prosperous-looking. For some miles round where the forest is cleared, are the little farms of the happy and contented people. And so as you ride along the well-made roads that traverse the little colony, you perceive about you everywhere comfortable-looking Teutons with blue eyes and yellow hair, and well-dressed children going to school, and comely matrons knitting at cottage-doors, as in

Europe, instead of the half-naked negroes and the barbarism of the slave plantations which surround this little oasis of liberty. And now in addition to all this, a further cause of prosperity has come to the village of Dom Pedro Secundo, for a blessing seems to be on the place. The cool and healthy air has induced many of the wealthy citizens of Rio to resort here during the summer months, when the yellow fever is hanging about the hot city. It is rapidly becoming quite a fashionable little place, and several good hotels have sprung up around the imperial summer palace.

We stayed at Mill's two days, visited the virgin forest—another thing we had to *do*—in a downpour of rain; I think we were *done* more than the forest was, for we did not appreciate its beauties under the depressing circumstances, though we had brought some *cana* with us, wherewith to dilute the rain. Besides, the virgin forest was a fraud, though a beautiful one, for the vegetation of it was in no wise more magnificent than that of most portions of the neighbouring country, though these gave themselves no high-sounding titles. From Petropolis we took coach to Entre Rios, a drive of about fifty miles, along a very well-kept road. The coach-mules were splendid animals, and carried us on in grand style, past the coffee plantations and the uncleared forests. From Entre Rios, we travelled about on the Dom Pedro Railway in rather an unmeaning way, from one uninteresting place to another. At the hotel at Juiz la Fora, by the way, they will give you a bottle of Chambertin for eighteenpence, at least there is a gold-lettered label on the bottle proclaiming it to be

of that vintage. It reminded me of a choice claret I once purchased at Swan's sale at Cambridge, as a freshman. Not even after I disguised it by mulling and converting it into cup, could I persuade any of my friends to touch it after the first experience. Ultimately it became the salvation of my staircase. For after a preliminary experiment on an objectionable bed-maker, it was used to propitiate (?) duns withal.

On the 15th of December we sailed from delightful Paqueta to our old berth off Rio, under Fort Villegagnon. The weather was now becoming oppressive—ninety-five in the shade, with no cool nights as a relief. The calm water in the harbour began to stink horribly; and far from odorous was the vegetable refuse that lay about the markets—so yellow Jack found his opportunity, and there were five vessels in the harbour, with the ominous yellow flag flying at their main. Our boy, like most sailors, was very inclined to become rather wild when he got on shore, so Jerdein preached a most edifying sermon to him, told him how loafers on shore fell suddenly sick and died in horrible convulsions, with their legs twisted round their necks in knots, the results of green rum under a vertical sun; and to make the homily still more impressive, he pointed out to him the five o'clock dead-boat, which was as usual carrying its ghastly load of corpses to be buried on the other side of the bay. So terrible was the picture drawn by Jerdein that Arthur did not ask for any more shore-leave in Rio.

While we were at anchor here the emperor came off to the *Falcon* in the *Wanderer's* launch; he was interested in our cruise, and, as I understand, intended

to honour us with a visit. Unfortunately we were all on shore at the time, so he merely steamed round us, and remarked that we must be very uncomfortable and very foolish to wander about the oceans in such a cockleshell. If I were an emperor I think I should be of the same opinion, and prefer something a good deal bigger if I cruised at all ; but after all, would it be half so enjoyable?—maybe not.

For several days in succession, during our stay, a violent squall arose every afternoon in the bay. The weather would wax sultrier and sultrier from sunrise till about three p.m., when suddenly a mass of black cloud would sweep over the sky, pouring down rain in such torrents as only tropical clouds can, accompanied by thunder and lightning. These squalls blew with very great force, lashing the bay into a mass of foam. On two occasions we had to put down two anchors, with fifty fathoms on each, to prevent driving. One day during the squall two large vessels near us fouled each other in consequence of the anchors of one dragging. Signals of distress were hoisted, and two men-of-war's boats' crews were sent to their assistance. After considerable damage had been incurred by both they were cleared. This is the old-fashioned Rio weather. Once this daily storm was so regular in its coming, that it was customary when one made an appointment with another to say, "I will meet you after or before the storm," as the case might be. But of late years the climate of Rio has changed considerably, as has that of every part of the world it seems, more or less ; and the three p.m. storm is not as punctual as was his wont of old.

One of our crew here left us—Andrews—so we were

now rather under-manned, and determined to pick up some one else in the Plate ; one who was somewhat more of a sailor than he—if possible.

It was now about time for us to leave Rio ; two of us were down with slight attacks of fever, and we all felt as if the fresh winds of the Atlantic would be beneficial as a change.

We had made the acquaintance of the officers of the SS. *Norseman* in Rio, the telegraph-vessel of the Anglo-Brazilian Telegraph Company. She was bound about this time for Maldonado, in Uruguay, and the captain kindly offered, if he met us out at sea, to give us a tow if we were in want of one. Maldonado Bay, he told us was a pleasant spot, with lots of sport on shore, and in every way preferable to Flores Island as a place to spend our quarantine in ; for into quarantine we were certain to be thrust as soon as we touched at any Uruguayan or Argentine port after leaving Rio. The River Plate people have the greatest dread of yellow fever, their countries lie outside of the usual limits of this pest, but they have a vivid reminiscence of the fearful epidemic at Buenos Ayres ten years ago, when the whole city was put into rigid quarantine, all business was at a standstill, and the horrors of a mediæval plague, such as that of Florence, were experienced to the full in the crowded South American city ; no less than a thousand people perishing a day, for several weeks.

CHAPTER VI.

WE sailed out of the harbour on December the 21st ; the pestilential city looking very beautiful from the sea in the early morning.

There was but little wind, and we progressed but slowly. It happened that the *Norseman* steamed out the same day, so ten hours after our departure she came up with us. The captain stopped his vessel and repeated his invitation as to the tow ; adding, as a further inducement, that we should thus reach Maldonado by Christmas Day, and we could all pass that festive season together. We gladly accepted his offer, so the *Norseman* lowered a boat, and we soon got a tow-line to each of her quarters. It was as well that we did get this tow, for now that Andrews had left us we were only four on board. Of these Jerdein was laid up below with slight fever ; I was far from well recovering from the same ; and the boy had also been suffering from a sort of bilious fever for some days. Only one of us was in robust health—Arnaud ; he never was ill, on any pretext whatever ; but unfortunately, too, he was the very one who was absolutely useless on board ; no power on earth could ever make anything approaching to a sailor of my genial friend.

Under these circumstances Captain Lacy sent on board of us one of his black sailors to lend a hand at steering. He and the boy took one watch during Jerdein's illness, Arnaud and myself the other. Steering a small vessel when towing fast requires some care, so, as usual under similar circumstances, I had to do all the steering in my watches. Arnaud, however, was not allowed to be idle. He was kept very constantly at the pumps, for we were towing so fast through the short seas—ten knots an hour at times—that much water came on board, and found its way below through the hatch of the sail-room.

We had not been towing long before we parted one of the warps : the steamer stopped and lowered a boat with another. This boat was manned by Krumen, who kept time to their oars as they came off with a queer dirge-like song. The words of this song were delightfully simple, consisting of a constant repetition of the monosyllable Bo. The Kruman has many, and to him beautiful songs ; but they are all about this word Bo and nothing else, except one, a marriage hymn, which I am told sings Ba-Ba-Ba, Ba-Ba, and so on ; this latter seems to have a sort of unkind ring in it, like a chorus of envious Benedicks casting ridicule on the happy spoony ones.

Some of my readers may not know what Krumen are. Well, they are a superior race of black men who inhabit a certain strip along the West Coast of Africa. They are all boatmen by profession, and are engaged by European vessels for service in the unhealthy oil-rivers, and other parts where work in the sun is perilous for the white man. Excellent fellows they are, with a far more intellectual cast of counte-

nance than any of the West Indian or Brazilian blacks. These they despise and will hold no communion with, for the Kruman boasts that he is not only a freeman, but the descendant of freemen. He is certainly a superior being to the ordinary negro, faithful and honest. The Krumen in their native land live in a very fairly civilized manner.

Every Kruman who has made a certain number of voyages becomes a chief or head-man ; the others, when shipped on a vessel, have to pay a certain percentage of their wages to the heads on their return home. When a vessel ships a considerable crew of these men, a head-man is taken as well—such is the case on board the *Norseman*. He is feared and respected by the rest, no insubordination is shown before him, and whenever a Kruman has to be chastised it is the head-man who inflicts the punishment.

Curious names these jolly blacks take to themselves. On the *Norseman* we had Silver, Maintop, Ropeyarn, Jibboom, and Zulu ; this latter was so called because he was taken to London to impersonate one of the Zulus exhibited at the Aquarium. He there enjoyed himself amazingly, and still receives letters from an Aquarium barmaid. Zulu was the man sent on board of us by Captain Lacy. Rather funny that we should ship an Aquarium Farini-Zulu as a hand on the *Falcon* !

As the sea increased a good deal on our second day out, it became necessary for the *Norseman* to diminish her speed to eight knots, so as to avoid straining the yacht, which towed very heavily. We had now crossed Capricorn, and were once more out of the tropics. The difference of latitude soon made itself

apparent. The wind blew from the south, cold and bracing after its passage from Antarctic seas. It was a very great change after sultry Rio, and we found pea-jackets necessary for the first time.

The distance that the *Norseman* proposed to tow us was above 900 miles. The experiences of the voyage were such as to make me resolve never under any circumstances to undertake anything of the kind again. The *Norseman* had been compelled to go easy, and stop so often in order to enable us to put fresh chafing-gear on the hawsers, and to get a new tow-line on board when one was carried away, an incident which occurred thrice, so violent were the sudden jerks at times, that on the 24th of December, Christmas Eve, we were still so far from Maldonado, as to render all chance of eating our Christmas dinner in port very remote.

This day a nasty short sea was running, that was continually filling our deck fore and aft. The vessel pitched about with extraordinary quickness, showers of spray came over the bows constantly, half-drowning the man at the tiller, who alone stayed on deck. Everybody and everything was wet through. Poor Zulu, unaccustomed to the cold and wet, looked very miserable indeed when his turn used to come round to steer. No doubt he regretted his native wilds in the well-warmed London Aquarium, where he was wont to raise his terrific Farini war-cry, and hurl his assegai into the targets, surrounded by admiring pale-face damsels. The poor fellow was laid up for three days after his experience of *Falcon* life.

About two p.m. I was at the tiller: a confused sea was running at the time, so that it was very difficult

to steer the vessel. And now a serious accident that I had for a long time foreseen as probable occurred. I must explain that the *Falcon's* bowsprit runs straight over the top of her stem amidships, and that the forestay leads to the bowsprit gammoning-iron—an exceptionally strong one of course—instead of to the stem, as is the usual method. I do not know whose idea this arrangement was, but it is obviously a very bad one; not only is that most important support to the mast, the forestay, fitted in an insecure fashion, but the bowsprit cannot be taken wholly on board, as the mainmast is in the way of so doing. Thus we had a good many feet of bowsprit overboard when the heel of it was jammed up against the mast. The result was, after one heavier pitch than usual, and a shower of water that half-blinded me and took away my breath for a moment, I saw with consternation that all the main rigging and shrouds were flying about quite slack. I knew in a moment what had occurred—one of the hawsers had got under the bowsprit close to the bow and wrenched the gammoning-iron and stout iron band right out of the stem, thus carrying away our forestay as well. I called all hands on deck, and hailed the *Norseman*, which at once stopped and lowered a boat to lend us assistance. We found that a large piece had been wrenched off our stem in addition to other damage: so we were in a fine pickle. The bowsprit itself was not broken.

But a more serious mishap was now to follow, which all but put a termination to the *Falcon's* cruise altogether, by sending her to the bottom of the South Atlantic. The *Norseman* had stopped. Being to windward we drifted on to her. Seeing that we were

getting too near, we shouted to the officer in charge to take a few revolutions ahead occasionally so as to keep clear of us. As soon as he attempted to do so it was found that one of the tow-lines had got round her screw, so that she could not move, but lay helplessly rolling about in the seas. In a few moments we had drifted right down on her, and we were foul of each other. Our rigging then got entangled in the stock of her anchor, and thus having secured us, she locked us in her embrace, and, like a great sea-monster as she is, deliberately proceeded to crush us to pieces. She was rolling heavily at the time, and with every roll the stock of her great anchor and her iron sides came down on us with pitiless weight. First our main-mast was nearly wrenched out of us. Then the great black mass of the ocean steamer leaned over us, bending in our davits, and crushing our beautiful dinghy into matchwood. Then another great lurch, and the stock of her starboard anchor coming down between our port-shrouds carried away all the ratlines, about ten feet of bulwark, and threatened to stave in our decks. Then our bowsprit went. We were now right across her bows, a most perilous situation; for over the bows of a telegraph-vessel hangs an enormous iron machine, weighing many tons, used I believe, for winding in the electric cable. This rose and fell above us like a battering-ram, as the steamer pitched in the great seas. It was indeed a "bad quarter of an hour" for us that; not a merry way of passing Christmas Eve. We tried our best to disentangle our rigging from her anchors, and shove clear of her, a difficult and even dangerous undertaking. One plucky Kruman was very nearly crushed while helping us.

At last, almost miraculously, we fell clear of her, and setting a bit of sail drifted some half-mile away to leeward, where the poor old *Falcon* lay a dismal and dishevelled wreck upon the waters. The remains of our dinghy oars and other articles were floating away, visible at times on the summit of the waves, a pitiable sight. But it was no time for lamentation; it was important to repair the damage as far as possible without delay. On inspection we rejoiced to find that to all appearance only our upper works had suffered, the body of the vessel was as sound as ever. We passed our chain through the two hawse-pipes, set up our forestay to it as well as we could, and got everything shipshape again.

In the meantime the *Norseman* managed to get the hawser clear of her screw, so steaming down to us she took us once more in tow.

A most uncomfortable time we had of it this Christmas Eve. The wind and sea had risen considerably, and it was very dark. I remember well what curious work it was steering that night by the rising and falling stern-light of the heavily-pitching steamer. The motion of the *Falcon* was at the time the most violently quick I have ever experienced. We were constantly jumped off our feet while steering. At regular intervals the vessel would take five or six terribly rapid rolls in succession, rolling her gunwales under, and filling her decks right up with water, heeling to such an angle as made even capsizing seem quite a possible contingency at times; then she would pitch as violently as she had rolled, and we expected to see the main-mast chucked out over her bow at any moment. Water-breakers and other

articles broke adrift, floated on deck, and flew about wildly with the frantic leaps of the little craft. Down in the cabin the water was a foot over the flooring, and washing over the bunks, drenching everything, notwithstanding that some one was always at the pump. Every one was wet, cold, and miserable, and bruised, too, with the banging about, against which no sea-legs availed. It was rather an anxious time, for had the weather been a little worse the steamer would have been obliged to slip us, no agreeable prospect in our half-wrecked state. So passed our merry Christmas Eve.

But when Christmas Day broke there came a change. It was a lovely morning, bright and bracing; the wind had moderated considerably; the sea, too, had gone down; so the *Norseman* increased her speed to make up for lost time.

Towards dinner-time the steamer stopped, and Captain Lacy sent a boat with a fresh hawser to us, and an invitation to partake of the orthodox roast beef and plum-pudding on board of his vessel. He lent us two Madagascar negroes to steer the *Falcon* in the meanwhile. After the wet and cold of the last few days we thoroughly enjoyed our Christmas dinner in the comfortable saloon of the steamer. In the evening we returned to the *Falcon* once more to renew our duties. Throughout the night the sea was smooth, and all went well.

On the morning of the 26th of December we perceived the loom of land on our starboard side, the coast of Uruguay. On nearing it we were enabled to discern what manner of country this was that we had now reached. The climate, the colour of the clear

sky, and the aspect of the vegetation showed us that we had indeed left the tropics. Very different all appeared after torrid Rio, one thousand miles to the northward. It was a low shore with sandy dunes and hills of no great altitude in the background ; a desert-looking country where thistles and aloes seemed especially to thrive. Of ill-repute too is all this wild coast from here to the Brazilian frontier, and a terror to mariners. The currents of the ocean hereabouts are powerful and inconstant. There are few landmarks, and disasters to vessels are frequent. On the shore among the surf one can perceive the skeletons of many ill-fated ships, as one coasts along the dreary sand-banks. And woe betide the mariners who are wrecked on this inhospitable land ; for the only inhabitants of it are wild gauchos, professional and skilful wreckers when not employed in the almost as lucrative pursuit of pillaging and ravaging all over their native country under the banner of one or the other of those rival guerilla chieftains who are ever contesting who shall next be the chief magistrate and arch-robber of poor revolutionary Uruguay.

These land sharks are bold in the extreme in their malpractices, and of course commit all sorts of atrocities with absolute impunity, for the Government cannot be troubled with inquiry into such little peccadilloes as wrecking and piracy. These brave gauchos must be humoured, or they will join the other side in politics, and lend their lances to a rival cut-throat.

A British barque went on shore near Maldonado not long ago and broke up. The sailors managed to save some of their property, and formed a little camp

on the beach. Knowing the character of the coast, they had not forgotten to bring muskets with them. The gauchos came down like so many vultures, all mounted; each with his big knife at his back, his lasso, and cleets fixed to his saddle to which to attach the expected spoil. They managed to steal a good deal, notwithstanding the vigilance of the sailors.

And very smartly they did it too, as the following story will illustrate.

One sailor is sitting half-asleep on his sea-chest. A gaucho comes up and taps him on the back.

"Bueno, Johnny; bueno, Johnny."

"If you are not off, I will send a bullet into you," says Jack.

"Bueno, Johnny; bueno; *hasta mañana* till to-morrow;" and off skulks the gaucho to his horse, which he mounts. With a sardonic smile he takes off his hat to Jack, bids him farewell, and digging his spurs into the flanks of his wiry little horse, leans over his neck and is off at full gallop over the short grass of the sandy plains.

At the first stride of the horse, to Jack's intense surprise his box is wrenched violently from under him. He jumps up, rubs his eyes, and before he can recover his senses he sees his property rolling and bumping away over the sand-hills at the heels of the gaucho's steed; for this clever gentleman had managed to make one end of his lasso fast to the handle of Jack's box while engaged in conversation with him.

At about sunset we were in sight of our port. As we approached the land, the whole vessel was en-

veloped in a dense cloud of dragon-flies, which completely covered our rigging.

That very common phenomenon in the River Plate, a mirage, was observable along the whole coast. All the inland hills seemed to have turned upside down ; and these floated at some height above the plain, midway in a band of lovely pink sky.

We rounded Pt. Este, and sailing inside Lobos Island, famous for its many seals, entered Maldonado Bay. Not a very lively place this little harbour seemed, nor in any way too much protected, should the wind choose to blow hard from seaward. It is but a shallow bay surrounded by sand-banks, with one little island called Goriti, overgrown with wild asparagus, and inhabited by rabbits alone, in the centre of it. It was here that H.M.S. *Agamemnon*, Nelson's old vessel, was lost. The town or village of Maldonado is situated a few miles from the shore and is hidden from it by the sand-hills. Only a few little houses are to be seen on the beach at the extremity of the bay. Not a very prepossessing spot, but Captain Lacy promised us plenty of sport on shore by the lagunas which lie beyond the sand-hills.

"Partridges, snipes, teal, geese, &c., are to be found here in amazing numbers, *at times*," he said.

What a great virtue there is in your *at times* ! it is as good as your *if*. We did not come across any very extraordinary sport here ; but buoyed up with wild hopes by that *at times*, we sportsmen were wont to toil bravely on.

Just before sunset we perceived a dismasted vessel far out to sea, a derelict evidently, for she had no signals flying. Unfortunately a mist came on just

then, or the *Norseman* would have steamed after her and brought her in. A wind arose in the night that carried her far away before morning.

The *Norseman* put to sea again the day after our arrival, and proceeded towards Chuy, as the submarine cable required repairing somewhere thereabouts. She did not return for two days. This time we spent in repairing as much as possible the damage the collision had inflicted on us. We naturally were desirous of going on shore and having a look at the country, but of course could not do so until we had received pratique. We waited twelve hours, and no one came off to us. There was no sign of life anywhere: there were two small craft anchored in the bay, but no one was on board of them; the shore might be a bit of the central Sahara for loneliness. Twenty-four hours passed, and still no one. At last a solitary horseman appeared on the summit of a sand-hill and looked at us. Hope revived in our breasts; but after remaining a few seconds only, he galloped away again. Forty-eight hours passed away, and we waxed impatient. We hoisted all manner of signals, but no one paid the slightest attention to them. Where were all the Maldonadans? Had they gone away revolutionizing? or seeing from afar that imposing brass gun of ours, had they taken the peaceable *Falcon* for a pirate, and betaken themselves in terror to the inner wilds? These two days a south-west wind blew fresh and squally right into the bay, and brought into it a sea that made us far from comfortable at our anchorage.

Waxing impatient, I took the collapsible dinghy, and went off to the desert islet of Goriti to shoot

rabbits. Here I made the acquaintance of the only inhabitant, a sociable horse, who followed me about everywhere ; walked on when I walked on, sat down when I sat down, and standing on the beach gave me a plaintive farewell neigh when I ultimately rowed off. Of rabbits I saw no traces save their habitations. They too, I suppose, had gone revolutionizing. There were several old iron cannons lying about on the island, for it was strongly fortified in the days of the Spanish, when there was a viceroyalty of Buenos Ayres.

On the third day the *Norseman* came in again ; and at last the inhabitants took notice of us, for a boat came off with a gentleman most gorgeously uniformed and much sabred, who politely told us that he was the captain of the port. Hearing we had come from Rio, he gave us two days' quarantine.

"But," I suggested, "we have already been two days here."

"Ah ! indeed !" he replied ; "then it is well ; your quarantine is over."

We went on shore, scampered up the sand-hills, and were surprised, on reaching their summit, to behold on the other side a wild but pleasant-looking country ; an undulating Pampas of grass and thistles, aloes and cactus, lay between us and the distant hills, diversified with little lakes, bogs, and sandy wastes. In the foreground was Maldonado town, a small congregation of white-washed, flat-roofed houses, with a street or two, in which it seemed as if no man ever walked. We were introduced to the aristocracy of the place. First to a store-keeper, who is also a commandant, or something of the kind ; next to a

portly major-general in the Uruguayan army, who is also a butcher ; and to an ex-high-admiral of the Uruguayan fleet, who is willing to pilot us to Montevideo in consideration of a small gratuity. Truly a republican country ! The latter grandee is an ex-admiral at present because his politics are not those of the party now in power. For with a change in the Government of a South American republic every one goes out of office—admirals, generals, telegraph clerks, policemen, crossing-sweepers—to make room for the friends of the new presidents, and the friends of those friends, and the friends of all their sisters, their cousins, and their aunts, and so on. One rises and falls pretty rapidly out here—admiral to-day, ordinary pilot to-morrow.

We stayed two days more in Maldonado Bay, and had some pleasant rides over the country with the officers of the *Norseman* : but I cannot say that we shot quite so many partridges, snipes, &c., as we anticipated. However, we had a very good time of it, thanks to our friends on the *Norseman* and on shore.

On December the 31st we got up anchor, and sailed for Montevideo, which is about seventy miles from Maldonado. We took the ex-admiral with us as pilot ; not that a pilot was really necessary, but the old gentleman seemed anxious to come with us, and was very companionable and jovial in disposition.

We were now in the estuary of the Rio de la Plata, for the limit of the river and the ocean is held to be a line drawn between Maldonado and Cabo San Antonio, 150 miles across. At Montevideo the river is sixty-four miles wide. At Buenos Ayres, 210 miles higher up than Maldonado, it is thirty-four miles

wide. All this gigantic estuary is obstructed by shoals and sand-banks ; the depth of water is hardly anywhere upwards of three fathoms. Luckily the bottom is generally of soft mud : hence there is little risk to a vessel that runs ashore unless the weather be bad. But, unfortunately, bad weather is very common indeed off the River Plate. It is a region of storms and extraordinary electric disturbance. The pampero, the storm-wind from the Pampas, is frequent, and blows with great violence ; often being, indeed, a true hurricane in its fury. The ocean tides do not affect to any great extent the waters of the River Plate, but strong sea-winds cause it to rise considerably. The water is fresh almost as far as Montevideo, where, indeed, it is occasionally drunk on the vessels in the roads, so slightly brackish it is. A desolate waste of choppy, muddy waves, flowing between dark mud-banks, with here and there little floating islands of lilies, and trees drifting seawards from the great rivers of the interior ; such is the mouth of the La Plata, the widest river of the world ; and the one which, with the exception of the Amazon, discharges the greatest volume of water into the ocean.

At daybreak on the 1st of January we were in sight of Montevideo. From afar off we observed that there were many men-of-war of different nations and sizes in the harbour and in the roads—some twenty, at least. Furthest to seaward of all we perceived a British squadron of five huge vessels at anchor. These we soon recognized as the *Bacchante* and the four other men-of-war composing the flying squadron, now bound on a voyage round the world with the

two sons of the Prince of Wales. Montevideo presents a very pleasing appearance from the sea, looking very much like an Eastern city with its whitewashed, low, flat-roofed houses. Like an Eastern city, it looked very clean and bright from a distance. We afterwards found that, unlike an Eastern city, it proved as clean and bright on closer inspection.

We came to an anchor well up the little bay which answers as an apology for a harbour here—a very poor harbour in bad weather, as we afterwards found—and hoisted the yellow flag for the health-officer. When that functionary came off, he expressed great dissatisfaction at the conduct of his colleague in Maldonado.

“Two days’ quarantine is insufficient for a vessel coming from Rio ; you must sail to Flores, and pass three more days off that island before I can permit you to land here.”

But now a steam launch, with some other gorgeous officer, came off ; and hearing how matters stood, took our part, and argued that in the case of so small a vessel, with so few men on board, it was hardly necessary to inflict the full allowance of quarantine. After some parley the first doctor gave in, and we were granted pratique, to our great delight, for three days off Flores was not a pleasant prospect. Montevideo was having a good time of it with all these men-of-war in the roads, no fewer than nine of which were British. Bull-fights, masked-balls, hells, and other dissipations were not wanting to relieve the mariner of his hard-earned cash. They told me that there were frequently 5000 men-of-war’s men and marines on shore at a time.

A walk through the streets and squares of the capital of Uruguay soon showed us how very different were these people that we were now among from the Brazilians in every respect. No two cities could be less alike than these two capitals of neighbouring states. Not here the lofty houses of Rio, but clean streets of one-storied glaring white houses, built in the style of a Pompeian dwelling. A square, flat-roofed building, with an open courtyard, or *patio*, in the centre, on to which all the rooms open; a fountain and a flower-garden in the *patio*; towards the street the windows, if any, small and heavily barred with iron—such is the residence of a South American Spaniard, a retiring sort of a dwelling, shutting itself jealously from the outer world with a Mussulman-like love of seclusion. The populace, too, how different from that of a Brazilian city! No negroes here, and no ugly-looking Portuguese; but handsome and dignified Spaniards, with a good deal of Indian blood in the veins of the lower orders of them. Cleanest of cities is Montevideo, with straight streets cutting each other at right angles in the American chess-board fashion.

In the evening of New Year's Day we visited the fine Plaza de l'Independencia, where an excellent military band was playing. Here we were enabled to study the different orders of the populace. The ladies floated by with stately Spanish walk, looking well in their black silk dresses and mantillas; but why will every South American lady so besmear her face with powder, however good her complexion be? Officers of the army strutted by in gorgeous uniforms, and with the clash of sabres on the pavement; a

motley crowd of the lower orders loafed about—Basques, Italians, Greeks, and the native gauchos in their barbaric but becoming costume. Here was a group of British blue-jackets slightly overcome by cãna. The native soldiers were everywhere, dressed in their hideous parody of Zouave uniforms. And here were two of the Spanish bull-fighters in their picturesque off-duty dress and pigtails; smart, wiry, neat-cut fellows they were, and rather foppish in their general get up. The young native swells hung round them admiringly, were proud of their acquaintance, were delighted when allowed to sit at the same table as the matador at a café and treat him to champagne—in short, courted them and made much of them, much in the same way as English gentlemen did prize-fighters not so long back, and the young Roman patrician the crack gladiators of his day when he wanted to be considered as a fast man about town.

CHAPTER VII.

THE climate of the River Plate is exceedingly changeable and trying. The day we came in it was quite cold. The day before the thermometer registered 102° in the shade. When the south wind blows from over the cold Antarctic seas the weather is bracing and cool. But with the north wind coming as it does from over thousands of leagues of parched Pampas and tropical jungles, the atmosphere is hot, dry, and oppressive as that of North Africa when the khamsin blows.

All skippers that have been unfortunately compelled to put into Montevideo for repairs to their vessels, anathematize it; we were not exceptions to this rule. A wretched German, who called himself a ship's carpenter, undertook to repair the damages to our stem and bulwarks. He not only made a miserable job of it, but detained us seventeen days, and finally presented us with a most exorbitant bill.

Never having been a witness of a bull-fight, curiosity led me to visit the arena one Sunday. It was a glorious day—true River Plate weather—that is, with a cloudless, pale blue and peculiarly clear sky overhead. The clearness of the atmosphere

in this land of the Pampas is very remarkable, and it causes the vault of the heavens to appear to be much farther off and vaster than in other lands. The stars, too, at night shine with an exceeding brightness. They seem to be at a far greater distance off than those over our hemisphere, and one can see more of them, further up into the heaven as it were, so pure is the sky ; stars behind stars, archipelago behind archipelago of them, to infinity.

On this day a great slaughter of bulls and horses had been promised to the populace ; so the glaring white streets that led out of the town to the amphitheatre were thronged with the thousands of pleasure-seekers who were on their way to the cruel games. It was like the road to the Derby without the rowdyism. In carriages, trams, and on foot the crowds poured on, while over the balconies of the houses leaned the pretty Montevidean girls, fanning, and laughing, and flirting as they looked down on the human flood. We entered a tram-car—for of course, being a South American city, Montevideo has scarce a street down which the tramway-rails are not laid—and drove some miles through the pretty suburbs of the town, where nestling in lovely gardens are gaudy villas of *pseudo*-classic and Italian style, generally painted outside in delicate tints of pink, yellow, and blue, which suits the climate well enough. The suburban houses of the native mode of construction are one-storied, and all look as if the architect had intended to build two stories, but had suddenly altered his mind and stopped short when he had built up about one-third of the second ; for the sort of battlement that

tops these flat-roofed mansions is cut into embrasures that match the windows below, and appear to be the commencement of the windows of the second story. The trams of Montevideo are driven along at a tremendous rate, and the mules and horses that draw them are fine animals. On our way a rather steep hill had to be mounted, and it became necessary to put on another horse. But the tram did not stop in order to effect this, nor slacken its rapid speed in the least. It was a pretty operation. A man on a wiry little horse was waiting at the foot of the hill. To his saddle behind him was attached a coil of stout rope, with a hook at its further end. When the tram came up, he trotted alongside of it, cleverly dropped his hook into an eye prepared for it on the left side of the car, and away went his horse, leaning well over as he tugged away sideways, as is the custom in this land. At last we reached the amphitheatre, gay with the flags of Uruguay and Spain.

We paid our dollar and a half for a *sombra* seat—that is, one on the shady side—and entered the huge structure. It was just the Roman amphitheatre over again. Uncovered to the blue sky was the great circus, with the flights of bare stone steps sloping down to the arena, on which the common spectators sat. And there, too, was one scarlet-draped box, in the which sat a bloated grandee in bright uniform and much be-medalled—president or great minister, I know not which, with his sycophants around him; just as bloated emperor or consul sat in his purple-draped box long ago, under as blue Italian skies, while beneath him the gladiators fought to the death, or Christians fed famishing lions. And no wit less

brutally savage was the spectacle, and no less cruel and ready with the "*pollice verso*" were the spectators on this fine Sunday afternoon, in this civilized city of Montevideo, in the year of grace 1880, than in the Roman circus of 2000 years ago. There was a very full house, and there was no small number of our ruddy blue-jackets and marines among the sallow Spaniards. I was pleased to see that, contrary to my expectations, only two women were present, and these were foreigners, and evidently members of the *demi-monde*. Constant communion with strangers has possibly softened the manners of the women of this branch of the Spanish race ; for it is certainly not *the thing* in Montevideo for a lady to assist at a bull-fight. But on the other hand, there were a great many young children of both sexes present that had been brought hither by their fathers, and the blood thirsty little dears enjoyed themselves amazingly.

I had never seen a bull-fight before, and in my ignorance imagined that there might be something more in it than mere cruel brutality—some good sport or display of skill. I do not know that such may not be the case in Spain, but in Montevideo this amusement is merely the ordinary business of an *abattoir* glorified by music and gay costumes, and a strong spice of unnecessary cruelty. Danger to those engaged in the fight is reduced to a minimum. After waiting about half an hour there arose a martial fanfare of trumpets, a door opened, and there galloped forth a picturesque procession. First rode the proprietor in his black velvet dress, mounted on a fine coal-black horse, then came the toreadors, picadors, and matadors in the gaudy and beautiful costumes

peculiar to their respective duties ; and lastly came four horses drawing a yoke : this to drag out the carcasses of bulls and horses that were to be massacred during the games.

Three times, to the lively strains of the band, this procession galloped round the arena, and then went out again ; the door closed, and there were left alone in the centre two picadors on their horses, each with his long lance, and a group of footmen with scarlet cloaks over their arms, and the cruel little darts in their hands. Then came a suspense and a pause in the chatter from the stone steps for a few moments, and quickly another door opened, and out rushed, head down, a savage little bull of the Pampas, who made it pretty lively for every one for a short time. But between his wild rushing hither and thither, the being dazed by the scarlet cloaks that were thrown across his head, the loss of blood from lance wounds, and the eight little darts that were sticking in his flanks, the poor beast after a few minutes became weak and showed disinclination to continue the unequal combat. But this was not what was intended by his cowardly foes—he must kill a horse or two ere he be permitted to gasp out his life on the blood-stained sand of the arena and be at peace—the people wanted the smell of more gore, and the pleasant spectacle of prolonged dying agonies before they could let him go. It was now the duty of the picador to place the horse on which he was riding across the path of the bull as much as possible, and no longer to avoid him. It was a disgusting spectacle. The picador himself, with his legs thickly padded with lead and cloth, could suffer no injury from the

animal's horns—while his wretched horse had bandages over his eyes, that he might not perceive the infuriated bull that charged him, take alarm and run away. Neither horse nor bull were quite up to the scratch, for the former heard and trembled though he could not see, and the latter was now weak and faint. So we enjoyed the elevating spectacle of attendants whipping up the poor horse, and others stabbing and torturing the dying bull into one last infuriated charge. Maddened by his tormentors, at last he did charge; the picador kept his horse broadside on to the attack, and loud cheers of *bravo, toro!* saluted the bull as he ran his horns into the belly of the poor animal, that then rushed wildly away, almost unseating his rider in his agonized plunges, with his bowels dragging over the ground as he went. The bull had yet the horse of the other picador to disembowel, or blind, or tear asunder in some other way, before his turn came to die. He lay crouching in a corner, with the blood pouring out of his nostrils with every heavy gasp; still at bay though, and ready to stagger to his feet and defend himself on the approach of an enemy, only to fall again with half his life gone out with the exertion. Then came up the matador, with scarlet cloak on the left arm, and rapier in the right hand. He came deliberately up to the bull, and after a little dodging deftly run the long steel into his brain, and the poor beast was free at last. The work of the matador is the most merciful to the bull, and the most dangerous to the man, of the whole performance; for when the bull, as often happens, has still a good deal of life left in him, the slightest divergence in the rapier-thrust might be

fatal to the unskilful swordsman. Seven bulls were tortured and slain this fine Sunday afternoon, and some fourteen horses, till the white sand was red and reeking with the blood and entrails of the poor beasts. When a horse was not killed outright by a bull—only disembowelled, or with shoulder ripped up, or the like—he was taken out, doctored and patched up, his wounds sewn up and plastered over to stay the flow of blood, and then he was brought on again half an hour afterwards, weak and staggering, to face and be ultimately killed by another bull.

During the course of the afternoon, one incident gave great pleasure to the spectators. A savage little yellow bull charged with such fury that he tossed a horse and picador clear into the air. The man fell, half-stunned, with the horse on the top of his legs. The bull then stood over them and commenced to deliberately gore his prostrate enemies to death. It was splendid sport for the people, and a loud cry of *bravo, toro! bravo, toro!* went up; no horror, no sympathy for the wretched man was expressed on any face of that large crowd of Spaniards—merely fiendish delight in the horrible scene. The people stood up and shrieked with frantic joy, and laughed to see the cruel horns bury themselves in the soft flesh. The picador was not killed, for his comrades diverted the bull, and rescued him. I am sure that many of the spectators looked on this as very unfair—they had been defrauded of the best part of their entertainment—how exciting to have seen a man slowly gored into shreds! During the progress of this refined entertainment, I looked round at some of the British blue-jackets and marines to discover by their

faces in what way they were impressed by the national sports of Spain. These natives of the bleak northern island were evidently too barbarous to appreciate a bull-fight. I observed that they did not laugh, that some looked pale and disgusted, and that there was an expression on many a young marine's face of wonder that such things could be in any civilized city—a sort of perplexed look that said a good deal. The blue-jackets did not talk much, but looked on moodily and silently, with knit brows and compressed lips. I overheard one big, burly, bearded fellow say to his comrade, "D——n me, Bill, I don't half like this. Why can't they leave them poor beasties alone, and make some of them yellow chaps with red blankets strip and stand up and have a round or two like men? That's more to my mind, it is." And to mine too, honest Jack. Brutal our prize-ring was, no doubt; but what can be said of this torturing of the noblest of dumb animals, that I have attempted to describe as I saw it myself this day?

Throughout our stay at Montevideo the weather was abominable. Violent squalls occurred daily, and it blew a gale of wind three days out of four—an exceptional state of things in midsummer. We rolled and pitched so much at our anchorage in this unprotected port, that the carpenter was unable for ten days at a stretch to get his stage alongside, in order to fit on our new stem-post. Indeed, we were occasionally running our bows right under in the short, nasty seas. Nor was he able to effect the repairs on deck during this time, for the wretched fellow got sea-sick as soon as he stepped on board of us. Thus it was not until the 20th of January that we got all straight again.

On the 21st of January we weighed anchor at noon, and proceeded out of the harbour under all plain canvas to sail to Buenos Ayres. It is customary for strangers to take a pilot from Montevideo to Buenos Ayres, but we did not consider this necessary in the case of a small vessel like ours. There was a fresh E.S.E. wind blowing, so that we were enabled to set our spinnaker, and kept up an average speed of seven knots throughout the voyage. At ten p.m. we made the Chico light-ship, and then, keeping the lead constantly going, sailed over the flats in about three fathoms of water, until, at seven a.m. on the morrow, we reached the guard-ship, which is moored about twelve miles or so from Buenos Ayres. From here we could see the long line of the houses of the city and the vessels in the inner roads.

We hove-to off the guard-ship in order to await the doctor's boat and obtain pratique before sailing in to the town. Many large vessels were at anchor around us, rolling heavily in the rough pea-soup-coloured water, for no vessel of considerable draught can approach nearer to the shore than this; indeed, none of our big men-of-war could come anywhere near Argentine Waters. The royal mail steamers have been known to ground even so far out as these outer roads, as they are called. For where the vast plains of the Pampas terminate in the sea, so gradual is the incline that it is really difficult to say where sea begins and land ends. The gnarled mangroves grow far out into the water from the swampy shores. So flat are these alluvial plains that a rise of one foot of water only will overflow the land miles inland in many places.

At ten we received pratique, and proceeded towards

the city. As we sailed in, the water very gradually shoaled until we reached the inner roads where lay a large number of vessels whose lighter draught enabled them to come thus far in. We proceeded still further, and came to an anchor in fourteen feet of water off the Catalina Mole in the midst of a crowd of lighters, shallow coasting schooners, river steamers, and other small craft ; still, however, a considerable distance from the shore. We got into our dinghy and proceeded to sail towards the end of the pier. So shallow became the water long ere we reached it, that even our little boat bumped continually against the bottom. For half a mile or more we sailed through a large fleet of carts and horses ; for in this extraordinary port of Buenos Ayres merchandize has to be transhipped three times between the vessel, fourteen miles out in the outer roads, and the railway trucks on shore—from vessel to lighter, from lighter to carts drawn by amphibious horses, and so to the railway. A very unpleasant place to lay in is this port, if it can be called such, of Buenos Ayres, whether one be in the outer, inner, or small craft roads. For this coast is quite open to the Atlantic on the south-east, and when the wind blows hard from anywhere near that quarter a very short, dangerous sea soon rises on these shallow waters. The Argentine Republic is very unfortunate in the matter of its ports ; save far south, in Patagonia, where there is little if any commerce, there is no harbour worthy of the name. Just to the south of the city of Buenos Ayres a small river runs into the sea—the Riachuelo. This has been dredged sufficiently to admit small craft. It is the head-quarters of the Italian river schooners, which

are here built and fitted out. A large town has now sprung up around this port—the Boca, inhabited almost exclusively by Italians and Greeks, a rather cut-throat place by reputation.

North of Buenos Ayres, and some ten miles from it, is another river, the Lujan, one of the many channels of the intricate delta of the River Plate. Near one of its mouths is the little town of San Fernando. Here the Argentine Government has constructed docks, and here are the naval stores and workshops. It is a sort of Argentine Chatham ; but unfortunately the entrance of the river is impeded, like all others hereabouts, by a bar, and there are times when the water is so low that a vessel drawing only eight feet has to wait weeks before it can cross it. Once within the river there is plenty of water. To lie off Buenos Ayres was, of course, impossible, so we had to choose between these two harbours for the *Falcon* during our stay here. We decided on the latter, or rather on the River Tigre, which is a branch of the Lujan. On its banks, and close to the Tigre railway-station, is the boat-house of the English rowing club. Our friends recommended us to drop our anchor close to it, as being a quiet spot where we would be unmolested, and where we would have the advantages of trains running into the city at short intervals.

We lay at anchor off the Catalina Mole during the night, tossing about very uncomfortably in the short seas. On the morrow, the 23rd of January, we weighed anchor at one p.m., and proceeded in charge of a pilot to the River Tigre. A fresh wind was blowing from the E. by S., and we sailed rapidly along the low coasts. The pilot kept the lead con-

stantly going. As we approached the mouth of the Lujan the water gradually shoaled, for here the alluvial matter brought down by the many rivers of the delta have formed a great bank known as Las Palmas, that stretches far out to sea. From two fathoms we shoaled to ten feet, then to nine, then eight. The pilot looked anxious.

"How much did you say you were drawing?" he asked.

"Seven feet six inches," was the reply.

"Well, we may do it. We'll hit the channel soon, and be in deep water. Besides the mud is soft here, we can drive her through it."

Another cast of the lead showed us we were in seven feet of water. Bump, bump the vessel went, as she sailed over the mud, before half a gale of wind, with all canvas set.

"We shall be in deep water soon," said the pilot ; "but the river is precious low ; there should be more than eight feet here by rights."

Another cast of the lead indicated a depth of only six feet, and the *Falcon*, after vainly attempting to force her way a little further, stuck firmly, to the great disgust of the pilot, who seemed to be surprised that a vessel drawing nearly eight feet of water could not sail where there was a depth of six.

We quickly lowered all the canvas on deck, while Jerdein, who had promised himself a pleasant evening in town with some old friends, admonished that unhappy pilot "till the air was blue with blasphemy" There was no particularly pleasant evening for any one that night. We got two anchors down, and proceeded to wait until some sea-wind, or flood, or

other phenomenon, should cause the waters to rise, an event which might be in an hour or in a month, as far as we could tell, and the pilot could not enlighten us. The water was still going down, for in three hours after we struck we found that there was a depth of only five feet round us. The wind now freshened considerably, and howled and whistled through our rigging.

It was a weird and melancholy scene from the *Falcon's* deck. A few miles to the port hand was the low leaden-coloured shore of mud, a leaden sky was above, and the choppy seas of dirty water that were around us were of still more dismal a shade. Towards evening the rain commenced to fall heavily, and the wind increased till it blew a gale from the south-east. This made matters look rather serious for us, for this coast is a lee-shore to this wind, which blows straight from the Atlantic. The seas became higher and higher, and occasionally washed over us, and had we bumped about throughout the night in the manner we did at first, the *Falcon*, strong though she be, might possibly have broken up. But this south-east wind, blowing straight into the estuary from seawards, is the wind of all others to cause the waters of the Plate to rise rapidly, for it stops the currents from proceeding out to the ocean, and drives them back towards the delta. In about an hour the water had risen upwards of two feet, and we were afloat once more, riding safe to our two anchors, only striking the bottom with our keel at long intervals, after some higher wave than usual had passed by.

We remained at anchor during the night, rolling

about very heavily ; but we had good holding ground under us, and good ground tackle to hold on by, else we should have felt more anxious than we did, riding out a gale of wind on this lee-shore. In fact we got off very well considering everything, and much better than some others did, for we afterwards found that two schooners had been driven ashore at Buenos Ayres that night, and broken up. At daybreak the wind moderated and came round from the north-east, while the water commenced to fall again. We weighed anchor, and proceeded to cross the bank towards a buoy that marks the entrance of the channel—not without touching the ground occasionally. At last we found ourselves in deep water once more, and sailed into the Lujan, which we found to be a narrow river, with low banks overgrown with forests of willows. After ascending the stream for about two miles we reached the junction of the Tigre and the Lujan, and proceeded up the former river a few hundred yards till we reached the rowing-club house. We brought up alongside the bank, put out an anchor ahead, and one astern, and took a warp to a tree on shore.

On looking around us we were very contented with our new berth. It was the snuggest that the old *Falcon* had known for a very long time. The banks of the river were thickly grown with graceful willows and other trees, while handsome villas were scattered here and there, with beautiful gardens of sub-tropical shrubs and flowers stretching from them to the water's edge. Not by any means the least pleasing feature of the agreeable landscape was a group of pretty young Spanish ladies, who came out of the villa just

opposite our anchorage into the garden to gaze at the unwonted spectacle of an English yacht in the Tigre. The captain of the port of the Tigre came off to us, inspected our papers, and gave us pratique, so we were free to take train into Buenos Ayres. On landing and looking around us we found that we were in a very different sort of country from any we had yet visited. This delta of the Parana is one vast flat jungle, scarcely raised two feet above the level of the water, and intersected by innumerable creeks and channels, that flow sluggishly between islands of every size, only a few of which are inhabited, or for the matter of that have even ever been trodden by the foot of man. The richest portion of this mosquito-infested labyrinth, and the most thickly-peopled, is in the neighbourhood of the Tigre. This indeed is a beautiful region, called the Venetia of South America. Here the many islands are covered with a prodigal natural vegetation and very forests of peach-trees, for the fat alluvial soil is as rich as that of the Nile banks, and the river is continually overflowing it to leave fresh deposits.

French and Italian immigrants possess many of these islands, and cultivate on them millions of peaches and splendid vegetables of all kinds. Very pleasant little farms these are. Each family has a little island to itself, surrounded by narrow creeks—a secluded little paradise among the drooping willows. The house is built invariably on piles, so as to be above the level of the waters in time of flood. The most lovely roses and other flowers grow luxuriantly around the homestead. The only means of communication is by water, and every morning can be seen

canoe after canoe laden with fruit and flowers floating slowly down the willow-shaded canals to market, the light-hearted owner singing merrily as he stands up in the stern propelling his little craft with one long oar, as they do in the Venetian gondolas.

There is a peculiar dream-like beauty about this enchanted region that strikes all visitors to La Plata. The citizens of Buenos Ayres are very fond and proud of the Tigre. Its banks are a favourite resort on Sunday, and many a pleasant picnic party and *fête champêtre* enlivens the isles in the summer days.

Before any one decides to purchase land and settle among the channels of the delta, he should first consider one or two rather serious drawbacks. In the first place, the mosquitoes are terrible ; in the second place, real property hereabouts is by no means an "immovable." These islands and creeks are ever changing. If you buy an island one year, it may have grown to double its original size by the next, or it may have disappeared altogether ; where houses once stood, deep waters now roll ; and on the other hand, the peach-trees grow thickly where the river schooners were wont to sail a few years back. The now deserted port of the Tigre was once animated with the presence of much shipping, and noisy with the sound of the hammers of the workshops and forges on the banks, where Genoese immigrants carried on every branch of naval construction and repair. But all now is silent, and the shipwrights have been driven away to the Boca and San Fernando, to the utter ruin of many of them who had invested all their little capital on their establishment here. This exodus was very sudden, and was due

to one of those arbitrary orders of a whimsical and selfish tyrant so common in these free republics. Dr. Tejedor, the would-be dictator of the Argentine Republic, happened to fall into possession of a villa on the banks of the Tigre. The constant din of hammering annoyed him, so he peremptorily exerted the powers entrusted to him to clear his neighbourhood of the obnoxious and noisy aliens.

CHAPTER VIII.

AND now, my readers, I am going to take you with me far away from the salt seas, not to return to them again until you have followed me over many thousands of miles of inland travel, extending over nine months of time. For the *Falcon* was now to sail up the great fresh-water rivers to the central wildernesses of the continent, where no yacht had ever been before; and again she was to be left for months at anchor, while her crew changed their sailor life for that of the gaucho, and rode across the great Pampas, through the arid *montes* of St. Iago, to the great Cordilleras and tropical forests of Tucuman.

A few months before our arrival, Buenos Ayres had passed through one of those periodical revolutions, without which no South American Republic is long happy. The bumptiousness of the province of Buenos Ayres provoked the contest; for the Portenos, as the Buenos Ayreans term themselves, wished to raise by force their own man to the office of President, in despite of the votes of the other thirteen provinces.

Buenos Ayres is so much the largest, so far the most wealthy, the most civilized, and the *whitest* of all the cities of the Argentine Confederation—and it

must be remembered that this is a confederation of *cities*—that the Portenos fancy themselves vastly, and despise the provincials, whom they are inclined to consider as mere barbarous half-breeds, which is not far from the truth. All the culture and spirit of progress that there is in this republic emanates from Buenos Ayres.

But in these days of railways, the great seaport can no longer successfully defy the united provinces as of old ; and when the national troops concentrated outside the city they soon brought it to terms, notwithstanding the heroism displayed. The Argentine men-of-war were in the hands of the Nationals, and bombarded the city ; but they do not seem to have inflicted much damage, which is not surprising, considering of what material the navy here is composed.

These revolutions are a great nuisance to the *estancieros* (cattle-farmers) in the camps ; for while they last the country is overrun by irregular troops and marauding gauchos, who requisition and rob in a most promiscuous fashion. Robbery is after all the whole object of these civil discords ; the two parties fight their little game out, and the winner enjoys the monopoly of swindling the nation for the term of the presidential office ; bloodshed is avoided as much as possible. This time, however, one serious engagement was fought in Buenos Ayres ; for the rival armies met by accident, and about 2000 of the Buenos Ayreans were slain by the wild Indians and half-breeds of the provincial army. This battle, so they say, was entirely due to bad generalship, for all the rival forces desired was to keep apart and plunder in different directions. Unfortunately, it came to pass

that the two armies came across each other, and were plundering at the same time in the same locality. It was exceedingly awkward. They could not very well wink at each other and continue to plunder on different sides of the street. They could not ignore and cut each other dead, so were obliged, if only as a matter of form, to do a bit of fighting. I suppose they got warmed up when they once commenced, for it was a serious business as long as it lasted, and the butcher's bill was longer than the Government liked to confess afterwards.

One bold and well-known officer of the National army, by the way, had his portrait taken at this time under very exceptional circumstances, if the popular story can be believed. It seems that the street fight was going on very briskly just under the studio of a well-known photographer. This artist bethought himself of taking an instantaneous photograph of the action. It was highly successful, notwithstanding the smoke; and when all was over the copies sold freely. But unfortunately the officer I mentioned came out in the picture as standing or advancing, I forget which, with his back to the enemy, like Mark Twain's heroes in Palestine, bent on a vigorous charge on any foe that might be to the rear. When this came to his knowledge his wrath knew no bounds, and I believe that the wretched photographer is still in durance vile in some deepest dungeon beneath a castle moat, atoning for his compromising work of art.

We loafed about Buenos Ayres until we were bored; were "welcomed on Change"—Anglo-Portenos will know what that means; visited several *estancias* in the southern camps and elsewhere, acquiring an in-

sight into the unnecessarily brutal way in which horses are broken in and cattle worked in this part of the globe ; were interested in the ostrich farms, which promise to be as remunerative here as in South Africa ; and then considered whither we should next go.

Our chief object in coming out to this part of the world was to ascend some of the tributaries of the great La Plata, as far as was possible in the yacht ; for from all we had heard and read, such a voyage would not fail to repay us with the enjoyment of strange and marvellous scenery and splendid sport ; nor were we altogether disappointed in our expectations.

But for the present the river voyage was not to be thought of. It was now midsummer, and even as far south as Buenos Ayres—by the shores, too, of the refreshing sea—the thermometer did not rarely indicate 100° in the shade. Those at Buenos Ayres who knew the Parana and Paraguay, advised us to postpone our cruise till the winter, and drew alarming pictures for us of the intolerable torment of the mosquitoes, that would render our life a misery to us on the inland waters at this season.

We therefore determined to leave the *Falcon* at her safe moorings in the Tigre in charge of the boy, purchase a horse each, and undertake an expedition into the interior of the continent of about two months' duration. Our plans were rather vague when we left the capital, but Cordoba, the ancient Jesuit city in the heart of the republic, was to be our immediate destination ; and Rosario, the second city of this country and 280 miles higher up the river than Buenos Ayres, our starting-point. From Cordoba we

would journey either to the tropical provinces to the north, or westward to the Andes, as we might consider best.

Jerdein, Arnaud, and myself met at the Estación Centrale one delicious February morning. Our luggage was simple and business-like; each took with him a saddle, saddle-bags containing spare flannel shirts, &c., top-boots, a blanket, a revolver, a poncho, and a wide native belt of carpincho hide; while a broad-brimmed felt hat was on each head. After a three hours' journey in the comfortable American cars of the Campana Railway Company, across treeless, dusty plains of pasture whose monotony the rare agave and cactus alone relieved, we reached Campana, a small port on one of the many channels of the great delta of the La Plata. This is the terminus of the railway, and here we had to embark on David Bruce and Co.'s steamer *Provedor*, a comfortable vessel, where a good dinner is provided for the passengers, and whose steward is not a novice at concocting the invigorating cocktail. We had many friends on board, so the swizzle-stick, South American fashion, was not left idle. These steamers run between Campana and Rosario, a distance of about 200 miles, thus connecting Buenos Ayres with the Central Argentine Trunk Railway, whose southern terminus is at Rosario. We were enabled to form a good idea of what was in store for the good ship *Falcon*, from what we saw on this short voyage up the great Parana. We steamed all that afternoon and throughout the night up a broad stream of muddy water, winding across an alluvial plain flat as a pancake. This stream was broad and deep, as a huge river should be, and yet this was but

one minor branch of this tremendous watercourse, which, with its sister the Amazon, drains the huge southern continent ; and whose head-waters are in the unexplored tropical forests and savannahs, in close proximity to those of that other mighty river.

The Paraguay, the Parana, the Uruguay, and a dozen other mighty streams pour their waters into the common estuary of the Rio de la Plata, and it is estimated that the volume of water brought down hourly by this river exceeds that of all the rivers in Europe put together. As we steamed up we could perceive the mainland on neither side of us, for this was but a comparatively narrow channel between two huge islands. And what a strange country was this intricate network of island and channel. On our starboard hand, for instance, the mainland was thirty miles away ; between us and that were islands numberless, rising not more than two feet or so above the average level of the water—an unknown wilderness of swamp and jungle, uninhabited save in rare spots, by the shores of the more commonly navigated channels. The islands are thickly overgrown with a rank and ever-verdant vegetation. Willows, great reeds, the gnarled seibo-tree, with its bright green leaves and scarlet blossoms ; strange bushes, all interwoven with rich convolvuli, render these wilds impassable save to the carpincho or river-hog, the tiger, and the lion (as the natives call the jaguar and the puma), and deadly snakes of resplendent colour.

Near Rosario, the islands are frequently inhabited. Enterprising foreigners cultivate rice successfully on some of them, and on others, as I read from the *Buenos Ayres Standard*, certain not desirable people

are to be found : gauchos, who have given up the horse to take to the canoe—a lawless set, who make frequent raids on the *estancias* of the mainland, fishermen by profession, but pirates and banditti by practice. For those good old-fashioned ruffians, the buccaneers, are by no means extinct on the tribu-



A GAUCHO'S HOME IN THE SWAMPS.

taries of La Plata. There are districts on the banks of the Parana, for instance, near Corrientes, a thousand miles from the sea, that have acquired a very evil reputation ; cut-throat crews have often come out in canoes from the secluded *riachos* of the Chaco, seized and plundered the passing Italian

trading-schooners, and murdered the men. Most of these trading-schooners now carry a small cannon in addition to their muskets. The *Falcon*, though much smaller than any of these vessels, would, I think, be quite as capable as any of them of resisting the pirates successfully, for we are incomparably better off as regards arms.

It was pleasant to be on the Parana this fine summer night. After dinner we sipped our coffee and smoked our cigarettes on deck, as the vessel steamed up under the lovely stars of the southern hemisphere. The sides of our vessel at times almost brushed the jungle, which was now illuminated with brilliant fireflies that emulated the planets themselves. Indeed with stars above us, their reflections dancing on the gently rippling water, and the fireflies whirling all around, we seemed (for the night was dark, and we could not perceive anything else than these) to be a world ourselves, sailing through an infinite space thick with stars. It was a beautiful and curious effect, but it did not excite my unimagi-native mind quite so strongly as it did that of one of our fellow-passengers. This was an Englishman, I am sorry to say, who had to all appearance been about a week or so "on the booze." This gentleman bethought him to run up suddenly from the hot bright-lit cabin on the deck, so that the fresh night air might cool his fevered brow somewhat. No sooner did he make his appearance, than a puzzled look first came over his countenance, he rubbed his eyes, and looked around, then his jaw fell, and the most abject terror was expressed in his eyes and open mouth. He looked wildly at the myriad lights whirl-

ing above, below, and around him, put his hands to his head, closed his eyes to exclude the frightful vision, and with a tragic whisper full of horror of "Got 'em again! Oh, got 'em again!" plunged once more below; and then shouted to the *mozo* to bring him a bottle of "three stars," wherein to drown those other three million horrid stars without.

Mosquitoes soon drove us also below to play at euchre, while a musical passenger played us some pretty Spanish airs on the saloon piano.

On the following morning we found that we had reached the main stream of the Parana. On our port hand was the mainland, on our starboard a string of islands about three miles away. The river itself is still very wide, for the Entre Rios shore is quite forty miles off, an unexplored wilderness of shallow streams and long green isles intervening.

There is now a considerable navigation on the Parana. Vessels from North America and Europe load with hides, bones, and alfalfa (a sort of lucerne) at the quays of Rosario; but the navigation above this is almost exclusively in the hands of the Italians. Their vessels are handsome schooners, of little draught, but great beam, with enormous spread of canvas, and great square top-sails high aloft to catch the wind above the trees. The running-gear is generally of plaited hide, a very excellent substitute for rope. They go up against the stream, laden with wines and European produce, even as far as the centre of the Brazilian province of Matagrosso, about 2400 miles from the sea—the voyage there and back occupying about a year. They return to Buenos Ayres and Montevideo with cargoes of cedar and

valuable hard woods from the virgin forests of the Chaco, of oranges from Paraguay and other produce of those rich but little cultivated countries.

At last we came to an anchor off Rosario, the second city of the Republic, stretching along the banks of a river which even here, so many hundreds of miles from the sea, is so broad that from a ship's deck the horizon between the many islands is of water, the further coasts being invisible. Such are the sea-like expanses that stretch between isle and isle. Mr. Keenan, the popular host of the English hotel at Rosario, soon made us at home in his comfortable hotel. He already knew us by reputation, having read about our wanderings in the papers.

If you study any old atlas, and not so very old either, you will not be able to discover such a place as Rosario on the map of South America, yet you will most probably see Santa Fé, its neighbour, marked in prominent letters, though this is but a little village to the first-named large and wealthy city. For Rosario is one of those mushroom cities that rise so rapidly in this new Western world. Its prosperity is of yesterday ; it is bran-new—painfully new from an artistic point of view ; a money-making, tramwayed, prosperous place, that has doubled its population in ten years, and will, in all probability, double it again in another ten years ; for it cannot but always be a most important place, being as it is the terminus of those great railways that will in time open out all the rich regions between the Bolivian forests and the Pampas, the Pacific and the Atlantic. Now that the influx of foreigners into the Argentine Republic is augmenting so amazingly, and revolution

is waxing feebler and feebler before it, who can foresee limits to the increase of the commercial enterprise and wealth of these wonderful countries? Even now the produce that lies on the quays of Rosario ready to be put on board ship will give us an insight into what is yet to be. There are the sugars—the valuable cabinet woods of Tucuman—the hides and beef from the estancias of the Pampas—wines from the eastern slopes of the Andes, the vintage of Mendoza and San Juan; minerals, too, from the Cordilleras, and from the Sierras of Cordoba, where gold and silver and copper abound, and only await the adventurous miner.

There is but little to say about these modern Spanish South American cities. They are very uninteresting. In describing one you describe all. The same straight streets drawn at right angles to each other, with the dismal one-storied, flat-roofed houses. Tramways everywhere. A square or two. A cleanly, prosperous look about the whole, inhabitants included. Here you have everything. This chess-board-like, block system of laying out cities produces one effect that eminently strikes the stranger. In any of these long, straight streets one has an uninterrupted view right through the town. At Buenos Ayres, and more especially at Montevideo, the sea terminates the view as a rule. Here it is the Pampas. If you stand in the centre of Rosario where any two streets cross, and look up and down them, you will see that each abruptly terminates far off in a sort of mist, for no straggling suburbs surround the town. At the end of each street is the desert. The mist you perceive is the dust of the immense plain that commences at the verge of the city and stretches

unbroken for a thousand leagues. The suddenness of the exit from the thickly thronged street into the roadless wilds is very remarkable in many of these cities, and is doubtless a relic of the old days when Indian raids were frequent, and the first few founders of the *pueblo* crowded their habitations together for mutual protection, and surrounded them with a common stockade. It is indeed a marvellous contrast ; a wilderness untilled, inhabited by wild half-breeds clad in a barbaric costume, coming up to the very streets of cities, where every article of European civilization is to be found, and whose citizens are delicate in their lives and fastidiously dressed in the height of the latest Parisian fashion. It is curious to see the gaucho from the Pampas strolling through the busy streets, so out of place with his striped poncho, his laced drawers, and his hide belt ornamented with coins. He does not evince any interest or curiosity, but from his looks evidently hates and despises towns and their pale inhabitants. Life in the saddle, on the Pampas or in the Monte (bush), is the only life he knows or cares for. Horse-stealing and cattle-lifting, in his opinion, are the only pursuits worthy of a man.

We were elected members of the Strangers' Club at Rosario—an excellent club it is too—and enjoyed therein a good read of all the latest European papers. We found that there were accounts of our voyage in the *Field* and other journals ; and were amused to see that *Truth*, in a little article, hinted that we must be rather insane people. Anyhow, this paper shared this opinion with the Emperor of the Brazils, so I suppose there must be some truth in it.

One more day we pottered about the glaring hot city and its environs. In the morning we visited an ostrich farm on the river-bank; in the evening attended a public ball. For the carnival was approaching, and South Americans only requiring an excuse to commence their favourite pastime, generally open the masked balls weeks before the orthodox time, so as to get into full swing for that fearful Terpsichorean orgie which they celebrate once a year. The Indo-Spanish race, lazy in all else, is certainly indefatigable in dance. For nights in succession these people will tread unwearied their graceful native figures with supple limbs. The head—every limb—indeed the whole being, seems to be entering into the measure, inspired with a species of phrenzy. At three theatres here there were public masked balls this night attended by all classes, from stately white ladies in Parisian costume, to the simple little copper-coloured *chinas* with pink dresses of common stuff and black mantillas, ever-laughing faces, and perpetually shaking fans. There are, by the bye, some not uncomely faces among these dusky half-breeds—the Indian blood producing a much handsomer type than the negro, when crossed with the Spanish or Portuguese.

Before starting on our expedition we had to exchange the notes we had brought from Buenos Ayres for the money current up country. Every province of this republic has a circulation of its own not current in the other provinces, which accounts for the enormous number of money-changers one comes across in every city. There is a common standard throughout the whole country, called a patacon, which

is about the value of four shillings ; but this patacon has no real existence, it is a purely imaginary quantity ; there is no coin or bank-note which professes to be one or more patacones, or any fraction of the same ; but I suppose it serves as a standard whereby to compare the variously fluctuating provincial moneys.

In the province of Buenos Ayres gold or silver is unknown, paper money being the only currency. The original paper dollar was intended to represent a Spanish silver dollar or peso ; but between revolution and what not this paper peso gradually depreciated till it reached its present value of about twopence. This seeming somewhat unsatisfactory to the sage rulers of the country, they issued another superior sort of paper dollar which they called the *peso fuerte*, or hard dollar, to be of the full value of the original four and twopenny silver coin before mentioned. This is now current in Buenos Ayres by the side of the twopenny paper dollar, or *peso corriente*. But, alas ! the *peso fuerte* has also terribly depreciated by this time ; whether the Government will issue an *extra-fuerte*, and then when that goes down a *fuertissimo*, and so on, is beyond my power to say.

The Government of Santa Fé, the province in which we now are, issues a paper dollar of the value of about three shillings. The Cordoban paper dollar is worth a little more, and does represent some fixed value—the silver dollar of Bolivia. In the remoter and poorer provinces there is no paper money ; but quaint old silver Bolivian coins, Peruvian and Chilian dollars, and the like foreign money are the sole currency. I have said enough to show how confusing

this system is, and how the unfortunate traveller must lose in the frequent exchanges while travelling through this republic. It is rather a curious fact that in the wealthier republics of South America metallic currency is quite unknown, while the poorer countries like Paraguay and Bolivia have nothing else. I suppose the fact is that no one would have anything to do with the paper of these untrustworthy states, had they the impudence to issue any.

About seven leagues from Rosario, on the Central Argentine Railway, is the small town—I must not risk offence by calling it a village—of Carcarañal. Hearing that this was a likely place to purchase horses in, we took train thither on the second morning after our landing at Rosario. This railway is carried in a perfectly straight line, without curve or gradient, for hundreds of miles across the Pampas—and strange these vast plains seemed to us as viewed to-day for the first time from the windows of the car. We saw an interminable pasture, roadless, treeless, stretching all around ; here and there a great cattle farm, either unfenced or surrounded with a wire fence ; vast herds of sleek cattle and troops of half-wild horses roamed over the plain. Here and there were partial deserts of burnt-up earth and sand ; here muddy lagunas ; while at long intervals, like oases in this treeless waste, rose small isolated clumps of eucalypti, marking the sites of the estancias. Under the intense blue sky the horizon seemed to be infinitely far off, trembling and rolling like the waves of a distant sea with the mirage, while the distant eucalypti were raised by it, and seemed to be rooted in mid-air.

At Carcarañal we found a little inn, kept by a

hospitable dame from old Gaul, who made us very comfortable. A curious little camp-town this : merely a straight row of clean flat-roofed white one-storied houses ; in front a lane of small acacias, and all around and beyond, glaring under the cloudless implacable sky, the arid plain with its short dried-up grass ; a cloud of dust over all, dust of the finest and most penetrating nature, dust that will find its way through all your clothes to your skin in no time, dust that is as bad as an Egyptian plague, irritating, blinding, pore-closing, parching,—stay, let us at least give it justice—it did prepare us to thoroughly enjoy the brimming cups of caña and water, flavoured with some delicate essence of fruit, that our landlady mixed for us. There is use in everything, even in dust.

A funny collection we were in the little hostelry after dinner. At one table was our party playing at euchre in shirt sleeves ; at another several natives in camp garb gambling desperately at monte, with a very greasy pack of cards. In the next room we could perceive through the open door a merry wedding-supper party—*gringos* these, English, German, French, and Italian colonists. We had arrived here very opportunely ; for as soon as these people had dined they cleared the room for a jolly ball, which was energetically kept up all night to the merry music of a three-tuned barrel-organ. As is the free and easy fashion of this country, all strangers were welcome to join them in their merry-making. Wedding garments were by no means *de rigueur*, but it seemed the proper thing to take off one's coat while dancing.

In the middle of the night we heard in a lull in the

revelry a shouting of many voices in the distance, and then the tread and lowing of numerous cattle. This turned out to be a vast herd of many hundred head that was being driven down to Rosario from some far northern province, where a long *seca* had been prevailing, and where all beasts were dying for want of water and pasture. As soon as the *peons* had rounded in these cattle outside the town for the night, the head-man and a few others came in to seek hospitality. Attracted by the sound of the *baile* they entered the inn, and were soon dancing away with the best of us, in despite of the fatigue and stiffness of a month in the saddle. They danced in their camp dress, top-boots, silver spurs, chiripas, poncho and all, so that one might almost imagine oneself at a fancy-dress ball at home, such was the variety of costume.

CHAPTER IX.

NOT being able to find what we wanted in the way of horses at Carcarañal, we again took train to Cañada de Gomez, another camp-town a few leagues higher up the line. A typical little camp settlement we found this to be, the mushroom growth of a few years — new and prosperous, with an astonishing amount of civilization, too, considering where it is. We entered the *fonda*, or general store where the camp-man comes down to buy all he wants, groceries, powder, and especially caña, I fear. The proprietor, Schnack, is an old Dutchman, a sailor, whose long service in British ships accounts for his perfect knowledge of our tongue. He put an upper room at our disposal to sleep in. He could not feed us, only lodge and drink us, he said ; but there was a restaurant at the railway station opposite, so that mattered little.

A wonderfully cosmopolitan continent this South America is. Having left our Dutchman for the restaurant over the way, we found the proprietor of this was an old French soldier, of the Garde Imperiale, and a *maitre d'escrime*. Then we went to the barber to be shaved, and found that he was a citizen of Naples : his razors, I imagine, came out of

the torture-chambers of the Inquisition. This is indeed a very civilized little town. We not only have our restaurant and our barber, but also our judge ; also a half-finished church—this the common condition of a camp-town church, for the priests, after squeezing a certain amount of dollars from the pious, start building on an over-ambitious scale, run short of funds, and then comes a standstill in the work, until the little dribblets of offerings enable further progress. There is also a prison here, this being an imposing pair of stocks considerably placed under the shade of the pretty çina-çina trees in front of a grog-shop. The court-house where justice is dispensed, and which is also the residence of the judge, belongs to friend Schnack. The Government is a bad paymaster, and our host tells me that after many vain applications for arrears of rent he has been obliged to evict the poor judge and Mistress Justice to seek a roof elsewhere.

Peaceful and civilized though this little place appears, the untamed Indian tribes are not so far off. It is now but twelve years since the Indians made a raid here, and carried away 10,000 head of cattle, and many women, for the aboriginal has the good taste to prefer the white to the dusky beauties of his own race. But the camps of the white men have advanced many leagues further into the Indian territory since that time, and Cañada de Gomez has little to fear now. A raid of Pampas Indians is no joke. As the peaceful stock-farmer is scanning his herds one fine morning he perceives a dust on the horizon, and out of the dust soon comes on at a tremendous gallop the wild troop of naked men on splendid horses,

seeming one with their steeds—very centaurs—with long black hair waving behind their shoulders, and brandishing their long lances, while they raise their piercing and fearful war-cries. The estancia is pillaged in a few moments, the wife and daughters of the estanciero carried off, and then, swooping down on the herds, the savages drive them away to the distant pastures by far rivers that the white man knows not of. When Indians on expeditions of this nature come across a solitary white man they kill him if they find arms upon him ; if he be unarmed they treat him more mercifully (?)—they content themselves with cutting off the soles of his feet, and let him go.

Schnack's was a type of the regular camp-town store ; loafing about the bar, drinking caña, gin, and cocktails, was the usual crowd from the camp. Natives in their picturesque dress, and English estancieros—these, many of them, in the native costume also, but mostly in shirt sleeves, top-boots, broad felt sombreros, and hide belts with six-shooters and knives stuck ostentatiously therein. The Englishman of the province of Santa Fé rather affects this brigand-like get up ; but I believe there is good reason for it, as there are no few bad characters about, and the hand of justice being almost impotent hereabouts, each one must look out for himself.

When the men standing at the bar heard of our proposed ride, they of course overwhelmed us with advice. When in reply to their queries we said that we thought of riding through Cordoba to Tucuman, first one, a Yankee, said,—

“ Take train from here to Cordoba, and commence

your ride from there. There is nothing to interest you between here and that city."

Said another, a Britisher,—

"No; ride from here to Cordoba; that will be all very well. To go beyond that will be madness; you will lose yourselves and die of thirst in the Salinas, salt-deserts where there is no water—salt and cacti and sun, salt and sun and cacti, nothing more."

Said a third, a native,—

"My advice is, don't go at all. It is too hot to ride this time of the year; what pleasure can you find in galloping through the eternal salt and sun and cacti that my friend here speaks of?"

I tried to persuade this last that we were a scientific expedition, that had been sent hither by the English Government to inspect sun and salt and cacti, and send home returns thereon; but he would not swallow this, and set us down as harmless lunatics.

We were not a little laughed at, too, when we informed our friends that we intended to accomplish our journey with one horse each—taking no remounts. This was pronounced as impossible. In this land of cheap horseflesh it is the universal custom to travel with a *tropilla*—four or even eight horses to each man. A mare, the *madrina*, with bell tinkling at her neck, is also taken, and all the spare horses follow her like sheep do the bell-sheep, as she leads the way. It is only necessary to hobble the *madrina* when the party encamps for the night; the troop of geldings can be left to graze at will, for these animals will not stray far, but keep near the lady, with an affecting Platonic tenderness. This method of travelling by

tropilla is certainly by far the fastest. The fashion here is to go at full gallop, leap from one horse to another, as they in turn weary, and get over about one hundred miles a day—the South American caring little if he lose a few of his animals by the way. We however preferred our own quieter mode of travelling, which our experience in other lands had taught us was certainly possible. One horse well looked after will carry a man for a journey of months; at a very fair pace too.

The result proved that we were right, for we reached, later on, lands where there was no pasture, and where hard food for our horses had to be purchased at extravagant prices. Had we been travelling with thirty instead of four horses we should have found it rather expensive work.

Many a long yarn was spun this night for our benefit by our revolvered friends on the dangers of our way. They told us of the *monteneros* of Santiago, who would cut our throats and steal our horses; of the salt-deserts, where we would perish of thirst—deserts in whose midst two tropillas have been known to meet and fight to the death for the little skin of water that was all left to one party; of the deadly chuchu, or fever, of the northern provinces; of jiggers that would bring mortification to our toes, and the bicho colorado that would lay eggs in our legs; and so on.

About thirty miles from here is the estancia of Las Rosas, the property of the well-known Mr. Kemiss, whose horned cattle and horses are the pride of the Plate, an enterprising man who has introduced blood from England, and whose horses carry all

before them on the race-courses of South America. On the morning after our arrival at Cañada de Gomez we procured a trap and two horses and drove up to this estancia. A pleasant drive it was, too, through the clear exhilarating air of the plains ; beneath our feet were flowers of every hue, chief among which that commonest flower of the Pampas, the scarlet verbená. The grasses hereabouts were long and of various species. All of them were now capped with plumes of silver seed, so that on the horizon the white stretches of it were exactly like the sands of a distant desert. We followed the tropilla-track to the north, which consisted merely of the ruts made by the huge waggons of the caravans that have for ages wended their slow way by this route. In places which are apt to be swampy in wet weather, the ruts become very deep, so that the waggons have to avoid them and make a slight circuit : thus new tracks are formed parallel to the old, till in some softer parts of the country the road is a band of a thousand ruts, a mile or so in breadth. Such are all the roads of the Pampas—roads to the construction of which man has contributed no labour.

The pastures we crossed to-day were some of the richest of this province. Here you have a typical view of the camp as we saw it when we unharnessed our horses and allowed them a 'rest and a roll at midday. First, just before us stretched the muddy tropilla-track, a dark line through the bright grasses. Across it lay the huge clumsy walnut wheel of a broken-down waggon ; the bones of cattle were frequent, and a little further off we could see a crowd of mangy vultures feeding on the carcass of a horse.

At the entrance to the numberless bizcacha holes, among the wild pumpkins, sat, solemnly blinking, the grey owls, generally in twos, sociably. Why, by the bye, does the bizcacha always plant pumpkins and owls at his door?

Looking further away we perceived on one side the silver stretch of a laguna a league or so off, with many cattle and horses by it—also numerous plover; the grass by it not yellow and partly burnt as elsewhere, but of a vivid green. Beyond that, afar off, stretched the unbroken horizon of the plains, a long line of smoke rising from it in one place, showing where some leagues of camp were on fire.

Turning round in the other direction we could perceive some shy gama, the deer of the Pampas, playing under the shade of a solitary ombu; beyond that on the horizon the waving sea of the mirage, and two tall columns as of a waterspout dark against the bright sky—two dust-whirls that broke and vanished as suddenly as they had arisen. A strange solemn land this lonely Pampas; still, too, save for the sound of the dry north wind sighing in the grass.

At last we reached the wire fences and passed through the strong gates on to the lands of the great breeder of horses, and drove up to the hospitable house. A pleasant place this, and possessing what is very rare on the Pampas—a garden of flowers and one of fruit and vegetables. The native *estanciero* is far too lazy a man to cultivate these; he breeds his cattle in his rough brutal way; and yet, though he number them by thousands, butter and milk are unknown luxuries in his house. He is content to eat his perpetual *asado* and *puchero* without vegetables or

bread or seasoning ; alfalfa and maize being the sole produce he condescends to raise from his estate.

The locusts had been playing considerable havoc in Mr. Kemiss' gardens of late : the peach-trees stood stripped of all leaf and fruit, the stones alone hanging bare of flesh from the skeleton twigs. The blue gum-trees and the prickly pears, of which the hedge round the garden was composed, had alone resisted the ravages of these destroying swarms. As the sun set we perceived what is a common sight enough on the Pampas in summer. All around the horizon, at five different points, were long bands of ruddy flame. These camp fires sometimes burn and smoulder on for months, devouring league after league of pasture. We had an opportunity of seeing how these fires are extinguished while we were in this neighbourhood. The method is one which will illustrate as much as anything the value of horseflesh in this country. The *peons* of the estate which we were visiting perceived a fresh fire breaking out on the verge of their master's lands : immediately they galloped off to it. There happened to be a troop of mares close by grazing tranquilly. In almost less time than it takes to describe it, two of these were lassoed, thrown on their backs, killed, and their stomachs ripped right up with the long knife every native carries ; lassos were attached to the legs of the animals, and the mounted men dragged the bleeding carcasses across the burning grass—and a very efficacious method it proved to be, for the conflagration was thus got under in a few minutes.

On the morrow we borrowed horses from Mr. Kemiss, and galloped all over the country to see if any neigh-

bouring estancieros had horses fit for our expedition to sell us. We rode to the estancia of Las Tres Lagunas, then to that of Las Lomas, and that of California—where three brothers from Central California were trying their fortunes,—but all in vain ; save one tropilla of unbroken young *riscos* from the Entre Rios camps we could find nothing.

So the next morning we drove back to Cañada de Gomez in our trap. It was a sultry day, heavy with storm. When we had about half-completed our journey the sky became overclouded, and vivid forked lightning flashed in the distance. The horses trembled : their instinct evidently told them what was coming ; for nothing is more terrible than a storm on the Pampas. All animals, and man himself, are struck with terror when they find themselves overtaken on the unsheltered wilderness by these terrific tempests. The blast sweeps over these thousands of leagues of plain with force unchecked, meeting no obstacles of hill and dale to deflect and break its Titanic strength. The wind drives all before it, the vast herds of lowing cattle till they fall one on the top of the other into the swollen rivers, and are drowned. Clouds of dust are stirred up that make day as dark as night, and have been known to bury great herds—even as does the dreaded sand-storm of the Sahara—and the hailstones fall so large and with such force that they kill man and horse exposed to their fury, and, as I have myself seen, break through the tiled roofs of houses like so many round shot.

But curiously enough, where there comes but only a little and rare cultivation and civilization, the climate of a country changes. Of old the dust-storm

used frequently to rush into Buenos Ayres—now it does so rarely and to a limited extent. And wonderful though it may seem, they tell me that the presence here in the wilds of Santa Fé of a few scattered estancias, with their eucalypti, has greatly contributed to break the fury of the desert tempest and that to see it in all its horrible majesty one must now go further out into the wilder regions of the Pampas; for not only the Indians, but drought and the hurricane itself retreat before the advance of the white man. But the storm we experienced this day was quite enough for us. It came on with amazing suddenness; one moment it was hot, sultry, and calm, the next moment a wind of hurricane strength rushed down on us, and we shivered with cold, so rapidly the temperature fell. The dust rose in clouds, the hurricane threatened to capsize our trap and roll it over the plain before it. We had to turn it to the wind and heave-to as it were, stooping down with our heads buried in our ponchos; then the rain came down sharp and stinging—a rain of mud, for it gathered up all the dust from the skies as it descended—a rain, too, of sticks and stones and grass, and millions of prickly thistle-heads.

This deluge luckily did not last long, and the fury of the short-lived tempest soon subsided; but it left us most miserable objects. We were drenched; an inch of mud covered our clothes, as thickly studded with thistle-heads as a plum-pudding is with plums; and we were not sorry when we found ourselves once more under Schnack's hospitable roof.

Not being able to purchase horses in this neighbourhood, we took train to the camp-town of Fraile

Muerto, which is in the province of Cordoba. A batch of Buenos Ayres papers had reached us, so we were enabled to read how the civilized world was getting on in our absence. Among other items we were interested to learn that during the last year there had been 1600 marriages at Buenos Ayres, and 700 applications for separation. "This," adds the journal, "is about the usual average." So it seems that in the capital nearly one-half become wearied of matrimony before the first twelvemonth of nuptial bliss is over. We also read that ninety-three per cent. of the births in Cordoba were illegitimate; and that in Paraguay there was one marriage last year—this latter event being looked on by the editor as a hopeful sign, and indicative of the moral regeneration of that country. It seems from all this, that moral laxity increases in South America, as one advances further inland away from the great seaports. But we are south of the line here, and that is supposed to account for a great deal.

Before reaching Fraile Muerto we observed that the aspect of the Pampas was gradually changing. For we were nearing the region of the *monte*, or bush, which stretches hence to the tropical forests of the north. The camps, no longer monotonous wastes of grass and thistles, were covered, save in some open patches, with mimosas and thorny bushes; commonest and most imposing among which rose the algarobbas, noble trees of the mimosa species. The algarobba is a tree of great importance in South America. In the first place it is used in the place of coal on the railway engines, and its wood serves for sleepers. In the hot provinces of Santiago del Estero

it bears fruit every year ; but here, in more temperate Cordoba, but once in four years. This is a large bean-like pod full of saccharine matter. It is excellent food for cattle ; and horses, when hard-worked, thrive on it as well as on maize. Even human beings extract nourishment from the algarobba pod. The poor of Santiago almost entirely subsist on cakes made from it, and the children seem to be perpetually chewing the hard sweet seed in its raw state. An enterprising Frenchman attempted to prepare sugar from it, but failed to compete with the cane sugar of Tucuman. However, a very palatable spirit is extracted from it. The algarobba is of the same species as the locust-tree of Cyprus and Asia Minor.

On arriving at Fraile Muerto station, which is some way from the settlement, we found that civilization had progressed so far that there were two coaches to meet us. The driver of one, a sharp Indian, pounced on us first, and claimed the caballeros as his own ; the driver of the other, which happened to be the coach of the fonda to which we were bound, then hurried on the scene very disgusted indeed. After a hot dispute between the rival Jehus, the disappointed one came up to us while we were refreshing the inner man at the station bar, and said to me in a confidential manner,—

“What did he say he’d charge you ? Whatever it is, come with me and I’ll charge you less.”

The Indian’s fare was two reals a head.

“I will take you for one each,” eagerly shouted his rival on hearing this.

“No, no, hombre ; we have promised the other fellow.”

"I'll take you all for two reals, then."

But we refused even this generous offer, to his great astonishment, for he could not understand how any one could sacrifice even a real to his word. I believe he would have taken us for nothing, nay, paid us to come with him in his spite against the other driver; but we were obdurate, so he stalked off, muttering something about mad *gringos*.

We got into the Indian's trap, and drove at a gallop across a plain of alternate pasture and brushwood; then over an iron bridge that spanned the Carcavañal, a typical river of the Pampas, flowing rapid and muddy between two steep forty-feet-high banks of earth, glittering with particles of diamond-like mica—banks that were topped with evergreen mimosas, while the interspaces of the bush were full of lovely flowers, and the lofty pampa grass with its plumes of silver feathers.

Fraile Muerto is a prosperous-looking little camp-town. It for the most part consists of one big square with a double row of trees round it. Whenever a new *pueblo* is founded in South America, the native colonists commence by laying out an immense square. At first it is a mere waste, with only three or four ranchos maybe scattered along its lines, while all round is the tiger-haunted jungle. The next thing they do is to cut a race-course through this jungle, and then they sit down and rest—they have done enough—let Providence do the rest. From this nucleus a great city may spring or it may not, *Quien sabe?* As a rule it does not; but where there is much of energetic foreign blood about, cities do spring up very rapidly indeed in South America—so

is it with Fraile Muerto, which is fast becoming quite a considerable little village.

The Spanish American mind always seems to run in squares. His cities are built in cuadros all of a size ; he even measures length by squares, and speaks of so many cuadros where we should say so many dozen rods. The Portuguese American prefers lines to squares and irregularity to symmetry. The network of streets in a Brazilian city is puzzling in the extreme. You do not find there the chess-board arrangement the Argentine people are so fond of. Again, when Brazilians found some new village in the interior, they prefer to make one long irregular street of it, stretching along the high road. They do not understand concentration around a central square. At Faira St. Anna, for instance, there is one street only, with no others branching off it. Yet this town is of considerable size, and the one street it does boast is, I am afraid to say how many miles in length. There is a *café* at either end of it. If you breakfast at one, and walk briskly to the other, you will reach it just in time for dinner—at least, so the natives say ; but the story seems hardly probable. I should like to see the man who performed this pedestrian feat, for there happens to be a tramway running all down this one-streeted town, and what Brazilian would walk ten yards when he could drive, or even when he couldn't? for in that case he would remain in the end of the town he was born in, and decline to venture to the unknown further end of the street. The man who boasted of that walk must certainly have been a madman or an utterer of falsehoods.

We drove into the courtyard of the fonda of Don

Pépe. Our host came forth to meet us. Don Pépe is a great character in his way—a Roman of noble family, they say, and an ex-bandit of Calabria; he is a fine, handsome, white-haired old ruffian, and a terrible swearer. His sister, a most stately Roman dame, assists him in preserving order in his, at times, rather noisy establishment. This lady rolls off the sonorous Spanish and blood-curdling Italian oaths as volubly as her brother.

Fraile Muerto is associated with the fortunes of the ill-fated Henley colony. About twelve years since there came hither from England a strange crew of young English gentlemen with the ostensible object of cattle farming. If energy and skill in caña drinking and horse-racing are the sole requisites for a cattle farmer, then none could be better than these. These young men, unsteady, fresh from school and college and regiment, without any practical knowledge of anything, arrived at Rosario in a batch, and considerably astonished the natives by their manners and customs. The Henleyites came down on the land in the fashion of a hostile army. They had a uniform of which a plumed helmet was not the least conspicuous article; each was provided with a regulation rifle, revolver, and sabre, not to speak of the very arsenal of wonderful weapons he took on his own account in addition. They were encamped for some time in a village of wooden huts, while lands were being apportioned out to them; and here they soon showed what manner of colonists they were going to be. Drinking, gambling, and horse-racing was the order of the day. The capital they had brought with them took unto itself wings, for let the *gringo*, however

knowing in his own land, skin his eyes ere he match himself on the turf with the simple gaucho of the Pampas. So things went on, and the natives smiled at the ways of the *locos Inglesas*, won their money, acquired their mortgaged lands, while the colonists diminished woefully in number. Many of these gentlemen ultimately were driven to take any menial work they could get ; some died of delirium tremens, others self-despatched with their own revolvers ; the remainder settled down, after the first wild burst was over, with diminished means to the business they had come over to undertake.

This prosperous little town of Fraile Muerto has been built for the most part on the spoils that have been wrung from the ill-fated Englishmen by publicans and usurers.

But now, scattered all over these rich plains, are stock-farmers of our own blood but of a very different breed, experienced men from Scotland, from Australia, ready for a lark at times may be, but keeping ever a keen eye on the main chance. These are the sort of men the native had in his eye when he said, " Were it not for these strangers this republic would only be one big *bizcachero* " (*bizcacha warren*).

Fiascos in the way of emigration are frequent out here, and bring discredit on this fine country ; whereas it is the folly, or worse, of people at home that is really to blame.

There have been schemes of this nature in South America that have turned out far more unfortunately than even this one of poor, well-meaning, but misguided Mr. Henley. The Paraguayan Lincolnshire farmer scheme, for instance. During our ride I hap-

pened to see a navvy working on a remote portion of the Tucuman railway line. On my asking him the way, or some such question, he proved to be a fellow-countryman. He rested his foot on his spade, and started a chat with me :—

“ Right glad I am to have a chance of talking the old language now and again,” he said. He told me he had been a jockey in his youth ; then a groom in London.

“ And how came you out here ? ” I asked.

“ Oh, I came here as a Lincolnshire farmer,” he replied, with a humorous twitch about the corners of his mouth.

“ As a Lincolnshire farmer ? I don’t quite understand.”

“ Ha ! ha ! Well it do seem rum, don’t it now ? But that’s right—a Lincolnshire farmer. Why, you know, I saw a grand emigration scheme advertised in the papers, Lincoln farmers to go out to Paraguay and grow tobacco on land that had been bought dirt cheap from the Government ; splendid climate, and so on. *Bueno*. I did not know a rap where Paraguay was, and didn’t care ; but I was main tired of town, and times was bad, so I scraped some money together, and off I went ; and here I am, less of a Lincoln farmer than ever, I guess.”

But his case was light enough. The misery that wretched Lincoln farmer scheme brought on hundreds is inconceivable. In the first place these emigrants, who were supposed to be experienced agriculturists from the rich lowlands of East Anglia, were anything but that. Farmers, forsooth ! No more so than, and as useless in their way as, the young gentlemen of the Henley colony ; roughs from

London, the offscourings of the Dials and White-chapel, rusty acrobats, race-meeting minstrels, and the like, not unaccompanied by a large following of dirty, noisy women and puny children.

Well, this motley crowd was packed off a thousand miles inland to grow tobacco in the tropical climate of Paraguay. They reached the lands assigned to them, an uncleared jungle alternating with swamp. Here, as any one could have foretold, fever fell on the miserable, uncared-for wretches, living as they could amid deadly miasma; so helpless and ignorant that they could not even put their hands to building huts to cover them. So they perished by dozens, the little children, weak with privation and fever, being literally devoured by mosquitoes and jiggers, till they died of putrefying sores. The remnant had to be sent south again by the exertions of private charity; and, would it be believed, the men of this melancholy relic—independent, helpless, surly British workmen as they were proved to be—refused to carry from the bakers the biscuit charity had provided for them and their starving families, unless they were paid for doing so! Some of the specimens of the British working-man one sees in South America are verily strange beasts, and not calculated to do credit to their fatherland. But there was one emigration scheme that I know of that beats all the others. A peculiarly pestilential district, in a state adjoining this one, was the locality chosen. The originators of the scheme were sleek, godly men of the city of London, who richly deserve to be brought out and delivered over to the tender mercies of those that have been deluded by their plausible prospectus.

CHAPTER X.

JERDEIN was a few years back an estanciero near Fraile Muerto, and remembers it in the old days when Indian tribes roamed outside its square, and Indian raids were frequent. He was engaged in rather an amusing fiasco here, which is worth relating as illustrative of life on the Pampas camps. A popular English estanciero had been murdered by a native. The assassin, strange to say, was arrested by the authorities, and locked up in the policía of Fraile Muerto. The English friends of the murdered man knew well that the murderer would never get his deserts at the hands of his countrymen, but that his escape would be connived at, for why should not the poor fellow kill one of these wretched *gringos* when he had the chance? A good many foreigners had been assassinated lately, and this prisoner was a notorious ruffian, so Jerdein and several other Britishers determined to make an example of him. They organized an attack on the policía one dark night, with the intention of seizing and promptly lynching him. The whole thing was got up in the orthodox blood-and-thunder melodramatic fashion. There was a meeting of the armed conspirators at

midnight, horsed and masked ; the watchword was "blood." There were twenty in all. Leaving their horses outside the town they entered it, and at two a.m. broke into the policía, expecting to find it almost unguarded ; but the authorities had an inkling of what was going on—the place was full of armed *serenos*. There was a scrimmage, the lights were extinguished, a dozen revolver-shots were fired with little effect in the dark, and the whole party of would-be lynchers fled, mounted their horses, and galloped across the camp, with the commandante and eighty horsemen, who turned up suddenly, no one knew whence, at their heels. There was a good deal of chaff knocking about Fraile Muerto at their expense for some time after this. I believe the little native children even used to run after any of the conspirators that passed, and greet him with cries of "Blood !" "Blood !"

Carnival was in full swing at Fraile Muerto when we arrived. Buckets of water were being thrown liberally over passers-by, and every one was armed with the inevitable *pomito*, or squirt, of Florida water. The dark-eyed little rogues under the black mantillas made it very hot, or rather, wet and cool, for the Falcons with the aid of these detestable instruments. The night was one of revelry ; the twang of the guitar was heard through many an open door, and at least a dozen *bailes* were under way in different parts of the town ; indeed, there were as many balls as there were houses, for all the *estancieros*, *rancheros*, and *gauchos* for leagues around had flocked into Fraile Muerto for the occasion.

Thoroughly the laughing little camp girls threw

themselves into the spirit of the wild and beautiful native dances. Horse-racing, cock-fighting, and dancing are the only amusements of the Pampas, and the last is the only one which the fair sex can share with the sterner. They certainly are not stingy in their preparations for carnival in these parts; many pretty masquerade dresses were to be seen among the revellers. This afternoon a grand procession of clumsy waggons, drawn by handsome oxen, slowly perambulated the glaring, dusty streets. Waggons and oxen were tastefully decorated with flowers and coloured draperies. In one waggon was a band of musicians clad fantastically in yellow coats, that recalled the penitential dress of the victims of the Inquisition; while two men worked a huge squirt, or fire-engine, pouring volumes of water right and left—rather too rough carnival play this, but all good-naturedly taken. Another waggon was full of pretty *chinas*, dressed in a uniform of red and black, laughing and squirting scent.

At the Union Club, for we boast a club in our village, was the grand affair of the evening, the masked ball for the aristocracy. Thither we repaired. The club turned out to be merely a fair-sized room on the ground-floor of a house. This was a particularly select entertainment, yet where the exclusive grandees of Fraile Muerto drew the line I did not exactly perceive. The door of the ball-room was on the street, and was wide open; all who wished could look in and behold the spectacle, could even, as far as I could see, enter and join the dancers. The commandante was there with his pretty daughters; the storekeeper, too; and the shoemaker, with his lady and family—

these exhausted the list of the native aristocracy. Then came people with whom "one did not like to mix," and on whom the daughters of the above swells turned up their little noses—gauchos from the camp, murderers and cattle-lifters many of them—wild fellows in native dress and of savage mien. *Mate* seemed to be the only refreshment provided, and nothing there is that will better pull together the wearied dancer than this invigorating decoction of the Paraguayan yerba.

On the morning after our arrival Pépe insisted on taking us round his establishment. This caravan-serai of the Pampas consisted of a large square courtyard, round three sides of which was a low, one-storied building—simply a series of small rooms with doors opening on the said court; on the fourth side were stables and a blacksmith's forge.

"That forge," said he, "has only recently become my property. It belonged to a Frenchman; poor fellow, he drank it all away in absinthe; got drunk 'on tic,' as you English say, at my bar; so now it is mine."

"And now," said Pépe, "come, and I will show you my museum." He took us into a small room, surrounded with cases of arms and other curiosities.

"These," said he, "are chiefly the spoils of your countrymen, taken by me in lieu of bad debts; all represent so much caña drunk."

It was a melancholy spectacle—Westley Richards, Cogswell and Harrison, and the like names were to be seen on many a fine arm in this collection. Here were the best shot-guns and rifles out of English and French workshops: Martini-Henrys, Sniders, Win-

chester repeaters, Colt's and Smith and Weston's six-shooters, swords, sabres, and so on—the relics of the ill-fated Henley colonists. Here, too, were strange-made Italian stilettos, some such as are served out by the secret societies to their initiated,—all pawned for drink.

But do not imagine from all this that Pépe is a sort of Fraile-Muertan Shylock, an unpitying, grasping usurer ; on the contrary, he is a very kind-hearted old fellow, who has done many a good turn for our countrymen, as well as his own, who have come to grief here. He is beloved by all, save the authorities, who entertain a wholesome dread of him ; for Pépe holds very strong opinions as to his fonda being his castle, and more than one British neer-do-weel or Italian cut-throat has found a harbour of refuge in this hostelry. When the *serenos* come to seize the refugee, old Pépe will stand at his door and swear sonorous oaths, and with a hundred horrid blasphemies, threaten to rip up the *tripos* of any who venture to cross his threshold against his will.

Apropos of Henley colonists and scapegraces in general, the old man inflicted on us a long lecture on the evils of mixing drinks. He told us he only indulged in one drink at a time ; when, after a month of one beverage, he felt evil symptoms approaching, he changed it for another ; six weeks ago absinthe was his speciality, now it was brandy, but as he was complaining of sleeplessness and other more serious affections, he was about to knock this off. From what he told us about the peculiar wholesomeness and purity of a certain Havannah caña he had in stock, I think this will be his next experiment. What

is there in the air of South America that makes such a thirsty country of it? The Spaniard, the Portuguese, the Italian, who are so sober in their own countries, soon acquire out here as strong bibulous tendencies as the Anglo-Saxon himself.

Carnival was now over, so it was possible to promenade the streets with a dry coat ; and the natives once more began to attend to the little business they ever trouble themselves with. We let it be known throughout the village that we were in want of four good horses—five-year-olds that were accustomed to eat maize and other hard food, for the camp-horses will not do this, and a fortnight's starvation, at the least, is necessary before they can be induced to touch it.

A pure-blood Indian offered his services ; he said he knew every horse for ten leagues round, he would gallop over the camps and bring every animal in that he thought might be likely to suit us. A curious old ruffian this was, short, stumpy, with straight, long, black hair, laughing, groggy eyes, bandy legs, and a sort of duck's waddle in the place of a walk—as is that of all horse-Indians. For three days he galloped about and brought horse after horse to us for inspection, while other ragged and wild-looking fellows, who had heard of our wants, came in with tropillas and single animals. We pitted the rival vendors against each other : it was amusing to listen to their voluble lies and denunciations. After inspecting one tropilla of twenty we picked out the best two, and made a bid of thirty Bolivians for them. The owner laughed us to scorn. " Why forty will be dirt cheap for these two splendid thoroughbreds ; the Colorado is the

fastest horse over four cuadros in the whole province—besides, you spoil my whole tropilla by taking these two out.” And so he argued after the manner of one that sells a horse, in all times and among all peoples. After some haggling we brought him down to thirty-two Bolivians for the two, that is about fifty-five shillings each—quite a fancy price, but they were decent animals, and seemed to have anything but an objection to eating maize when we put some before them. They were five-year-olds, and in addition to their other virtues were provided with papers in proper form, so we purchased them.

In this country the traveller needs no passport, but his horse does. There are title-deeds to horses here as to land, and any transfer has to be made before the judge of the district, and registered in the archives—a new title, or *guia*, stamped with the judicial seal is then delivered to the purchaser, which describes the conditions of sale, and is illustrated with a diagram of the animal's marks. These marks are large characters branded in very conspicuous fashion on the horse's flanks, so that there can be no mistake about them. So it is too with cattle, and the market value of their hides must be somewhat diminished by the custom; but all this is very necessary in this land of horse-stealing and cattle-lifting.

Our old Indian generally got a few reals out of us each time he brought a horse round for inspection. These he used to invest on the replenishing of his caña jar, from which he was wont to sip freely, as he galloped over the plain in search of other animals. This went on for three days: he got drunker and drunker till he could scarcely talk, and certainly could

not walk ; but his seat on horseback, and his discrimination in choosing, and sharpness in selling horses was not in the least affected. Horse-dealing is a delightful pursuit for such as he ; the gaucho loves to prolong the agony of a bargain. He would rather take less for his horse and linger over the haggling, than be paid the sum he opens the market with straight down. We managed to pick up another decent horse for about thirty shillings, and were now ready to start.

It was a glorious morning in early March that we paid Pépe our bill, drank the stirrup-cup, and rode out of Fraile Muerto in full marching order. Each of us had his saddle-bags under him, and his blanket rolled up behind. A felt sombrero, top-boots, a native hide belt six inches broad, with a six-shooter stuck in it, and a striped poncho over the shoulder, made each man look quite an orthodox roamer of the Pampas.

And now commenced a most delightful journey, concerning the direction of which I will make a few preliminary remarks.

On looking at a good map it will be seen that wild tribes of Indians, for the most part, occupy the centre of South America from north to south, and that the Europeans occupy a band more or less broad along either coast. But in this part of the continent a thin strip of civilization has been carried right across, connecting the eastern country of the white man with that of the west ; the Atlantic with the Pacific ; the camps of Santa Fé and Buenos Ayres with the Andes and the Chilian territory. This strip is not a broad one, and as yet is but sparsely inhabited by the

conquerors ; but it is ever and ever broadening. The line of the frontier forts is ever advancing both north and south into the lands of the savages. Here at Fraile Muerto the strip is not very broad. If one travels but a few leagues to the southward, one arrives on the Indian territory of the Pampas—an almost unknown country, on which the white man has no footing—even to the deserts of Patagonia and the cold shores of Magellan's Straits. If one travels to the northward again, one will soon reach another Indian territory, that of the Gran Chaco, an unexplored waste of forest and jungle and swamp that lies between the rivers Parana and Paraguay on the east, and the provinces of Santiago Salta, &c., on the west ; and stretches north, through latitudes claimed by Bolivia and Brazil, who knows how far into the steaming tropics. It is down the centre of this strip of civilization that the Central Argentine Railway is carried, a line that is destined to be the trunk line of the whole South American system when these countries are opened out.

We proposed to ride along the line as far as Cordoba, and there leave it to travel by the old tropilla-track to Santiago and Tucuman. It is by this route that of old the caravans used to wend their slow way from Potosi to Buenos Ayres.

From Buenos Ayres to Tucuman by this tropilla-track, which winds a good deal, is 1119 English miles, according to an old Argentine postal road-book which a friend lent me. By following this route we should see a good deal of the country, and also much variety of scenery. It was curious to observe the gradual change in the vegetation as we

advanced northward to tropical Tucuman, which is eight degrees nearer the equator than Buenos Ayres is. First comes the green Pampas of Santa Fé, where the rain-fall is considerable and the climate temperate ; then gradually drier lands, the camps of Cordoba, where water is scarce, and the sky is cloudless for long months of drought ; then the regions of the monté, the bush that forms the northern limit of the Pampas ; and then a hotter and drier land, where spinous bushes and giant cacti of many species can alone extract nourishment from the arid sandy soil, encrusted as it is with glittering salt. Finally another change comes, a range of stupendous mountains blocks the horizon, the Sierras of Tucuman and Aconquija, branches of the Andes, whose summits attain the height of 17,000 feet, mothers of many rivers. Under their giant shadows spreads a great plain, a land of streams and much rain, a steaming hot, unhealthy region, breeding fatal fevers, yet rich withal, with great plantations of sugar-cane waving in the tepid breeze, and brilliant orange-groves ever noisy with parrots and other gorgeous birds of the tropics—for this is the province of Tucuman, known far and wide as the garden of South America.

I must not let the memories of that delightful ride lead me to the occupying of undue space in this book with the story of it, so let us prick our horses into a "little gallop" as they call it here, and speed across the plains alongside the straight line of the railway.

We took it easily at first for sake of selves and horses, and made a six days' ride of it to Cordoba.

Our first day's journey was across a parched country of burnt earth, scant and coarse pasture, with here and there a clump of algarrobas. The grass in this part of the Pampas does not cover the earth in a rich velvety carpet as in Santa Fé, but grows in scattered tufts with bare baked earth between—a very grass of the desert, wiry and prickly. Numerous eagles, vultures, owls, and bizcachas, seemed to be the sole inhabitants of this wilderness, a desolate expanse, with a horizon as is usual on the Pampas and most characteristic of these plains—vague, mysterious, immense—seeming to be infinitely off, and melting into a waving mirage, as if into some strange magic-land far beyond. And a strange land it is that does lie beyond, for there is the wilderness of the Indian, a desert of peril and thirst and death, stretching—so immense is it—as Head writes, “from tropic forests of palm in the north to eternal snows in the dreary south.”

But there is one sign of civilization about us, and that with its contrast tends only to increase the sense of solemnity and desolation. Only two thin bars of iron running parallel in the very straightest line, till they meet in the far perspective like a wedge, and disappear in the trembling horizon. But this insignificant-looking line of the railway has tended as much to carry progress and justice into dark lands, as even that other thin red line, of which we Englishmen are so justly proud. The thin edge of the wedge of civilization has now been driven deep into the barbarism of the Pampas, notwithstanding the fanatical obstruction of Cordoban priests, and the vain opposition of novelty-hating gauchos, who tried to lasso

the engine as it passed, and found that they had something more stubborn than an infuriated bull to deal with.

We rode on in the teeth of the hot north wind, till we came to where a bush-fire was smouldering over some leagues of country. All the grass had been consumed, the algarroba-trees had been all more or less carbonized, and tongues of fire leapt up hungrily here and there. Between the hot sky above, and the baking ashes beneath us, we soon acquired a very respectable thirst, that an old toper would have given much for ; but, alas ! we had no means of alleviating it, so it was not of much use to us.

Before dusk we reached the station of Ballesteros. We expected to find a little town here, but could perceive nothing but two or three wretched tenements, none of which was an inn.

The only decent-looking establishment was the railway station ; so we repaired thither, and to our delight found that the station-master was an Englishman, Mr. Coleson. He received us with great hospitality, and we did justice, after our exhilarating ride, to the hearty supper he put before us, as did our horses to their alfalfa and algarroba pods.

We were now gradually leaving the region of the foreigners. But few British estancieros are to be found beyond Fraile Muerto, and we were to change the comfortable homesteads and civilized ways of the *gringo* for the at any rate as hospitable, if more primitive, homes and manners of the old Andalusian colonists.

There are several native estancias round Ballesteros, so of course a juez, a comisario of police, and a

commandante have been put in authority over the rising *pueblo*. There is some amusing scandal running about concerning these great men, which is worth repeating, so illustrative is it of life in these wild camps. What I am about to relate will seem almost incredible to those who have passed their lives among the well-ordered communities of Europe; but here, be it remembered, we are in the midst of a half-barbaric people, and a people that have never known what justice is, and whose state of civilization is in many respects far inferior to that of our recent foes, the Kaffirs of South Africa.

Each of the three functionaries I mentioned above imagines himself to be the boss of the place; for their powers are rather vague, and they are hardly men capable of understanding nice distinctions. Of the three the judge, I believe, alone can write, and that only to the extent of being able to sign his name to official documents. This legal luminary receives no fixed pay, but is supposed to reserve one-half of all the fees he receives and the fines he exacts, a method which, of course, leads to unlimited extortion. The poor old gentleman, who looks more like a gaucho than a judge, had suffered a run of very bad luck of late. His cattle had perished of drought, fees and fines did not come in, for people would not be married or commit crimes as they should, so he was at last at his wits' end even how to procure a sufficiency of beef to keep up his judicial proportions. About a week before our arrival he hit upon the following happy plan. He procured a few bottles of vile gin on credit from the pulperia, and invited all his friends to a little carnival *baile* at his house. Several of

these abused his hospitality and his gin to such an extent, that on leaving towards the early hours of the morning, they commenced to reel about the township in a boisterous and unbecoming manner, and waxed quarrelsome to boot. This was duly reported to their host, who summoned them all to his presence, severely censured them, and then fined each offender five pesos. He dined sumptuously every night for a week afterwards.

Another instructive incident recently occurred at Ballesteros. It seems that a certain unfortunate debtor was so pestered by his importunate creditors that he fled into another province. It happened that a store-keeper here owed certain moneys to the fugitive. On learning this our old friend the judge, losing no time, hurried round to attach the debt, with the intention of apportioning it among the creditors, after, of course, deducting a fair percentage for court fees. But, alas! he was too late. It happened that the commissary of police was one of the creditors, and had wisely anticipated all the others. He had visited the store-keeper, and obliged him to deliver the whole sum over to him. A stormy meeting between judge and commissary ensued in the open road before the assembled populace. The judge demanded a restitution of the moneys by the commissary. The latter refused to do anything of the kind, and openly accused the old gentleman of desiring to appropriate all to himself and rob the creditors. Thereupon the judge, gliding over the retort courteous and other intermediate stages of discussion, passed on at once to the countercheck quarrelsome, and said :—" Senor Com-misario, you lie ;" at the same time striking him

across the face with his *rebenque*, or whip of plaited hide. On this the comisario retorted by knocking the judge down with the back of his sword, called assistance, and arrested that high functionary. Next he had him placed on a horse with his feet tied underneath its belly, and marched him off to Fraile Muerto, where he put him in the stocks.

Barbarous enough, too, as a rule, are these camp-town stocks. There is no convenience for sitting down as in our comfortable old English stocks, where Hudibras took his ease. Here the feet are imprisoned at some height from the ground, while the body is left to shift for itself, dangling down often with the head undermost. In this uncomfortable position an unfortunate wretch is often left untended and without food for days, through sun, and rain, and dew.

Verily a cruel people these Indo-Spanish, a crueller cross of two cruel races. The tortures of the old Inquisition could not have been worse than some of the horrible South American punishments of the present day—the stacado, for instance. In this the wretched victim is stretched out on his back on a pile of knapsacks. Four stakes are stuck in the ground round him at some distance off. Thongs of raw hide are drawn quite taut from these and attached tightly to his hands and feet; then the knapsacks are removed from under him, and he is left suspended. Presently the hot sun shrinks up and tightens the cruel thongs, his limbs are drawn out with a slow but immense power. He experiences all the agonies of the rack. The joints are often pulled out of their sockets by the fearful strain; and if the poor wretch does not die, he is left a helpless cripple for life.

During last year's revolution at Buenos Ayres an officer, suspecting his servant of theft, ordered him to be put to this torture till he confessed his crime. The fellow was stretched out in an open place at the bottom of the garden of some friends of mine. For four days and nights his groans and cries of agony appalled all the foreigners who dwelt near, and delicate ladies were made seriously ill by these sounds of Inquisition tortures enacted at their very gates.

.But to return to our sheep, that poor old judge ; he seems to be ever getting into scrapes. Another rather good story, and an authentic one, is told of him. Some time back he was playing at cards in the baker's house with a capataz of railway navvies. The capataz was unlucky, and lost considerably. Suspecting the judge of foul play, he refused to pay up. Thereupon the judge determined to sue him, but being so far conversant with law as to know that *nemo in sua lite potest judicare*, he assigned this debt of honour to the baker, who then hailed the offending capataz before him. Our judge solemnly listened to the case, inflicted a fine, and sentenced the defendant to imprisonment until it was paid. But the capataz was a sharp man, and found means to repay the judge for this judicial farce. He went off to another, I suppose a superior, judge, who though he did not think it right to set aside the decision of his learned brother, at any rate inflicted a heavy fine on him, for countenancing unlicensed gambling. In this land of liberty a licence is needful for nearly everything—a game of cards, a private party, or a ball.

Such are the magistrates who are supposed to administer justice in the camps ; petty tyrants who imagine that their powers have no limit, whom the fear of assassination alone keeps in check. The poor people, the friendless widows whom they can bully and rob with impunity, are of course quite unaware that there are higher tribunals to which there is an appeal from the decisions of these ignorant and unjust judges. Perhaps it is as well after all that they are so unaware in this land, where, if rumour be true, the highest as well as the lowest official has his price.

The laws of this republic are excellent in theory, codified as they are after the schemes of Bentham and the French jurisconsults, but men capable of administering them are sadly wanting.

The law as regards murder here is very extraordinary ; too harsh and too lenient at the same time. Accidental and justifiable homicide is placed more or less on the same footing as wilful murder. Thus, if an honest man by accident or in self-defence kills another, he is imprisoned awhile and then sent into the army to serve on the Indian frontier ; no pleasant and luxurious station that. Again, if a villain stab an old man in the back to rob him of his little hoard, he likewise is transformed into a soldier as a punishment, and like all others has his chance of rising in the ranks. The late station-master of Ballesteros was brutally murdered by a peon. He is by no means the only British station-master that has been assassinated at his post on these railways. His murderer is now a non-commissioned officer, and was pointed out to me at the head of an escort of prisoners on the march.

This night I am writing my notes in a bedroom, with a candle in front of me on the table. The light has attracted all the insects of the neighbourhood, who are immolating themselves wholesale in the tempting flame, a very entomological museum that only South America could turn out at so short a notice. There are all manner of moths and beetles and strange creatures of all sizes and shapes and numbers of legs—some lean, some fat—of all colours ; some very uncanny of appearance ; and all humming and buzzing in different notes and keys. Verily, this is the land of bichos ; every month has bichos of its own peculiar to itself, but the omnipresent mosquito flourishes through all the months. Of this plague, too, there are many species ; some are enormous fellows striped like tigers, and capable, I should imagine, of sucking your blood through a thick hide boot ; others small and black, but no less irritating. But enough, it almost makes one swear to think of them !

That word bicho, by the way, is a very useful one. I suppose originally it was intended to signify beetle, but it means a good deal more than that now. It is more comprehensive in its meanings than even the Yankee bug. The term bicho is used here to signify not only an insect but any strange beast. The gaucho calls the tiger a great bicho. If he were to perceive any animal—say an elephant—that were new to him, he would speak of it as that bicho. Not only to animals but even to inanimate things is the term applied. I heard a native call a grain unknown to him a bicho. Old Pépe, of Fraile Muerto, would call his morning draught his bicho ; and people talk here of putting spirit in their water to kill the

bicho, and very careful they are, too, to do this. The water bicho has a poor chance indeed with the average South American.

A violent storm of thunder, wind, and rain refreshed the parched soil this night, and was very grateful after the recent heats.

CHAPTER XI.

ON the morrow we saddled betimes and rode through the town, or rather nucleus of a town, consisting as it did of a store, one other house, a pair of stocks, and a race-course.

We galloped over the plain, brighter and more beautiful after the rain. Here by monté of prickly bushes, under whose lee the grass was pressed down, showing where the wild beasts had crouched for shelter during the storm. Here by clumps of feathery pampa grass, and over greenest pastures thickly dotted with the scarlet and purple blossoms of verbenas and polyanthi. A south-west wind blew in our faces, odorous of mint and vanilla and a thousand flowers, and fresh and invigorating after the norte of yesterday, dry and hot as it was from its passage over a thousand leagues of parched steppes.

Who can do justice to these glorious Pampas—to the irresistible fascination of this vast expanse of grass and flowers—to the intoxicating delight of a gallop over them at breezy dawn, and to that peculiar quiet charm and sense of ecstatic calm that subdues even the most unimaginative man, when sitting by the evening encampment he is a spectator of that

magnificent appearance—a sunset on these ocean-like solitudes? There is no scenery, not even of the great mountains, that so overwhelms a man with a sense of his littleness, with a consciousness of what an immense unknown there is around him, as that of the South American steppes, where all Nature is so vast and vague.

Just before we entered the township of Villa Maria, which we had chosen as the destination of our second day's journey, we traversed a pretty wilderness of rank weeds, ten feet in height, all new to us, luxuriant, of many scents and flowers, and noisy with song of bird and hum of cicada. Riding through this we suddenly came upon a strange scene worthy of the brush of a Long. Dark between us and the golden sunset, there came towards us through the varied vegetation a troop of some thirty women, walking in slow and solemn procession; dusky half-breeds and Indians these, with their shoulders and raven hair covered with the black shawl of the country, and barefooted. Before them walked four girls who bore a little gaudily-painted image standing erect on a stretcher. This was a celebrated saint, who was now on his way to pay a visit to a neighbouring saint. Every native likes if possible to have a little wooden saint of his own in his rancho. It is believed that these saints are of sociable disposition and like to meet each other at times. So San Martin, in Lopez's rancho, is carried to visit Santa Rosa, in Gonzalez's rancho; an excuse for much caña-drinking and gambling. Some of these saints are celebrated for the miraculous cures they perform. Such a one's saint, for instance, is great at the curing of rheumatism.

When this is the case, he is often a good thing to his owner, who lets him out to sufferers at so much a day. A man will even pawn his saint sometimes ; but this is looked upon as unlucky, and the saint has been known to lose his virtues after having been thus treated. The priests do not much encourage this system of private saints—they like to have a monopoly in them, I suppose, and to act as go-betweens to saints and sufferers. Far from my intention is it to ridicule any of the rites of the Roman Catholic Church, but the religion of the South American camps is not the Roman Catholic religion—and none deplore this more than the educated dignitaries of the Church at Buenos Ayres—but a superstition of the very grossest kind, encouraged by an ignorant native priesthood, which, as Mr. Bates says in his excellent work on South America, “on everything pertaining to morals and the ordinary decencies of life, has its own opinions and ideas, which are certainly somewhat at variance with those usually entertained in Europe on such matters.”

Villa Maria is an important little place, being at the junction of the Cordoba railway and the new and yet unfinished line to Mendoza and the Andes. Here we passed the night in an hotel kept by M. Albert, a Frenchman, who prepared for us a capital dinner that reminded us of Europe, and which was washed down with wines from the slopes of the Cordilleras—the vintages of Mendoza, Rioja, and San Juan—which are by no means despicable.

We were now experiencing for the first time the attacks of that plague of the Pampas, the *bicho colorado*. This minute pest burrows into the lower half of the human leg, and there proceeds to lay its

eggs under the skin ; when the young bicho is hatched he works his way out of his cradle to the outer world, a performance that produces the most intolerable itching. These little beasts do not attack one singly but in hundreds, and in some cases produce nasty sores, but *aguardiente*, or other spirit, well rubbed in, generally brings relief.

On our third day we rode to the camp railway station of Chañares, a distance of only twenty-two miles ; but here we had to halt for the night, as a waterless, pastureless wilderness lay between this and the next stage, Laguna Larga, forty miles further on. This day we perceived a broad purple streak along the horizon like a sea of blood. On approaching it this proved to be thickly-growing polyanthi, covering a vast area of plain. Not only a land of bichos is this, but of thorns. As we unsaddled our horses, and lay ourselves under a big mimosa among the ants for our midday halt and siesta, we were made unpleasantly aware of how thorny a land we were approaching. The grass of this arid portion of the Pampas is a very grass of the desert, stiff, hard, sharp as a needle. Every plant and bush and tree is covered with thorns. There are balls of seed, too, studded round with cruel needles, like porcupines ; if you pluck these, your hands are filled with the minute and irritating points. Some of these seed-balls are as big as large plums, and roll along with the wind. When they strike one's coat they anchor themselves there and cling so tenaciously, that in wrenching them away much of the material of the cloth comes away also.

Our poor horses did not seem to appreciate this sort of vegetation in the way of pasture, but the algarrobas

were covered with pods, which we plucked and fed them with, to their evident gratification. At Chañares, jovial Mr. O'Donohue, the station-master, and his kind wife received us with true Irish hospitality. After our asado and praties—unwonted luxury—we camped out for the night on the platform, and slept the sleep of the just until midnight, when the train to Cordoba thundered in. “Caramba! what a lot of passengers for Cordoba,” I heard the guard say as he saw our prostrate forms. “Ah, no, it's those yacht fellows; for I can see Don Arturo's nose peeping above his blanket.” The guards of the trains—old English sailors most of them—knew us by this time, and were wont to exchange greetings with us, as we passed each other daily on the line—for the train runs to Cordoba one day, and returns to Rosario the next. That particular nose, by which they recognized us this night, was one of the great features of the *Falcon*; its owner is very proud of it, and, indeed, once seen, it is not soon to be forgotten, with its noble proportions coloured by the suns of many climes.

Our fourth day's journey was to Laguna Larga, a longer ride than usual. To one travelling over these plains each day brings some new feature in the vegetation. This day we crossed a large space where grew a grass three feet in height, topped with the most lovely feathery seeds; these, waving in the wind, caused the plain to assume the appearance of a rolling sea of softest wool or down—a most pleasing and curious effect. We noticed how far more numerous the birds were in this region, where the Pampas merged into jungle, than in treeless Santa Fé. Peewits, vultures, eagles, and many other varieties

were here, while a vast multitude of green parrots kept up a perpetual chatter over our heads. An immense cloud of martins too was flying north, doubtlessly emigrating from the impending winter of bleak Patagonia ; a wonderful number of them. Many were resting awhile on the telegraph wires ; they crowded on them, sitting close together, fluttering and chattering—living festoons of birds stretching a league away.

We then crossed a very parched district, waterless and treeless, where a strong stink of the skunk was the prevailing odour of the sultry air. Towards mid-day we sighted right ahead a square, black mass, rising conspicuously over the level plain. This turned out to be a tank in which the scant water of a neighbouring laguna is collected after rainfall in order to supply the railway engines. We called a halt, unsaddled our horses, and indulged in a welcome draught of the water—brackish, muddy, and tepid though it was. A native was in charge of the tank ; beside the hut in which he lived there was another wretched mud rancho, into whose roof a stick was thrust, with a white rag flying at its summit, indicating that this was a grog-shop ; for even this ungodly, houseless spot in the wilderness must needs have its pulperia.

It is astonishing how far off the thirsty traveller can distinguish that blessed white flag in the clear atmosphere of these level steppes. We lit a fire by the tank, and bringing forth from our saddle-bags some ribs of beef we had brought with us, pierced them with our iron *asador* (spit), which we then stuck into the ground in the midst of the fire. Thus was soon ready for us that national dish of South America,

the asado. A luxury it is, too, out in the camps, with the sauce of a healthy appetite ; but an asado eaten with knife and fork, within doors, is hardly to be recommended. We washed this down with some caña from the pulperia, enjoyed a siesta, and then rode on to the station of Laguna Larga, where Mr. Wynn, the station-master, who was expecting us, had prepared a good square supper for the travellers. This night, like the last, we passed on the platform comfortably enough.

Early in the afternoon of our fifth day's ride we reached the banks of the Rio Segundo, a river that rises in the Sierras of Cordoba, and ultimately flows into the Mar Chiquita, an inland lake whose waters never reach the sea, but are absorbed by the thirsty wilderness. The Rio Segundo is here a broad, rapid stream of clear water flowing over a sandy bed ; extensive sand-banks border its edges, backed by banks overgrown with tall grasses and shrubs, a jungle inhabited by many pumas and parrots. We met a native, who gave us instructions where to cross the river so as to avoid the quicksands. The water was low, so we found no difficulty in fording. This is by no means always the case. Many men and cattle are lost at this ford yearly. In a real *crescente* it is, of course, quite impossible to effect a passage. These *crescentes* of the rivers of the Pampas are as terrible and sudden as those of South Africa. A few hours heavy rain in the far Sierras, and down comes the flood with a thunderous roar—sweeping all before it, bearing down on its swollen waters huge trees and drowned cattle and the wrecks of habitations.

The water of this river is very wholesome, and is

strongly impregnated with the sarsaparilla that grows thickly on its banks in places. Having effected a safe passage we gave our horses a rest, while we indulged in the very unwonted luxury of a bath. For this purpose we waded to a pretty, willowy island in the middle of the stream. No sooner were we in than a group of girls came down to the bank, undressed with the utmost sang-froid and entered the river not far from us, splashing about merrily, with their long black tresses falling almost to their heels. Our presence in no way discomposed them; the Indian and half-breed damsel is not troubled with an excess of modesty.

The little township and station of Rio Segundo is but a mile distant from the river-bank. Here we passed the night. Mr. Mott, the station-master, gave us much information as to the profusion of game in the neighbouring montés. The pumas are almost the only sportsmen who revel in this grand hunting-ground, where are to be found innumerable wood-pigeons, parrots, three varieties of partridges, teal, snipe, duck, geese, chunas, ostriches, jaguars, deer, and many other beasts and birds.

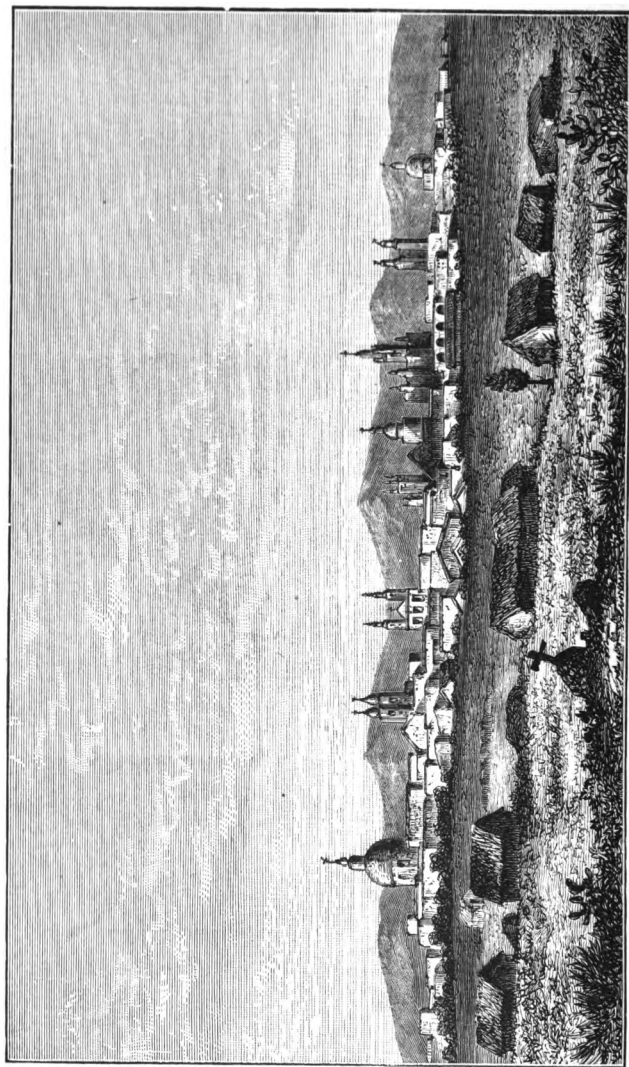
The next, our sixth, day's march, was to be our last in the company of the railway line; we were no longer to have the certain hospitality of a British station-master to look forward to at the end of each day's journey, for this night we were to reach the city of Cordoba.

The Sierras now loomed distinctly on the north-west horizon, refreshing indeed to the eye after these hundreds of leagues of unbroken plain. We greeted the hills once more with almost as keen a delight as

the mariner the loom of land after a long voyage on the plains of the salt sea.

The country between the Segundo and Cordoba is of a very pleasing character. We had evidently left the Pampas proper at last, and were entering the region of the bush that stretches hence to the tropic forests of the north. We rode through groves of algarroba and beautiful flowering shrubs, carpeted with the variegated blossoms of verbena, polyanthus, and other plants. The land, no longer of a dead level, was slightly undulating. As we were galloping down the pleasant glades one of us shouted in delight, "Hurrah! here is a peach-tree covered with fruit." We all drew near, but were doomed to disappointment. It was but some poisonous plum of the monté, amber of hue, and comely, but acrid in taste, and not any kin to the familiar old fruit we had mistaken it for.

At midday we hobbled our horses, plucked some algarrobos for them, and lunched off some sardines, biscuit, and caña we had brought with us. As I was sitting down I suddenly perceived two bright eyes glaring at me from a large hole in the ground. I dropped my sardine, and put my hand to my knife, not knowing what strange beast this might be, and what were his intentions; but I soon perceived that it was but an innocent, amiable creature after all, against whose character I have never heard any accusation brought—an unlovely scaly monster, somewhat resembling an alligator, yet inoffensive enough, being only a poor iguana that was peeping out of his house with no evil design, merely wondering what we intruders on his solitude might be. I presented him



Cordoba.

[Vol. I., page 189.]

with a bit of biscuit, which accepting gratefully, he retired unobtrusively into his house.

At last we reached a ridge overlooking a vast expanse of country: to our astonishment, for we were unaware that we had been ascending so much, and never expected to see Cordoba so far below us. It was a magnificent view: beyond the jungle that sloped downwards from where we stood, there lay extended a vast level plain, well watered with many silver streams, bordered with rows of poplars. Arable fields and pastures stretched far to a distant range of grand mountains, swelling range behind range. Lofty indeed they seemed to us after the interminable plains, and indeed some of the summits of these Sierras are 7000 feet in height; and in the centre of this plain, in the bend of a broad river winding out of sight into distant groves, we perceived the fair white city, with many domes and spires of churches, some of a bright white stone, others of marble, others gleaming with gold. To us, coming straight from the wilderness, this sudden first view of Cordoba was as that of the Delectable City to the worn pilgrim of that quaint history which is so delicious to the mind with its old-world fragrance.

Yes, before us was the world-renowned Cordoba, the Cordoba of the Jesuit fathers, the city of the churches, and the ringing of bells, the sanctimonious town of priests and doctors, the oasis of learning in the wilderness, in whose antique university how many generations of youth have acquired the Aristotelian philosophy, and all the humanities, and inhumanities to boot, if report be true. A mysterious place this ancient stronghold of the much-dreaded society of

Jesus, in the heart of South America, with a false-learned and narrow-minded population to this day, over which the priests have retained a great deal of their old power. When the railway was first brought up to the gates of Cordoba, the *frailles* felt that the old days had gone for ever, and that the dreaded light was coming, the old order changing for the new. In every church they preached fiercely against the accursed thing, and, had they dared, would have urged the pious citizens to tear up the rails, and cursed the fatal iron way.

But let us linger no longer on the hill that overlooks the ancient city, but ride boldly in, more boldly far than we could have done in the olden days, when the Inquisition with its tortures awaited the heretic *gringo* who dared venture here. From the ridge upon which we stood the track gradually widened until it became quite a decent road; for Cordoba, like all other cities in this land, is a mere oasis of civilization in the wilderness; its streets are continued as roads but a few hundreds of yards outside the town, and then dwindle away to scarce distinguishable tracks.

As we descended we became conscious of a great and sudden change in the Nature around us. No longer the level plain, so stoneless that one could not so much as find the smallest pebble wherewith to threaten a snarling cur, but here, at the edge of the Sierras, the granite peeped out occasionally through the soil, a country of rocks and of running water, and where the feet of horses are shod with iron, as is never the case on the Pampas.

Across the road and alongside of it ran with much

sound streams of clear sparkling water. We passed, too, huge waggons, slow, groaning horribly, drawn by oxen—waggons of hard red wood, in the construction of which no iron had been used, not even for one nail or tire of wheel, but the parts of which were lashed and laced together with thongs of raw hide.

Our poor unshodden horses of the Pampas were affrighted at the strange surroundings, they stumbled and shied at every step; never had they before been down so steep an incline, felt such stony ground under their feet, or heard such sound of running water. There was a little water-course that was carried across the road in a sunken wooden trough, or canal, some eighteen inches broad at most; though small, it babbled along noisily enough. The horses could not make this out at all; they sniffed at it suspiciously, shook their heads, became very uneasy, and refused to cross it. Ultimately, by dint of much persuasion of whip and spur, they did jump it; each in his turn pulled himself together, took a tremendous leap, and cleared it by yards and yards—a ridiculous spectacle; the prudent creatures evidently were determined to make no mistake about it, and give as wide a berth as possible to the uncanny phenomenon.

There are no suburbs to this city, the wilderness stretches down to the edge of its mediæval streets and squares. Just outside, it is true, there is a wretched *ceinture* of rubbish—offal, bones, broken bricks, and the like, among which, like jackals, dwells a miserable pack of squatters—a low type of half-breeds, hideous and repulsive in aspect. Their

squalid mud ranchos are scattered pell-mell over this disreputable locality without any pretension to order.

We rode into the city, which seems a well laid-out and agreeable place at its first aspect. We traversed long straight streets of one-storied white houses with the usual prison-like grated windows looking on the street ; clear water flowing down every gutter. The streets here are paved with stone ; on hearing the clanging of their hoofs on these our horses became almost unmanageable in their alarm, and when they did quiet down a little, proceeded with steps gingerly and timid, as if red-hot iron was beneath their feet.

We repaired to the "Hotel d'Europa," to which we had been recommended, and sent our horses to a stable to be looked after during our stay at Cordoba, with injunctions that they should be shod, another new experience for the poor beasts. The genial host of the "Europa," who is a German, made us very comfortable in his excellently managed hostelry.

CHAPTER XII.

ON the morrow after our arrival we sallied forth to inspect the city. We found ourselves once more in a civilized centre, for tramways, American bars, and French *cafés* have followed the railway, and now relieve the sense of oppression and *ennui* which pervades the atmosphere of the slow, grave old university town.

We had been awakened early by the ringing of many bells in many old churches, so had a good day before us to explore the streets and handsome squares of the city of priests and women. For, indeed, priests and women seem to form the bulk of the population of Cordoba. The *frailes* are a sour-looking lot enough, though some of the young clericals are regular *petits-mâîtres* in their way, and seem to have quite a feminine taste for lace and millinery. The women are not gifted with much beauty, with the exception, of course, of those of the high caste—pure white Spanish beauties, who are invariably dressed in the latest Paris fashion. But of these there are but very few; all the others are half-breeds, of a peculiarly disagreeable, dark, muddy complexion, and possessing the harsh Indian type of feature. Indeed, the population hereabouts has no right to rank itself with white men at

all ; these people are but the mongrel descendants of Indians that have been tamed by the Jesuits. This extensive crossing of the Spanish with the Indian blood has, in the opinion of those who know, proved to be a great curse to these countries, for the result has been a useless breed that cumpers the face of the earth. Not as in North America, where the aboriginal races have vanished like smoke before the advance of the white man and his civilization ; here the Indian blood has mingled with that of the Latin colonists, overpowered it indeed, and imbued it with its own barbarism, so that in many regions the conquerors have adopted the manners, dress, and even language, of the conquered tribes.

The negro and mulatto belles of the West Indies know how to set off and match their complexion and peculiar style of beauty with appropriate dress and gaudy tints ; but the Indo-Spanish half-breed and *chiña* of Cordoba envelopes herself from head to foot in a shabby-looking black shawl, or sheet, which, especially when rusty with age, does not tend to show off to advantage her muddy face. Though her toilette be thus simple, and does not entail heavy milliner's and *chapellerie* bills, the *chiña* belle is very particular in one respect—boots ; she must have a pair of nice-fitting French-styled boots. No more acceptable present can you make your Cordoban sweetheart, should you have the bad taste to possess one, than *uno par de botas nuevas*. Cordoba, by the way, like its namesake in old Spain, is a great place for the working of leather, and its damsels evidently consider that there is “nothing like leather,” and despise all other additions to their doubtful charms.

When the traveller has explored the cathedral with its massive gilding, the university, and some of the curious old churches—life is too short to visit them all—he cannot do better than light his cigar and stroll round the two great squares—the Plaza 25° de Mayo and the Alameda. There is a great contrast between these two. The latter is strictly old world and Spanish; a solemnity pervades the severe enclosure, deserted as it generally is, save for some silent stalking *fraile* with shovel hat, or black draped *chiña*, well harmonizing with the spot. This square is laid out with strictest mathematical regularity; round it are the usual white, grated-windowed, one-storied houses, with no shop-windows gay with display of goods—lifeless, prison-like. A lake of water occupies the centre of the Alameda, in the middle of which is an island cut into some mathematical figure, with a bright white temple of Greek architecture on it. There is a cold, artificial, confined look about the whole place, that seems strikingly emblematic of the old life of the ecclesiastical stronghold, austere, working in a narrow groove, never looking beyond its own limited horizon of the cloister wall. Rows of fine willows once bordered this lake, but during the tremendous hurricane that swept over Cordoba two years back, all these were uprooted. This must have been a fearful tempest, it bent double every heavy iron and brazen cross that tops the manifold steeples of this city of churches, and thus they still remain as we saw them, sloping all one way, a sign to the traveller of what a South American pampero can do at times.

This dreamy Alameda, so lonely and stern of aspect, that one would imagine it had never been awakened to any show of life, save by the excitement of some *auto-da-fé* of heathen Indians, does wake up in a languid sort of way once a day. Towards the late afternoon when the shadows of the Sierras come down to the city, and the southern cross with a myriad stars begins to illumine the delightful night of inland South America—the haughty Spanish beauties come forth in their carriages, and drive round and round the lake for three-quarters of an hour or so, while a considerable crowd of *chiñas* and others of the lower orders promenade on foot, marveling at the white beauty of the upper caste.

The other square—the Plaza de 25° de Mayo, is in the centre of the city, and is far more lively than the gloomy Alameda, for it is here that the energetic money-making *gringos* most do congregate. Fine shops and brilliant *cafés* surround it. At one side is the old Gothic cathedral, perhaps the finest specimen of mediæval architecture in the new world. A pleasant and well-tended garden occupies the centre, with two avenues crossing it diagonally from the corners of the square, as is the fashion of most of the old Spanish plazas; shrubs, splashing fountains, and winding walks fill up the interspace. Here every evening the military band plays excellently the enchanting airs of old Spain.

A visit to the North Market in the early morning is worth the while to the European stranger. Ugly old women and girls, half-bred Indians from the country, sit on the bare ground all over the quaint old enclosure; not chattering overmuch, nor importuning

the passer-by to purchase, but rather stolidly sucking the perpetual maté through the bombilla, each wrapped in the black funereal shroud I have described, squatting in front of her small stock of wares. Some have but a little mound of algarroba-pods, maize, or alfalfa before them, about six-penny-worth in all, which nevertheless they have perhaps brought hither several leagues, travelling on foot through the night. Others vend melons, wheaten cakes, and strange fruits ; while hide horse-gear, old and new, has its separate corner of the market allotted to it ; and boots, of course—that chief production of Cordoba,—are temptingly laid out in long rows before the marketing *chiña*.

We loafed about the ancient city for three days, made a trip to some of the pleasant vales at the foot of the Sierras, and then prepared for our ride to Tucuman. There is an English photographer established in Cordoba—who alone of any we met had undertaken the journey from here to Santiago del Estero. From him accordingly we procured a description of the old *tropilla*-track, and a list of the good halting-places. This track, which is a portion of that great route across South America along which in the olden days the strings of jingling mules were wont to bring the bars of silver from the mines of Potosi to Buenos Ayres, has been deserted by travellers since the construction of the Tucuman railway. The caravans of waggons from the interior now alone make use of it. From Cordoba to Santiago del Estero, the capital of the province of the same name, is according to some 130 Cordoban leagues (three and a half miles to a league) ; according to others, more. The latter, I

think are right, for the track winds considerably, and we were sixteen days accomplishing the distance, riding at no mean pace for about twelve hours each day.

The railway to Tucuman strikes straight across the *salinas*, or salt-deserts, an almost impracticable route for horses, for apart from the lack of pasture and fresh water, there are times when, after heavy rains in the Sierras, a strong wind blows the waters towards the desert in a mass, so that they roll over it like the Red Sea during Pharaoh's famous march, and convert the salt plain into a broad inland sea, with no land visible on any horizon. The railway is carried along a raised bank which is always above the level of the inundation.

On the other hand the road to Tucuman *via* Santiago sweeps one hundred miles to the eastward of the railway; skirts the salt-desert, and winds among the undulating hills of the province of Santiago, one of the poorest and most thinly populated of the republic, a mere jungle for the most part, lying between the salinas on one side, and the Indian hunting-grounds of El Chaco, beyond the great Rio Salado, on the other—a province between two deserts. This country, according to our friend the photographer, would not fail to interest us, for its scenery is picturesque, and it is inhabited by a primitive people, poor yet hospitable, dignified and courteous, and preserving all the manners and customs of their ancestors, the old *conquistadores*, who came here under Pizarro, ages ago.

The Santiagenas, however, are much hated and feared by the Argentines of the south, having ac-

quired an unenviable reputation as bandits, murderers, and cattle-lifters. Let me anticipate somewhat by stating that among this ill-famed people we met with greater kindness and hospitality than in any other of the five provinces which we traversed in this expedition. The Santiagenas, it is true, return the compliment, by accusing the Cordobans of being the greatest assassins and thieves in South America. The Cordobans, in their turn, heartily abuse both their neighbours of Santa Fé and Santiago, and so it is throughout the republic ; but all unite in giving a very bad character indeed to the men of Santiago. As far as my experience, and that of others who know these countries better, goes, the reports as to the dangers of travelling in this part of South America, are grossly exaggerated. I do not suppose it would be quite prudent to walk all over the republic alone and unarmed, but it would be still less prudent to do so in many countries in Europe I know of. Organized bands of banditti, as they have in Mexico, are quite unknown here, unless it may be in revolution times, when every South American becomes more or less of a brigand for the nonce. Considering how impotent the arm of justice is in these remote provinces, that there is practically no police, and that these vast montes could shelter large bands of robbers and enable them to defy the authorities with absolute impunity, it is wonderful that there is so little crime. It is indeed creditable to these poor half-breeds, that, left to themselves as they are, they should be so law-observing and orderly. Mule-trains laden with silver dollars often make enormous journeys here without an armed escort being deemed necessary to

accompany them. If the people that inhabited these wild steppes were of Anglo-Saxon blood, it strikes me that this would hardly be the case, and that in the absence of other law, that of Judge Lynch and the Vigilance Committee would soon become necessary.

We were now to leave the land of paper, so we had to supply ourselves at the Cordoba branch of the London and River Plate Bank with *chirolas*, small silver Bolivian coins which are current in the northern provinces, and others of anything but pure silver, bearing on one side an impression of the blessed cinchona-tree. The value of a very few sovereigns in this spurious metal weighs somewhat, so we had to divide these coins among the party, and no small addition did they make to our baggage.

We were strongly recommended to take a native peon with us, and a friend at the bank found us the very man—"A regular ruffian," he said, "doubtlessly an old horse-thief, and therefore the very one to see that your horses are not stolen; a native endowed with that wonderful instinct every true gaucho possesses, which enables him, when yet afar off, to detect the presence of water or pasture, to tell where a river can be forded with the least difficulty, and the like—a very useful man. You will find, perhaps," he continued, "that he will like to hurry over some portions of the road, as he is wanted in more than one place." This, indeed, we found to be the case; on one occasion we became aware that he was taking us by a very circuitous route to the place we wished to reach. The following conversation then ensued:—

"Is there not a way shorter than this one, Manuel?"

"How no, senor, there is a road a little shorter."

"Then why have you not taken it?"

"Because, senor, I know some one on that short cut."

He said this simply, without further comment, as if this was the most natural reason in the world. I suppose he once had a misfortune there—a South American euphemism for having murdered a man—and was being looked out for by revengeful relatives of the deceased.

This worthy called on us at the "Europa," and much disappointed us by his appearance. We expected to see a regular cutthroat-looking bandit in poncho, chirrippas, and massive silver spurs, with a long knife at his back. But Manuel was a very different-looking person. With the exception of the alpagatas on his feet, his dress was in no respect that of the orthodox South American bravo. He was clad in a light tweed cutaway coat and trousers—the present of some Englishman—very worn and ragged. His face, dark and bearded though it was, had no ferocity in its expression; his smile was bland and amiable as that of the heathen Chinese. Here we had a pleasant-looking, weather-beaten, middle-aged man, rather down at the heels, disreputable undoubtedly, but no fit model for a melodramatic villain.

There was something in the face of this terrible being that pleased us, so we soon struck a bargain with him. He engaged to ride with us to Tucuman as our peon, and supply his own horse.

"Have you got a horse, Manuel?" asked Jerdein.

"Como no, senor."

"Then we will start to-morrow morning."

This Manuel did not seem to approve of. "My

horse is twenty leagues from here," he said. "By the day after to-morrow I can bring it and be ready to start."

Thus was it arranged. Jerdein uncharitably suggested, when Manuel had turned his back, that he was not in the possession of any definite, distinct horse, but looked upon all horses as more or less his property, and only required this space of twenty-four hours, to enable him to pick out from the neighbouring camps a steed to his liking. Poor Manuel! I hardly think this was fair; though suspiciously enough, he did have no *guia* for his horse, when the said beast turned up; anyhow, if he had appropriated another's, he had made a good selection, for that horse proved to be the hardiest of our troop. Manuel himself, too, turned out to be a most excellent fellow, very useful, honest, and obliging; we parted with sorrow on both sides, when the journey was completed.

As Arnaud's horse showed some tendency to sore back he purchased another, a big black ex-racer, and we converted his old Colorado into a baggage animal. This change of duty the animal much appreciated—Arnaud, to begin with, is no feather-weight; now he had but a light burden to bear, and had it much his own way on the journey. He could trot on ahead and feed on some clump of delicate grass till we came up, then trot on again at his own sweet will; so long as he kept up with the rest of the party, and showed no tendency to roll and disarrange his burden, as he generally did after his girths were tightened up.

We formed quite an imposing troop as we fell in

early on the morning of the 17th of March in front of the hotel. First came the baggage animal with our saddle-bags on his back, also a sack of necessities for camp life we had purchased in Cordoba—*matés* and *bombillas*, an *asador*, a yard and a half of Bologna sausage to fall back upon in the wilderness, a supply of sugar, *yerba maté*, pepper, salt, and sulphate of quinine (for it was the season of *chuchu* in Tucuman), goodly ribs of beef, and some of the little flat loaves of the country, and, of course, tobacco. A kettle dangled melodiously at his neck. After this animal, who thus bore on his responsible back all that appertained to the baggage, commissariat, and ambulance departments, came we three *gringos* in top-boots and ponchos, each armed with a big revolver and a big bottle, the latter to be filled, when occasion offered, with caña and water. Then followed the sage Manuel armed with his perpetual cigarette, looking, in his seedy cutaway, far less bandit-like than the rest of the party.

He was mounted on a strange, lean, black horse, with bloodshot eyes—a dissipated-looking beast, and seemingly quite incapable of accomplishing so long a journey. But Manuel knew what he was about, and when we criticized his mount, he would smile and say, "*Es muy guapo*"—"You will see."

We did see, and wondered. This was a horse from the Pampas, and, unlike our own, had never been taught to eat hard food; thus in the pastureless lands we traversed the poor beast positively starved for days. He stood and looked on with astonishment when our horses greedily ate algarroba or maize, but he himself disdained to satisfy his hunger with these.

It was but occasionally he came across edible grass, yet, marvellous to say, this horse that seemed to exist on air was fresher every night, and in better condition when we reached Tucuman than our own better-fed animals. He was *muy guapo* with a vengeance. A gaucho's horse, like the gaucho himself, is as tough as nails, and capable of enduring with stoical resignation hunger, thirst, and fatigue.

We rode down to the Primero, the broad river which runs along the north side of the city, crossed it by a fine stone bridge, and soon found ourselves in the open uncultivated country, on the old tropilla-track, marked by the deep ruts of the lumbering waggons.

When we were still near the town, Manuel rode up to my side, and, pointing to a cluster of mud ranchos some few hundred yards off to the right of our road, said rather shyly,—

“I have a sweetheart up there.”

The gaucho, I must tell you, is like the Eastern European, rather bashful when alluding to his love relations.

“Well,” I replied, “I suppose she would like you to say good-bye to her as you pass by.”

“*Quien sabe?*” said Manuel, with a shrug of the shoulders; “but”—this hesitatingly—“she is very poor, is Anita.”

He then explained that this damsel was under his sole protection, and that he should like to have an advance of a few dollars of his wages, to enable her to live during his absence. This Dulcinea was certainly not very extravagant in her *menage*, for Manuel said he only wanted about fourteen shillings, this

would quite suffice her while he was away (about a month). We gave him his fourteen shillings, and off he galloped to the rancho of his love. After, no doubt, an affecting farewell, he returned smiling, and told us that the *senorita* sent us her respects, and wished the *caballeros* a safe journey. I am grieved to say another lady turned up in Tucuman, who likewise had claims on Manuel's purse. He was evidently a regular *roué*, was our attendant.

The road followed the banks of the *Primero* for a space, and fine indeed was the view from here. Beyond the river and its shingly bed towered the Jesuit city with its many domes and spires gleaming in the morning sun, the Sierras forming a noble background to the scene.

It will be very difficult to avoid monotony and repetition in my narrative of this ride. Each day's journey, it is true, showed us some new features to admire in the scenery and vegetation ; but it cannot be expected that the reader will appreciate the meagre description of the ever-changing beauties of this summer-land as we did the delightful reality. Monotony we found none, all was fair, strange, and new to us.

This morning we passed a *tropilla*, a picturesque and old-world sight. Slowly it came towards us, a long train of huge lumbering waggons drawn by mules, solidly built of the hard red wood, with no springs or iron in their construction, creaking and groaning horribly. Miles off one could hear the weird lamentation of the tortured timber. These waggons were laden with hides ; strange and wild-looking men in the gay-coloured ponchos of the north rode along-

side them, and behind followed a large number of spare mules. The chief of the caravan was better dressed than the rest, wore boots with silver spurs, and a valuable poncho of vicuña hair, while a brazen trumpet swung by his side, with which he sounded his orders from one end of the caravan to the other. As we passed, the two parties greeted each other in stately Spanish fashion, and Manuel asked a few questions from the chief as to the state of the road, the rivers and fords, as to how many days they were out, whence they had come, whither they were bound, for travellers on these great steppes hail each other and exchange news very much in the same way as two vessels meeting in mid-ocean. The discipline of a tropilla indeed very much resembles that of a ship. This South American caravan has its captain, whose powers over his wild subordinates are as great as that of the sea captain, nay, greater, for there is no inquiry on reaching port, in this lawless land, should he even have inflicted death while chastising a mutinous peon. There is no South American Plimsoll for the crews of the caravan.

These tropillas undertake enormous journeys, extending over many months, journeys whose length may be measured by thousands of miles. The men are generally armed so as to be able to resist any hostile Indians they may encounter on their lonely way. When attacked they form their waggons in a ring and fight behind them, somewhat in the fashion of the South African Boers. The foremost wagon of the line of march is often provided with a small cannon on a swivel. The railways, however, have now to a considerable extent done away with this, as

with many other of the picturesque features of Argentine life.

About midday we came across another small tropilla halting by the side of the track among the mimosas. The men in their picturesque garb lay about lazily smoking; while a juicy asado was grilling temptingly over their fire, and a huge demijohn of red wine from the Andes lay among the flowers ready for the meal. The physiognomy of the men and the whole scene recalled vividly to my mind the wayside descriptions one reads in "Don Quixote" and "Gil Blas." So lonely is the land we now traversed, that we only came across one more tropilla for the next 300 miles of our journey; other travellers none.

Just as our appetites told us that it was time for our own midday meal, we came to a public-house. This was a mud hut shaped like a sentry-box, about five feet high and four feet broad. The side towards the road was open, and there stood a little table covered with a very dirty bit of native lace. On this were laid out all the resources of the establishment—the whole capital of the enterprising owner. This consisted of one square-faced bottle of vile gin, a tumbler, three wheaten cakes, some tails of strong black tobacco, and several water-melons. At first this establishment seemed to be deserted, but on looking over the table we perceived the attendant barmaid; for there, squatting on the mud floor, was a very ugly half-breed girl, apathetically sucking maté through a black bombilla, evidently troubling herself very little as to whether travellers patronized her restaurant or not.

They are a very independent lot, these Argentines,

and won't go out of their way to ask you to employ them. If you purchase anything at a store, they serve you with an air as if they were conferring a great favour on you; the servility and importunity of a London tradesman would astonish and disgust them. The lady rose from the mud with a gesture of annoyance at being disturbed, and for a real sold us a large water-melon, delicious this sultry day. We gathered some wood, lit a fire by the side of the track, and over it cooked a succulent asado of the ribs of beef we had brought with us in the commissariat sack. We invited the bitter barmaid to join us at lunch. She melted, and smilingly acquiesced; so we all sat down and fell to with our fingers, native fashion. The caña we had brought with us washed down the roast; then the maté was prepared and handed round from one to the other, our horses the while rolling in the grass and enjoying the rich herbage. The barmaid now waxed quite loquacious. In reply to our queries, she sighed and said she was "*solitaria*," her husband was serving as a soldier on the Indian frontier; "forced into the army for merely stealing a miserable horse," she indignantly explained.

Having enjoyed our meal and our siesta, we collected our gear, saddled our horses, and bid adieu to the ugly grass-widow, who insisted on standing us a glass of her vile gin all round.

We went at a hand-gallop over the undulating plain of bush and flowers, whose sole inhabitants seemed to be parrots, vultures, and bizcachas, until we reached Jesus Maria, a small village thirty-three miles from Cordoba. This is an old decayed Jesuit settlement. There is a fine old church in it; and the

ruins of a convent, solid and grand, towering over a clump of sordid ranchos and grass-grown streets. Just outside the town are a few small plantations of maize; beyond, the wilderness of thorn. It was curious to see this stately ecclesiastical edifice among such surroundings, as foreign to it as were its builders, the old Jesuit missionaries, to the savage natives of the country.

There is a very fair *tienda* at Jesus Maria, quite a luxurious hotel for this country, where our horses and selves were well fed and lodged for the night. One is very lucky if he gets a bed at all when travelling in these provinces. The Argentine of the camps does not need such a thing; he sleeps anywhere—out of doors by preference—and if he have a warm blanket, he considers that he has all that the most fastidious could require. When the traveller does get a bed, as we did this night, it will be what is called a *catre*, which consists of a wooden frame with strips of hide strapped across it. The *catre* is generally too short for a decently tall man. His head will hang over one end, his legs over the other, unless he curl himself up like the domestic whiting. As in the East, the traveller is supposed to bring his own bedding with him. As the native saddle consists of a mass of ponchos and blankets lashed on to a wooden frame on the horse's back, what was saddle by day serves admirably as bedding by night.

Our this night's bedroom was an apartment striking for its unostentatious simplicity; the walls and floor were of mud; there was no fireplace, no window, no furniture, nothing indeed but four *catres*

arranged in a row. There was no door either to the doorway, so we enjoyed ample ventilation. Privacy is not valued much here. If one feels dirty in the morning, no uncommon matter with the filthy Britisher, one must sally forth to the horse-pond, or to the well, to perform one's ablutions. But this country is not intended for the over-fastidious traveller.

CHAPTER XIII.

March 18th.—At daybreak, Manuel gathered some sticks, lit a fire on the floor of our bedroom, and prepared our matutinal maté. This is indeed a grand drink to pull one together ; it beats coffee altogether. It has, I believe, another property, that of acting as a substitute for vegetables, and correcting the evil effect of a meat diet, for the native of the Pampas is exclusively carnivorous, gorges himself with beef like a wild beast, when he can get it, eating no vegetables, nor even bread ; but he fills up all his leisure moments between meals in sucking up from the bombilla this marvellously sustaining decoction of the Paraguayan yerba.

This day we rode across a charming country, more undulating than ever, for we were skirting the outer ridges of the Sierras. We crossed many dry beds of rivers—

“Where oleanders flush’d the bed
Of silent torrents, gravel spread ;”

and traversed, to repeat an expression I have before used, a land of birds and flowers, a *bocage* of many shrubs, all in blossom of many colours, of many scents, with fruits, amber and purple. Among others

we observed the various mimosas, the honey-tree with its snow-white blossoms smelling of honey, cacti, and prickly pears with large ripe fruit. Below our feet was soft grass in places, everywhere beautiful flowers, gorgeous as if cultivated with greatest care in a British hot-house.

We were very hot and thirsty by midday, for the parching north wind was blowing ; but all the river-beds we passed were dry, so we had to ride on. At last, about two p.m., we reached a small shallow pool of foul water left by the last rains. We had to make the best of this, so called a halt, unsaddled, lit our fire, and got the asado under way under the shade of a large algarroba blanca. The muddy water of the pool we sucked up through the tube of our pocket filter, it was not very nice, rotten and hot as it was. However, we enjoyed the asado, which we flavoured with the little red peppers which grew plentifully at our feet. Then came the usual siesta, very necessary in this climate, under the drowsy shade of our tree, among the polyanthi blossoms, while insects kept up a perpetual hum around, and the parrots a screaming aloft at our intrusion.

We reached this evening a little place called Las Talas, which is important enough to possess a judge, a worthy man who keeps a store and a billiard-room. We put our horses in his corral for the night, and gave them a feed of alfalfa. He kindly let us have a mud outhouse, inhabited by frogs, lizards, and fleas, for our own accommodation. He would have let us occupy the billiard-room, had it not been for a great match that was coming off therein this night between the two great billiard-players of the district.

March 19th.—This day's journey was across a similar country; at long intervals we passed a house—no rich estancia, such is not to be found in this poor province, but a mere rancho of some small proprietor or squatter. Round each, as a rule, was a small plot of maize or alfalfa. We slept this night in the village of Avellaneda.

March 20th.—This was a lovely day, hot of course, but tempered with a delightful breeze. We were now in the Sierras, and the track wound down pleasant wooded valleys, and over ridges whence we looked over many leagues of undulating jungle and pasture. We passed through a forest of charcoal, where a monte¹ fire must have been raging fiercely for weeks, the ground being still uncomfortably hot beneath our horses' feet.

Our midday halt and asado was by the banks of a stream of clear water running over a sandy bed; here, too, we found a deep, cool pool, wherein, to Manuel's surprise, we bathed.

In the afternoon we came to a new country. We left behind us the monte, with its various shrubs, and traversed a land where hill and dale was covered with pampa grass, while clusters of dark, stunted palm-trees were scattered here and there. By-and-by these became thicker, till at last we penetrated a dense forest of palms; from the hill-tops we perceived that as far as our vision could reach, the whole landscape was black with this

¹ I trust that my readers by this time understand that "monte" does not signify "mountain," as one would not unnaturally suppose, but what the Australians understand by the term "bush."

gloomy-looking species of that graceful family. Here and there rapid streams crossed our path, cleaving steep channels through the dark, loamy soil.

At sunset we reached a solitary house on a height, which is known by the name of Santa Cruz. It is a large and straggling building of unbaked brick, and served as the post-house in the days before the Tucuman railway withdrew travellers from this route. It stands alone on a bare hill, and commands one of the most solemn and melancholy views imaginable. All round it one looks over a seemingly illimitable expanse of black palm-heads, covering mountains and vast plains, right away to the horizon.

The owner came out as he saw us approach—a dark, handsome, pure-blooded white, with all the sternness and dignified politeness of his Spanish stock. A wild-looking lot of domestic animals, pigs, children, and two or three cutthroat-looking fellows followed to stare at the strangers in the garb of civilization—relatively speaking, for Bond Street would have stared for other reasons. We saluted him in the ceremonious manner of the land, whereupon he invited us to dismount. After a little conversation and maté, he placed a mud outhouse, far inferior to an English pigsty, at our disposal; herein we arranged all our impedimenta, but slept outside in our blankets. Our horses were safely lodged in the corral.

The ladies of the house brought us the maté, and we were much struck by their remarkable beauty. At times in the wildest parts of the republic the traveller comes across the most perfect type of refined white beauty among poor people like these were. One of these was the loveliest woman of the Spanish type of

beauty I had ever seen, with splendid complexion, teeth, and eyes, and long raven hair hanging in two tails almost to her heels. There was evidently no Indian blood in this family; here was the old Spanish stock of the *conquistadores*, unsullied by mixture with lower races.

A regular patriarchal house was this, where all the old-fashioned customs of the grand colonial days when Spain was great were still rigidly observed. Our host was surrounded not only by his stalwart sons and beautiful-eyed daughters, but by his pretty grandchildren and his now aged and helpless father and mother—a happy and upright family of the good old style, over whose heads the peaceful years pass by uneventful and uncounted, as the sons tend their herds and grow their maize in the clearings of the forest of waving palm, unmindful of the revolutions and the ambitions that stir the hearts of the citizens of the great cities by the sea.

When we had rolled ourselves up in our blankets for the night, we heard our host, good Catholic that he is, reading out the evening prayers to his assembled family, while at intervals the hum of their subdued voices, joining in, was heard above the shrill cicala and the crackle of the palm-leaves.

In the morning Jerdein asked our host to what amount we were indebted to him.

“Give me what you think right, senor,” said he. “Of course you were my guests last night for supper, what may be the worth of the alfalfa we gave your horses in money I know not, you from the city know better than I what things are worth in money.”

We knew what this “leaving it to you, sir,” means

in England ; but here our host spoke in all simplicity, for after we had given him what we thought to be right, he held a consultation with his beautiful wife, and then insisted on returning it all with the exception of twelve reals, saying that he was sure the afalfa was not worth more than that, and that sum, at any rate, would pay him very well. Such was the primitive country we had now reached, a land where hospitality is still as much a duty as among the Arabs themselves.

Here, where inns are almost unknown, the traveller as a matter of course rides up to any house, rich or poor, doffs his hat and asks for hospitality for the night. The host responds by bidding him dismount, and informs him that all he has is at his disposition. In the house of a wealthy man, as wealth goes in this poor country, you would insult your host by offering payment. In the house of a poorer man, the traveller if he can afford it pays for the afalfa for his horses, maybe for the beef he himself consumes, but never for his lodging. A man without a cent can travel from one end of this republic to the other and never want, for no one dare refuse food to the stranger if there be any in the house. The Argentine has his vices ; and they are great vices ; but he has his virtues also, and they are also great.

March 21st.—This day's ride was across a desolate country—an undulating waste of dark palms, with here and there, in strong contrast with their gloom, extensive barren stretches of salt sands glaring in the sunshine, for we were now travelling along the narrow strip of land that lies between the Sierras and the

salinas, and partakes of the character of both. We passed no house during the day, and having taken no beef with us, had to content ourselves with Bologna sausage and water for our first meal.

At sunset we came across a solitary house, the estancia of Rosario, a more substantial-looking place than we had yet seen in this province. The owner also had shown a tendency to please the eye when planning out his dwelling; a very rare thing in a country where a man builds his ugly mud house for use alone, and considers it very foolish to waste his sweet leisure in any superfluous ornamental work.

As I have before remarked, the native's estancia is rarely surrounded by any attempt at a garden. He is far too lazy as a rule even to cultivate vegetables, far less flowers and ornamental shrubs. But here we found a very delightful residence indeed, with many signs of refinement within and about it.

The house was built on an eminence overlooking an extensive landscape of hill and dale, jungle, pasture, and palm forest. Beautiful creepers wound about the pillars of the wooden portico. A really pretty garden with well laid-out beds spread in front, surrounded with a hedge of cactus and prickly pear. As we rode into the enclosure of this model farm of South America, a regular menagerie of dogs, geese, ducks, and hens saluted us.

We perceived, sitting under the flower-covered portico now glowing in the setting sun, a comely matron of the true Castilian caste of countenance. Busy over the lace she was working, she yet had time to superintend all the little country duties at which her group of pretty daughters and the Indian servants

around her were employed. A large fire of wood blazed in the centre of the courtyard, over which hung a huge copper cauldron, from which came forth a pleasant simmering and gurgling and a not unpleasant sweet smell. The girls stirred, fed and tasted the contents at every instant; great expectancy and excitement seemed to centre in that preparation, and no wonder, for, like the Primroses, mother and daughters prided themselves on being the most industrious housewives and the most clever fruit-preservers of the province. They were making nothing less than *ropa*, that is prickly-pear jam, and what little country family is not excited when comes the important preserving season?

The Indian girls came in constantly from the bush with huge baskets of the wild fruit on their heads, while the daughters of the house deftly peeled them; no easy matter for a novice to do this without filling the hands with millions of irritating, almost invisible, darts. Figs, too, from the patriarchal fig-trees were being laid out to dry on raised platforms of plaited reeds.

As we rode in there was a flutter of alarm among the girls, and they gathered round their mother like chickens round a hen, and gazed at us wonderingly with their big black eyes—for a body of armed strangers is not always a welcome sight in this wild and revolution-ridden country.

The lady of the house rose stately from her chair, and returned our salute with a dignified bow. We explained to her that we were only poor harmless, benighted *gringos*, who craved her hospitality for the night. As a matter of course she offered her all at

our disposal ; so dismounting, we sent our horses to the corral with Manuel, and sat down with the handsome girls and their comely mamma to drink maté. Our story much interested them ; they had read of the yacht in the Cordoban papers, also of our intended ride ; "Therefore," our hostess said smilingly, with true Spanish grace, "you are not strangers to us, but at home." She told us that they were citizens of Cordoba, where her husband now was ; she and her daughters were passing a few months in this their country-farm for the benefit of their healths. For the second time in twenty-four hours the Falcons all irrevocably lost their hearts.

March 22nd.—On the morrow it was with reluctance that we gathered our impedimenta together, in order to leave this oasis of civilization and the pleasant society of fair and gentle ladies. But we were not to start quite so soon as we expected. Manuel came up to us and informed us that our horses had broken through the corral in the night, and had decamped. This was startling news ; they might have wandered leagues away by this time, and small chance of recovering them in that case, or—the terrible thought flashed across our minds—stolen !

"No," says Manuel confidently, "they are not stolen. See," pointing to their fresh footprints in the soft soil of the corral, "they have gone through that break, and that too not three hours ago, and none of the men's footprints about here are nearly as fresh as that."

To have distinguished the prints of our horses' feet iron shod as they were, from the others was easy enough ; but it required the instinct of the gaucho to

detect that no man had been in the neighbourhood at the time of their departure, for some of the human footprints about seemed quite as fresh to us as the marks of our animals.

Manuel was confident though, and he proved to be right, for after tracking the horses some two miles through the bush, we found them quietly grazing by the side of a stream ; so we captured the deserters and brought them back.

Some gauchos are very good indeed at track-finding ; their exploits seem miraculous, and rival those of Fennimore Cooper's wonderful redskins. Several cases have come before my own notice. One man, the peon of a friend, was pointed out to me whose memory was so retentive that he never forgot the footprint of man or horse to which his attention had once been directed. On one occasion while travelling he stopped suddenly, and pointing to a print, said, "The little grey horse that was stolen from my master, Don Luis, three years ago passed here an hour ago." His statement proved to be correct, and the horse was recovered.

Two Englishmen were sleeping in one room in a lone hut, their peon was sleeping in another neighbouring rancho. In the night one of the Englishmen, an intimate friend of mine, heard a noise in the bush, and suspecting the presence of some wild beast, hurriedly put on the first pair of boots he came across, which happened to be his friend's, seized his gun and went out ; but, finding nothing, soon returned.

In the morning the servant said to him, "What did you think there was in the monte when you went out last night, senior ?"

"How do you know I went out?"

"I saw the marks of boots in the ground, not your boots, but your friend's; but it was your tread."

The following incident happened recently; as it is illustrative of the wonderful powers of observation of these grave, silent, Indian-like men of the Pampas and the monte, I will narrate it. A gold escort had been attacked somewhere in the west, and the robbers had escaped with their booty. Now it happened that a gaucho who had heard of this adventure, and of the high reward that was offered to any one who could give useful information to the authorities, one day perceived what would appear very innocent-looking to one whose training had not led him to observe the slightest abnormal circumstance in the passing objects of his daily life. What he saw was merely a small child leading a mule laden with raw hides down a narrow mountain-path—quite a common and everyday sight. But there was something just a little bit curious about the action of the animal. The gaucho's keen eye was fixed on it; he soon made it out. The mule stepped as if it had a considerably heavier weight than a parcel of hides on its back—the stolen gold must be hidden there. Forthwith he stopped the animal, cut the bandages of the hides, and there sure enough, concealed among them, were the purloined bags.

And more than these things will the gaucho do. If he has lost his way by night, he plucks some grass and tastes it, goes a mile or two on and tastes some more; and, unbelievable as it seems, can thus set himself right—knows in which direction is the river, or the lake, or wood, which he wishes to reach. By

the flight of birds, by a cloud of dust, he can tell the number of an approaching tropilla. When the Indian raid is imminent, and the barbarous hordes are still far off, he can warn his patron of the estancia and bid him make ready, for he has observed that the ostriches, the gama, and other timid beasts of the Pampas are all travelling from one direction.

Having saddled our runaway horses, we continued our journey. The undulating country was now densely overgrown with cacti, prickly pears, palms, and thorny mimosas; a land of poor and rare pasture, but of plentiful water, for down every valley a little *arroyo* of limpid water runs over the yellow sands.

At midday we came to a mud rancho. The woman who seemed to be its sole inhabitant permitted us to rest awhile under the huge carob-tree, which, as usual hereabouts, spread its broad branches some twenty yards in front of the threshold, and whose shade serves in this primitive land as a sort of spare-room for friends and travellers.

This lady provided us with some algarroba for our horses, for ourselves *charki* and maize ears; which latter, roasted over the fire, are a very fair substitute for bread. Here, away from the perennial pastures of the Pampas, it is usual for each *ranchero* to cultivate his little plot of maize or alfalfa; necessity forces him to become, against his instincts, somewhat of an agriculturist as well as a shepherd. We lit our fire under the carob, cooked our meat, and made merry during the sultry noon of this torrid land.

For those of my readers who have never tasted *charki*, a few words on this widely-consumed delicacy will not be amiss. *Charki* is merely beef cut

into long, thin strips and dried in the sun; when fresh it is not bad, but it rarely is fresh; and after these lean shreds have been hanging outside a rancho in the hot, dusty air, for I am afraid to say how long, they form anything but a luxurious diet. The charki then becomes so much third-rate leather; all the juices have been completely dried out of it, and the grilling of it on an asador over a wood fire does not tend to soften it. The toughness that beef thus treated can acquire is a thing to be experienced, not told. Conceive first the ideal abstract, "stringy toughness;" then, as to flavour, imagine a sort of charnel-house, fly-blown taste—for be it remembered that all these months that the charki is hanging in the sun, an average half-inch-deep layer of flies is settled on it; lastly, do not forget that this is one of the dustiest regions in the world, and that you will consume your orthodox peck of dirt before you have got through half a dozen meals of these delectable rags, and you will have formed some idea of what charki is—a teeth-testing dish with a vengeance.

Having torn, and worried, and masticated some particularly choice, old, high-toned fragments, we lay down under our carob-tree to enjoy our well-earned siesta, and rest our aching jaws. But we were soon awakened by an approaching sound, a confused murmur coming from the north. Then we distinguished the lowing of a vast multitude of oxen, the tread of thousands of hoofs, and the shouting of men. At last the great herd appeared out of the bush—a thousand head of cattle at least, lean, and halt, and weary with their long journey over the herbless, waterless country that lay to the north of us. About

twenty wild-looking horsemen were in charge, with gay ponchos fluttering in the breeze ; some were barefooted, others had their feet encased in the raw skins of foals' legs. This is the orthodox gaucho *chaussure*. It is prepared by simply cutting off the hind leg of a foal, and withdrawing the bone and the flesh. The man's foot and leg are then thrust into this natural boot. To guard the legs of the riders against the fearful thorns of the northern jungle, each horse had two shields or breastplates of stout raw hide, extending like two wings in front of the saddle and falling to below the stirrup-irons. About eighty remount horses followed the herd.

The cattle were rounded in for their midday halt just above us ; then the chief—a great swell with silver spurs, rich poncho, polished top-boots with very high heels, and mounted on a splendid horse—rode up to the rancho, and craved permission to take water from the laguna for his beasts. An introduction was soon effected between this gentleman and ourselves, and he insisted on our joining him at breakfast. Vain was it to declare that we had just completed our meal—breakfast again with him we must. There was one little bull in the herd that was very lame, so our new friend had him lassoed, pithed, cut up, and converted into asados in an incredibly short space of time. We sat down with him, ate the sweet beef with our fingers, and drank the red wine he had brought with him with much pleasure ; luxurious, indeed, were these to us after our charki and tepid laguna water.

Bidding farewell to our hospitable friend, we rode on till we reached the first township we had seen

since Jesus Maria. This was Chañares, a wretched little place in the midst of an uninhabited, untilled plain of palm and thorns. The *raison-d'être* of a town in such a spot is more than I could discover.

There were only from twenty to thirty houses, and half of these seemed to be deserted and in ruins, for the unbaked mud bricks of this country do not form very substantial buildings; they soon fall to pieces when left to themselves. We dismounted in front of the solitary store, entered it, and called for a tot of caña all round before commencing business. The bottle was put before us and one glass—water they had none on the establishment.

By the way, this custom of placing the bottle before the customer, and permitting him to help himself—the cost of the drink being the same whether he take a stiff or a mild dose—would, I imagine, hardly pay a British publican. Fancy a London rough entering a public-house, asking for a glass of gin, and in consideration of one penny having a whole bottle put before him. This is, however, the *modus operandi* throughout America.

We inquired of the storekeeper if it was possible to find accommodation for ourselves and our horses for the night in this city. He thought that to find this would be a matter of difficulty, as most of the houses were one-roomed. By this time half the population was around us, for the news of our arrival had spread like wild-fire, the visit of travellers, and what is more, foreign travellers, being a very rare occurrence indeed here. Some made suggestions as to where we might possibly get what we required. One little Indian girl, carrying a naked, very open-eyed baby,

said she knew of a house that belonged to a recently deceased gentleman ; this mansion was now deserted, as the defunct had left no testament or kin behind him, and it might suit us.

We visited this eligible villa, which was in the outskirts of the city. If in the days of the late lamented proprietor it was anything like it is now, I do not wonder that he decided to leave it for a more comfortable mansion in another world. It was a mud rancho ; the roof and two of the walls had fallen in, and the ruins had evidently been considered by the neighbours as a most suitable deposit for all sorts of household refuse and filth. Better to pitch our camp outside the town than here, and this we accordingly determined to do, after purchasing a stock of provisions.

But at this juncture an important personage attracted by the crowd, and imagining that this was a revolution that must be nipped in the bud, came on the scene. This was no less than the commandante, who was only distinguished from his humbler fellow-citizens by having a rusty pistol and an ancient cavalry sword stuck into his broad belt. A pompous man as became his dignity, but a very well-disposed little person was this. Robust, well-fed, and oily, both in countenance and manner, he much resembled my idea of the renowned Sancho Panza—that worthy, when governor of his long-promised island, must have been something like this magistrate. He shook hands with us, waved his hand in a patronizing manner round the village, and said, “Welcome to our town ;” the *our* sounding much as if it signified *my*, for he evidently never forgot that he was the presiding genius of the

place. "Our town is at the entire disposal of the *caballeros*; our herds, our horses, our domestic hearths." There was nothing that was not ours; we were lords of all we surveyed, according to him. We explained that we really could not trespass so much on his generosity as to accept the whole city, but were very much obliged to him nevertheless; we would be content with food for ourselves and horses, and cover for the night if possible.

Brought down from his florid Castilian talk to matter of fact, the poor fellow looked perplexed. It was evidently more difficult to satisfy this simple want than to give us the entire town. He stopped his discourse, looked anxious and doubtful, scratched his head, made and lit a cigarette; then he placed his forefinger to the side of his nose, and with a thoughtful frown contemplated the weather-cock on the church steeple. So he stood for some moments, while the little children, silent and with open mouths, gazed with awe at their pondering ruler.

Suddenly he slapped his thigh, rubbed his fat hands merrily, and said, "Come! senors, come! I know now." He took us to a house where dwelt an old lady and her two daughters. She had one large, bare, mud room on the street, which she kindly placed at our service. It was quite a sumptuous apartment, for it even had a floor of wooden planks, and the mud walls were whitewashed to the height of six feet. Windows of course there were none; but there was a doorway big enough to answer all purposes.

This was a very garrulous old lady; she tried to monopolize us altogether, and would not permit her comely daughters to come near us. A most Argus-

eyed duenna, she cruelly took the young ladies altogether out of the establishment as soon as we arrived, and locked the poor things up somewhere at the other extremity of the town.

We tied up our horses in the courtyard for the night ; but as it was impossible to procure any algarroba or alfalfa for them, the poor beasts had to content themselves with a large pile of the branches of some tree. However, they seemed to enjoy their frugal repast, even Manuel's horse fell to heartily ; at lunch-time he had patiently fasted, gazing contemptuously at the others as they munched their algarroba.

Our hostess drove the bats, cockroaches, snakes, lizards, and other tenants of our apartment into the street, and swept and garnished this room till it looked so large and beautiful, that it inspired the usually stolid Manuel with a most luminous idea. "What a fine room this would be for a *baile* !" he said. The very thing, we cried, so we determined to give a grand ball to the whole town this night.

In this quaint country it is quite the thing for a passing stranger to do this—and the people will not be shy at accepting his invitation. A musician will easily be found ; and two dollars' worth of vile gin is all that is necessary in the way of refreshments. We impressed a blind and villainous-looking gaucho, who could play *baile* music on the guitar, and after dinner proceeded to decorate our room. We stuck about thirty tallow candles round the walls, borrowed some wooden benches, and got a few bottles of square-face from the store, and all was ready. We then issued our invitations. Our hostess was in raptures over the whole thing ; she even released her daughters, and

permitted them to accept our invitation. Of course all the aristocracy was invited—the judge, the commandante, the store-keeper, and any of the other sex that might to them belong.

The dancing was soon in full swing, and a merry



ONE OF OUR GUESTS.

time we had of it. The *chifias* had donned their feast-day frocks, had adorned themselves with cherry-coloured ribbons, and looked pretty enough, as their dark eyes flashed with delight and excitement, for they were more than grateful for the grand entertainment we had prepared for them.

Twang, twang-twang, twang all night flowed out the old Spanish airs from the guitar, and as the people danced the guitarist sang, in a nasal drone, words to the tunes he played, as is the custom here—words generally of his own composition ; love-songs ; translating the subtle meanings of the figures of the dance.

For many of these quaint and stately dances are whole stories of a love. Such is the zampa, the handkerchief dance, and the gato, in which the fingers are snapped like castanets. Only two persons take part in these dances—a man and a woman. The man is wooing the woman. She is coy and turns away. He follows, implores. All the gamut of feeling and passion is traversed in this dumb-show, in which each movement of the supple, lithe forms of these marvellous dancers is full of expression. And all the while the guitar-player sings in rough, but often powerful, words the story of the dance, the passionate wooing of the man, the coyness, the subtle by-play of the woman, love-sick, yet feigning indifference ; again the lover's despair, and ultimately his triumph, when at last the girl can hide her heart no longer, returns his passion and confesses her love. It was an awful and rare sight to see Jerdein in his top-boots dancing the gato with our venerable but jovial hostess as a partner.

There was no sleep for us that night, for our indefatigable guests did justice to our entertainment and kept it up till dawn ; as is the nature of their race, winding themselves up to a madness, a Terpsichorean delirium. It was a demoniac whirl of supple limbs, with at times a Bedlam shouting. The atmosphere

of the room was hot and stifling with the heavy clouds of dust raised by the twinkling feet, and the fumes of tobacco. Those who did not dance themselves sat down, clapped their hands in time with the measure, and shouted incoherently to encourage the frenzy of those that did. It was a strange spectacle, and showed us that in the dance, if in nothing else, the Indo-Spaniard can be more than energetic.

CHAPTER XIV.

March 23rd.—Having closed the ball, we saddled our horses and resumed our journey. I am afraid that some of our guests could easily have been taken for Anglo-Saxons this morning, for unfairly enough any one at all disguised in drink is at once put down as one of that bibulous race by the South American. Our gin, too, was strong, and to tell the truth vile, but the beverages supplied at balls are not proverbially of the best quality even in England. A choice deputation of revellers accompanied us a good way outside the town, where a farewell bottle or so of gin was drunk ; then we shook hands all round, or rather two or three times all round, for the deputation was singularly short of memory. The commandante came up to me with his clanging sabre and his beaming face at least six separate times. On each occasion he came back to the attack, saying, " Ah, Don Edouardo, I have not embraced you, nor bidden thee farewell yet. Good-bye, dear friend ; good-bye."

At last we broke away from the kind and friendly people, and proceeded to brace ourselves up with a smart gallop after our night's dissipation. The country was now becoming poorer and more thinly

inhabited as we progressed. We were approaching an almost waterless and rainless region, utterly unfit for cultivation of any kind. From dawn till the late afternoon we travelled on this day without seeing any sign of human life. We had now crossed the frontier and were in the ill-famed, poverty-stricken province of Santiago, almost a desert itself, surrounded by veritable deserts.

At last we saw before us a little rancho with a corral by it, but no pasture anywhere, no plot of maize or alfalfa, or indeed any sign to show on what the inhabitants of the hovel subsisted. We rode up to it. An Indian woman with a child in her arms came out.

"Have you got any charki to sell?" we asked.

"No, señor."

"Any maize?"

"No, señor."

"Have you any food at all in the rancho?"

"No, señor."

We were parched with thirst, as were our poor horses, so we asked the woman if she could supply us with some water.

"I have got no water, señor," she replied.

There is in the neighbourhood of nearly every rancho in this part of the country a laguna or little artificially dammed-in pond, in the which stink the hot and putrescent dregs of the last rains; but the laguna here had been dried up for weeks.

"Where is the nearest water, then?" we asked.

"*Quien sabe?*" was the reply. "Who knows? They say that the laguna two leagues further on is also dry."

These people are certainly not unlike the animals they breed in many of their habits, as hardy and enduring as the beasts of the field. Often, as in this instance, a native will find himself in the dry season at many leagues' distance from the nearest water. This troubles him but very little. Notwithstanding the dry, thirst-giving nature of his diet, he can exist without drinking for days comfortably enough. Twice a week or so he will go down to water with his cattle to the nearest laguna, and then slake his thirst. How unlike the poor bibulous white man, who has such an unfortunate tendency to get thirsty at all sorts of odd moments!

So we had to ride on without food or drink all day until sunset, when we reached a comfortable-looking house. A plantation of prickly-pears and a plot of alfalfa were on one side of it, a muddy pond on the other. The master came out to greet us with the usual stately politeness; he was a man of some substance, for his broad hide belt was adorned with many coins, a gold condor gleaming in the midst of them, and he wore at his back a long knife in a heavy silver sheath. He was able to supply us with as much alfalfa and water as we required, and told us that we were at liberty to sleep under the large paradise-tree in front of the house. So we unsaddled our horses and placed a welcome feed of alfalfa before them, and then bethought us of our own supper, which was also not unwelcome, considering that it was our first meal this day.

We had mutton for a change this night, for we purchased a plump live sheep from our host for twelve reals (= about four shillings). We took him under

our tree and made all ready for a truly Homeric repast. We lit a glorious fire, while Manuel, now quite in his element, cut the sheep's throat, deftly skinned and disembowelled it, and then hung the carcase on a branch.

As we had now more than sufficient meat for two days, we did not care about keeping the "innards," so Manuel took these in his hand, walked up to the señora of the house, bowed, doffed his hat in stately fashion, and with a neat little speech presented them to her as a small token of his gratitude for all her kindness. A don of the old Spanish court could not have presented a necklace of pearls to a great court lady with more polished courtesy than Manuel his strings of raw tripes to the buxom Dulcinea of the Estancia Algarroba. We really appreciated our splendid roast mutton this night, unaccompanied though it was by bread or vegetables. Our host, Don Innocentia Acosta, could not supply us with these. It was, I suppose, beneath the dignity of his stock of shepherd gentlemen to plant a potato.

We turned in under our blankets to leeward of the fire, so that the smoke might keep the mosquitoes from us, for these pests were numerous this night. As we were making our preparations for the night our host came out to us, and advised us to sleep with our revolvers loaded at our sides, "For," said he, "this is a wild part of the country. Who knows what bad men may pass by to-night? A month or two back two young fellows who had brought some cattle to the south for sale, and were returning with the money, slept one night under that very tree where you are; the next morning we found them lying

there robbed, and with their throats cut from ear to ear."

However, we slept snugly by our fire under the paradise-tree, undisturbed save by the dogs, who, smelling the blood of our sheep, prowled about our camp constantly. Manuel had placed the sheep's head under his own head for safety. At midnight three or four big, bold dogs crept up, made a sudden rush at him, rolled his head aside, and decamped in a moment with the delicate morsel—the sheep's, not Manuel's, head. A fearful uproar ensued, and sonorous Castilian oaths fell like a cataract from our faithful peon's mouth. We all leapt up and seized our revolvers, thinking that an Indian raid at the least was on us. On Manuel's explaining we laughed heartily at the adventure, to his disgust, for he would not be consoled for the loss of his sheep's head. Then we rolled ourselves in our blankets, lit our pipes, and smoked ourselves to sleep once more.

March 24th.—At daybreak our fire was still alight, so we made some maté, and cooked some appetizing kybobs of the kidneys and other choice morsels of our sheep. Then we saddled, slung the remains of the carcass over Manuel's horse, and galloped off. At an early hour in the afternoon we reached the township of Ojo del Agua, consisting of one large square, a church at one side of it, and about twenty mean houses scattered round. Through the broad spaces between these one perceived the wilderness, whose luxuriant growth ran through and overflowed all the square itself. Yet this is the *pueblo* that our last night's host spoke of as *muy linda*—very pretty—and possessing *mucho gente*.

We put up at the most respectable store, where some awful-looking ruffians, gauchos of gauchos, would insist on our drinking with them. These were weather-beaten, cutthroat-looking fellows, with knives ostentatiously long: *Monteneros*, who came down to town occasionally to purchase maté or other necessities, when, as now, they knew that there were no soldiers about. The montes about here seem to have a very bad name. I suppose there must be some fire where there is so much smoke. Our host, rather a timid fellow, told us that these men were banditti when chance offered, prowled about the tropilla-track, attacked small parties of travellers, and cut camp to unknown fastnesses when they were pursued after some more daring outrage than usual. We were warned to be careful, when camping out by night especially.

The coinage in Santiago is curious in itself, and there is but little of it. I drank a glass of caña at the store, and presented the smallest coin current, the silver chirolla of Bolivia, worth two reals. I received in change a little triangular bit of silver, which, on inspection, turned out to be the quarter of a chirolla—for here, in default of smaller change, the people cut up their coins—two cigars, and a *vale*, or I O U, for another quarter real, with the storekeeper's stamp and signature on it. The storekeepers in the remoter provinces often do this petty banking, and issue these *vales* to a large extent in lieu of giving small change. A very good business, too, it must be for them, for not only do they thus derive the banker's ordinary profits, but indirectly others also, for the holder of the *vale* generally, I should imagine, feels himself

rather a mean cuss when he enters the store to get it cashed, and ends by becoming ashamed of himself, and taking it out in drinks, or other "kind," instead of in specie.

Our host informed us that the country ahead of us was very rough, that the old tropilla-track was quite impassable, as there was no food to be found on it for man or horse for at least eighty miles—a land of rocks and deserts uninhabited and waterless, traversed only by gaucho bandits when escaping pursuit. He therefore advised us to leave this track for a time and make a détour to the eastward, so passing through the *pueblo* of Salabina.

March 25th.—The vegetation, as I have before remarked, had been gradually changing as we advanced, becoming more and more of the tropics. It reached its climax of luxuriance in the country we traversed during the next three days, before becoming stunted and ugly again on the borders of the salt-desert we had subsequently to ride across.

The colouring of the jungle seemed now of an almost unnatural brilliancy. Strange thorny shrubs, flowers, and capsicums, with leaves of all shapes and hues, thickly covered the ground, but nearly all were of a dazzling metallic lustre, some gleaming like blue steel, others like burnished yellow gold, or red copper, or still darker bronze. The snakes and birds and beetles, too, that fed on the acrid juices of these seemed to have acquired from them the same mineral sheen, so brightly flashed their gorgeous wings and scales. Glorious convolvuli, with large blossoms of various colours, wound luxuriantly over every bush. One creeper, with white waxen flowers, sweet scent,

and bright emerald leaves, struck us for its remarkable beauty. We procured some seed of this, and sent it home. Perchance the child of Central South America will flourish in an English hothouse. The prickly-pear-trees, covered with delicious ripe fruit, were everywhere. This was the only food-producing plant of the monte. Not only we ourselves, but our horses also, appreciated the cool pulp when we were thirsty. Giant cacti at intervals soared above the lesser growth of the jungle.

After riding some few leagues this day we came to some open spaces in the bush—clear spots of bare, dry earth—where we perceived, growing in patches, a low, insignificant-looking plant with soft, white-petaled flowers and leaves of vivid green. “The *chuchu*,” said Manuel. Yes! this was the fatal plant against which we had been so frequently warned. Further on we saw acres of it. It grows only where no other living plant is, on the bare desert spots of the country; in solitude, as if all other herbs avoid its poisonous influence, forming little bright-green isles of verdure on the yellow earth. I do not know whether it be poisonous to man, but if a horse swallow but a few leaves of the deadly plant the symptoms of violent intoxication will first be declared, and the poor beast will die within an hour, raving mad and in great agony. The fact of its growing only in pastureless districts makes it particularly dangerous. The horses that are native to the sub-tropical plains where it grows know it and avoid it instinctively, but strange horses, like our own, from the Pampas will greedily devour it when they come across it. We had, in consequence to look carefully after our animals, and never let them

wander about to graze when any of this was near. *Chuchu*, by the way, not only signifies this horse-poisoning plant, but also the man-poisoning fever of Tucuman and the northern provinces.

We were in luck this day, for at noon we reached a rancho called Aigulla, and found that we were in time for a grand feast. An ox had been killed—a great event—so the people of the place were making merry. Like vultures, the gauchos and others had smelt the blood from afar, and had gathered here to participate in the luxury of a feed of fresh meat. Of course we also were invited to fall to with our fingers at the sweet asados, and to help them drain the bottle of square-face as it went its rounds. Ultimately we departed, content and happy, for had we not enjoyed a very square meal.

In the evening we reached Quebrachos, a town which, like all these pretentious Santiagan settlements, was laid out in a huge square, not by four-fifths filled up with the mud houses. At one end was a church, a curious edifice, ambitious in design, of unbaked mud, unfinished, but half-fallen in. The architect had tried too much; crumbling mud is far too unstable a material wherewith to construct a pretentious Gothic cathedral like this promised to be had it held out. The inhabitants of this bleak mud square were exceedingly hospitable. The comandante lodged us for the night, and a courteous and handsome old gentleman invited us to dinner. A colonel in the army was he, but as a follower of General Metri, the ex-president, out of the service *pro tem.*, and in receipt of no pay; for as I have already explained, in these enlightened and go-ahead repub-

lics there is a clean sweep of the broom with each change of Government. When one party goes—out, too, go all the subordinates—down to the ticket-clerks of the Government railways, and even—I should not be surprised to hear—to the licensed shoeblacks of the capital.

A very genial old gentleman was the colonel, and cheerful, notwithstanding that Providence had been playing at Job with him with a vengeance of late. Not only was his party out of office, but everything had been going wrong with him, he said. A recent flight of locusts had devoured all his maize; a few days back a jaguar had robbed him of a valuable horse; and now he had received very bad news indeed from his estate on the Rio Salado, eighteen leagues to the eastward; the Indians had made a raid on his cattle there, driven off some hundreds of head, and lanced some of his peones.

We were informed that we were the first foreigners that had visited this town save one, and this latter was so pleased with it, that he had taken up his residence here; what he found to be so pleased at our informant could not tell us. Anyhow, this eccentric individual, on hearing that there were some European travellers in the *pueblo*, called upon us, and welcomed us with great warmth. He proved to be an Italian, and, according to his own account, a ne'er-do-weel who had tried many professions in his day. He was a garrulous yet solemn little fellow; he plucked us by the sleeve, and rushed off into a detailed narrative of his former life in the true "ancient mariner" style. He had been for eighteen years a soldier in Italy; then deserted: after this he was a

sailor in the Spanish navy for so long; deserted again: next he became the husband of a shrew; deserted once more: and so on through a variety of professions, finishing off always with a desertion or abrupt running away.

"And what are you now?" I inquired, imagining that he kept a little grog-shop, was the cobbler, barber, or something of the like nature; but he gravely replied, "I am the Government schoolmaster of the national school of Quebrachos." He was the village dominie of this little hole in the desert, and was now seriously contemplating yet one more desertion from this not over-lucrative post. He was a sportsman, too, in his way, and drew us a very tempting picture of sport among the feræ of the neighbouring montes, and by the banks of the Rio Saladillo. Here, according to him, abounded jaguars, pumas, deer, duck, teal, hares, ostriches, geese, turkeys, and beasts whose names are unfamiliar to the average English ear.

It rains but seldom in the central portions of the Argentine Republic; but when it does rain, it is to an English shower what the Niagara is to the falls of the Upper Serpentine. This night a fearful storm swept over the land, a hurricane of wind, terrible thunder, and such a deluge of water as quite accounted for the deep fissures and rents that cut the monte we had recently traversed in all directions.

The dogs of Quebrachos were as hospitable as the inhabitants, and not wanting in kind attention to the strangers. They came from the four corners of the square, and mustered in front of the open doorway of the room in which we slept, to guard us through the perils of the night. They told themselves off in

two watches, about twenty to each watch, and so relieved each other in the awful chorus which they kept up diligently till morning. When we rose at dawn, they came up to us with forty wagging tails, and looked up to our faces with self-satisfied looks, as if waiting for the thanks which were their due. We did not feel very grateful to them for their noisy guard, but assumed the virtue though we had it not, and expressed to them our undying gratitude for their generous conduct. The officers of the guard dismissed the other dogs, and consented to join us at breakfast over the remains of our sheep; then, with expressions of mutual good-will, we parted.

March 26th.—We did not set off very early this morning, but waited to see whether the weather would clear, for it still rained heavily. This, the autumnal, is the rainy season here. It is only during these two months of February and March that there is any rainfall at all; when this fails, as not unfrequently happens, there is great distress in these provinces, and the cattle must either be driven eastward to the rivers by the Indian Chaco for pasture and water, or southward for sale.

Our Italian acquaintance called on us at about ten o'clock; a casual pedagogue he, conducting his school on free and easy principles. He said,—

“I must now show you round the town, besides I want to have a chat with you about Europe; come to the school with me and have *maté*.”

“I am afraid we will disturb you at your duties,” I remarked.

“My duties? nonsense! I won’t ring the bell for school as long as you are in Quebrachos. We’ll give

the urchins a holiday. Besides, I am tired of working for nothing. Can a man work unless he be fed? *Bueno!* the provincial government have not paid me for nine months; they give me paper instead of salary; paper will not buy bread."

He showed me one of these despised bits of paper; he receives one each month, a large elaborate printed document gay with stamps and seals, an acknowledgment that the provincial government of Santiago del Estero owes him so many dollars (*fuertes*) for a month's salary.

In the original agreement with him the Government contracts to pay him his salary each month, in gold, or its equivalent in bank-notes at the then rate of exchange. But these wretched I O U's, which the Government will never redeem, which no storekeeper will take—utterly unnegotiable, in short—are all the poor wretch is receiving. No wonder that he contemplates another desertion from such a thankless office. It suits the venal heads of departments very well, in more than one way, that Government debts should be paid in these I O U's, for the following trickery is notoriously practised. The Government *employé*, the poor ignorant holder of the paper, finding that he cannot cash it—that it is next to useless to him—will in many cases be only too willing to part with it at any sacrifice, for a sum far below its nominal value. Then steps in a third party, who buys the paper from him for a mere song—a speculator who has a brother, or a brother-in-law, or a cousin, who is a *compadre* of some big man in office, or is possessed of some such back-stairs key to that so mysterious an abstraction to the unlearned—the Govern-

ment. This influence being brought to bear, the Treasury winks and cashes the paper at its full nominal value, when the speculator, his relative, and the big man in office share the spoil and hold their tongues. Large fortunes have been acquired in this manner in this enlightened republic.

Quebrachos is but a very small place, at the very outside possessing twenty houses and huts, and yet within these narrow limits we have three public-houses, an imposing store where you can buy English pickles and beer, half a church, a school, a commandante, a judge, a schoolmaster, and an idiot beggar. A Santiagan settlement is like a San Domingan regiment, where all are officers and there are no privates ; or the old *Falcon*, where we had a self-dubbed admiral, a captain, a first lieutenant, a second lieutenant, and a crew composed of one small boy.

Our friend the schoolmaster did after all summon his pupils before we left ; not to study, however, but to take a lesson in practical engineering. The flood of last night had invaded the schoolroom, and a bank of sand had formed outside the door, preventing the escape of the water, so there was the good-natured pedagogue, bare-legged and in shirt-sleeves, spade in hand, directing a lot of half-naked, ragged, half-breed urchins to dig a canal through the sand into the square, so as to drain the flooded academy.

We bid adieu to our kind hosts, and rode off in a lull in the storm. It soon, however, broke on us again with all its fury of thunder, wind, and rain. We were of course drenched in a very short time. Manuel utterly despised the rain, for, as he said, "See my coat ; it is an English coat, and water cannot go

through it—at least not much.” He had evidently great faith in the tweed cutaway of the white man ; and, though he did become as wet through as ourselves, he insisted that the water found its way only through the numerous rents of the old garment, the impenetrability of the material he never doubted for a moment.

It rained so heavily that the sandy-floored *monte* was soon covered over with two feet of foaming water. It thus became impossible to distinguish the track, but we followed the current of the waters, which we knew was in our direction, for the brown roaring flood was rushing to the North to swell the Rio Saladillo into wild *crescentes* with these millions and millions of tons of water—water, difficult though it was to imagine, that would never reach the salt sea, but dry up beneath the hot sun in the vast Laguna de los Porongos, an inland sea in the desert that has no outlet to the ocean.

From a balloon some hundred yards or so above, the whole plain we were now traversing would, I imagine, have presented the aspect of a shoreless murky sea, with many bushes rising above its surface. We progressed with difficulty. Our horses became alarmed, and stumbled continually in the rapid water, whose bottom they could not see. At times we suddenly found ourselves in holes, where the whole of our saddles were under water, and the animals were carried off their legs by the rapid tide. Indeed things looked far from pleasant, and, more or less lost as we were, there was a probability of night overtaking us while we were floundering about in the flood—a not agreeable prospect. Of a sudden the

sky cleared and was blue again. The sun shone brightly, and all the birds burst into song. Lovely, indeed, this wild *monte* now appeared. All the vegetation was fresh and dripping with diamond-like drops. The tropic evergreens were greener than ever after the welcome moisture. The huge cacti, twenty to thirty feet in height, were the chief feature in the landscape, pointing their gaunt arms, with their rectangular elbows, heavenward, like some huge polypi—quaint and weird growths, very aged some of them, rotten and brown skeletons, with all the outer green pulp long gone, lying on the ground, or standing only till the next strong wind blew them down.

Beautiful convolvuli wound around all of them, while air plants depended like hanging gardens from every branch with their delicate blossoms. Below the yellow sands were hidden by the rushing waters, but the patches of golden-blossoming camomile rose like little islands here and there. At last, to our delight, we came across a hospitable house on a slight elevation overlooking the flooded land.

On riding up a gentleman came out with an unmistakable Teutonic cast of features. We introduced ourselves to him, and craved hospitality for the night. He told us to off-saddle and enter within. We found ourselves, to our surprise, in a well-furnished room, with good engravings on the walls, and a book-shelf full of standard German works. We seemed to have been transported of a sudden to Europe and civilization once again.

Our host then, before making any further remarks to us, called to a native hand-maiden, and ordered her to bring in some hot water and sugar; then he opened

a mysterious cupboard, full of curious instruments and bottles. From this he drew a decanter. Then turning to us he said in good English, deliberately and with pauses between the sentences, as he poured out with much delicacy, and in exact proportions, the contents of the decanter and hot-water jug into four tumblers,—

“I, too, am a gringo—Dr. Scharn—a medical man in practice at Santiago; and now, as a doctor, I am going to prescribe for you after your wetting. Hot water and sugar—that is enough. Now, then, the rum. I think that’s about the right dose. Come, now, drink this down while it is hot.”

Bowing to his superior knowledge as to what was good for us, we swallowed the medicine heroically, and that, too, without making wry faces over it.

We found the doctor to be a very well-informed man, who spoke French, English, and Spanish as well as his native tongue. We were lucky in finding him on this his country estate, where he was now passing a few weeks—a pleasant change after the sultry, unhealthy city of Santiago.

We got all our clothes dry, and enjoyed a sleep in beds for a change this night; for this was a very Capua.

CHAPTER XV.

March 27th.—It was not till noon this day that we saddled and rode off, for we had but a short journey before us to the banks of the Rio Saladillo, where we had decided to pass the night. After traversing some six leagues of sandy glades, we reached our destination, just as the sun was setting. The mud rancho, where dwelt the ferryman, was some hundred yards or so from the river, which was invisible from it on account of the lofty cane-brakes that intervened.

As we approached this habitation we heard a sound of voices and music, and, on riding through an opening in the bush, we burst suddenly on a village festival. In addition to the ferryman's, there were two other ranchos here, the white rag flying over the the roof of one declaring it to be a *pulperia*, perhaps the only grog-shop for a day's journey around. Each of these miserable huts stood in its own little enclosure, surrounded by a fence of prickly pear and cactus, to protect the cattle within from the tigers and pumas that are so numerous in these *montes*. Along a sandy glade in front of the grog-shop a primitive racecourse had been laid out, and a great race-meeting was now evidently being held ; for here

was a gathering of mounted men—some 200 at least—and such a gathering!

All the gauchos for three days' journey around must have been collected here—half-breeds most of them, though not a few were half-naked pure-blood Indians. A more cutthroat-looking lot of ruffians I never beheld; ragged, weather-beaten outlaws, each with his long knife at his back, many with *bollas* and *lassos* ready to bring down any stray cattle that might come by to tickle their appetite on their lonely wanderings. In front of the pulperia a *baile* was being energetically carried on.

We rode up to the ferryman's hut. He came out to meet us—a handsome, clear-complexioned, snowy-haired old Genovese.

“Lodging for the night *como no, senores caballeros?* Dismount—dismount. Beppo, unsaddle these horses. Come in, *senores caballeros*. Say, what do you desire to drink?”

He overwhelmed us with an attention and hospitality that was amazing, seeing what ruffianly-looking beings we strangers were, and that the old gentleman seemed to be sober at this early stage of the festival, so that this could scarcely be gin-induced geniality, and fellow-feeling bred of *caña*.

When we told him who we were, and that we were traversing the country in order to write a book to inform the English of its character—the best yarn wherewith to satisfy curiosity, I have always found—his pleasure knew no bounds; he attempted to drown us with gin. Remonstrances were vain.

“Bah,” he would say, “you are English. Drink won't hurt you, *caramba!*”

He told us that he was most delighted that we had arrived here so opportunely, as we could stand by him with our six-shooters in the event of a row. He considerably dreaded these race-gatherings, for an awful orgie always follows them, and a gaucho maddened with drink is a reckless savage, all the blood-lust that is in the instinct of his race rising to the surface.

"Besides," said our friend, "these are bad men round here to-day—murderous thieves, who would think it but a good joke to cut the throat of an old gringo like me; and they think I have money in the rancho, the devils!"

As we sat in the old man's porch, we could see the fresh arrivals on the scene, for they still kept flocking in, late though it was, two or three on one horse in many cases, bare-legged ruffians with big toes thrust in loops of hide for stirrups, half-drunk, waving long knives and bottles of gin above their heads, and yelling discordantly. They generally came up at full gallop and reined up suddenly in front of the huts. All looked askant at ourselves and our horses tied up within the cactus fence, doubtlessly reckoning up the chances of success in an attempt to run off with the animals in the night.

Our ancient host, Bartolo, told us that he had been settled here for twenty-four years. Before the construction of the railway across the Salinas the mails to Tucuman passed by here, and he had the monopoly of carrying them across the river on inflated hides in the old fashion that Xenophon or Herodotus, or both, describe, and which is still in practice in Mesopotamia and many Eastern lands. Those were good

days for Don Bartolo, but now trade is slack, and few travellers need his services as ferryman. The old man had been a sailor in his youth ; he had also been a soldier in Italy, and at the siege of Montevideo, in 1842, under Garibaldi. His life, he told us, had often been in danger in this lone spot in the wilderness, where, of course, law, police, and justice are unknown luxuries. Men here are left to do what they like, and they do it. These race-meetings at the ferry, he said, end as a rule in considerable kniving—regular duels with the murderous *cuchillo* being a favourite amusement when the gin had done its work.

“ But here we are talking and wasting good time, *caballeros*. Try some of this, my friends ; I think it is a drink new to you. You can write about it in the book ; it is a spirit extracted from the sweet pods of the *algarroba blanca*.”

We tasted and much approved of this very palatable beverage.

“ And now about dinner for you,” continued Don Bartolo, who did his best to make us thoroughly at home. He called his servants and ordered a fat sheep to be killed on the spot. Our mouths watered on hearing this ; we sighed with excess of joy, and our hearts warmed towards the benevolent old man. A pretty, little, half-naked, innocent boy, some seven years old, now ran up, and with a bewitching smile asked, in dulcet tones, if he could kill the sheep. His fine hazel eyes glistened with anticipation of such a treat. A knife was handed to him. With blood-thirsty grin he wiped the keen blade ; then, with half-a-dozen children younger than himself shrieking and

tumbling over each other at his heels, he ran proudly up to the sheep and, very deftly, it must be confessed, let out the creature's life. Loudly did the happy infants cheer when they saw the red blood flow, for such is the sweet Argentine child, such his gentle play. In this Indo-Spanish race a thirst of blood seems to be sucked in with the mother's milk. Cold-blooded torture is the one amusement of babyhood. The child of the Pampas despises dolls and toys, but give him a dog or other dumb animal, he will amuse himself for hours. First he will practise his father's lasso on it, and half-choke the poor beast; then he will tie it up and get further excitement by running pins into it, putting out its eyes, and such-like pretty childish games—innocent little darling that he is!

And now that the sheep is cooking, let us go on the race-course and see the fun. A curious meeting this to one accustomed only to our British sport. I wonder if one of our blatant bookmakers would find himself at home here, or one of our jockeys, for the matter of that. It would, I imagine, rather astonish the winning rider, for instance, at home to feel a knife plunged between his ribs by another disappointed rider who was coming in a good second behind him. This, however, occurred at the last race-meeting here, and was not looked upon as very extraordinary. The course was drawn down a sandy glade, between the giant cacti. Right down the middle of it was a row of posts supporting a hide-rope. It is the custom here for but two horses to race at a time, and this barrier is intended to separate them from each other. There was only one match to day that had been arranged beforehand, the others

were scratch-races got up on the course. This, the race of the day, was for twenty dollars, for 420 yards, between two great swells, the only present who wore boots.

It had just been run when we came on the scene. It seems that one had come in three lengths ahead, but the loser disputed the result, and refused to pay up. One of the barrier-posts had been knocked down, as he alleged, by the winning horse. Now to foul this rail invalidates a race. The winner denied this, and accused the other of riding against the post purposely, when he saw he had no chance of winning. There seemed to be no judge—none, at any rate, whose decisions any one paid the slightest attention to—so the dispute waxed hot. All the wild horsemen grouped round the two infuriated jockeys. Each gaucho, of course, stuck up for the horse he had laid his money on, and a good deal of perjury was knocking about in the air. It happened that he who had come in first was a stranger, so nearly all the money, and hence the sympathies, of the spectators were with the other. Therefore, finding himself overpowered, and his protestations against the cheating vain, the winner leapt on his horse, swore a great oath, and galloped furiously away into the jungle, followed by the jeers of the crowd.

This matter settled, preparations were made for another race. The would-be competitors, some mere boys, half-naked on bare-backed steeds, rode about in the throng, shouting out challenges in regular book-maker style; some wanted to back their horses against special animals, others against the field, or the field bar one, somewhat thus, "Ho! ho! I'll race my

colorado (chestnut) for two squares, for two dollars, against any horse save Jose's big *saiño* (bay). Ho! ho! *caballeros*."

In the interval between the races we looked round to see what substitute they had here for Aunt Sally, nigger minstrels, and other Derby-day amusements. It was rather a serious meeting; we saw in one place three men sitting round a fire, and silently, sadly playing at some game with a very greasy pack of cards, as they sucked their *maté*. About two dozen gauchos stood round them, watching the game with a solemn apathy. By the way the peculiar seriousness of the half-breed is not indicative of a contemplative mind, but of a torpid indolence; his indeed is the "*rêverie qui ne pense à rien*."

Farther on we came across a ragged minstrel playing on a cracked guitar. There was a jabbering idiot on the course, too, whose ears had been cut off, by Indians probably, and whose costume consisted solely of a thin, torn poncho, and thick dirt. He groaned and wept and wrung his hands energetically, and evidently was reaping no small harvest.

"Another race; make way! make way!" A long, lean, lantern-jawed fellow, looking like a Don Quixote in bad circumstances, with only one leg, rode to and fro on a hard-looking black horse; he carried a long staff on his legless side, which he stamped on the ground as he rode along, like Peter the Hermit in the old woodcuts. He was very eager indeed to race his horse. "I'll run any one four squares for a patacon!" he shouted continually with a stentorian voice. Many present evidently considered that they had a very fair chance of success if matched against

this one-legged sportsman. "*Bueno !* I'll race you on my bay," cried one, and four or five others also accepted his challenge. But that one-legged structure of skin and bone knew what he was about. He affected not to hear these, but continued to yell out his challenge like one possessed, so drawing on more and more to answer it, for all now doubted his earnestness, and looked upon him as some poor, half-daft fellow. But at last, all of a sudden, he turned sharply round and pounced on one jovial-looking fellow mounted on a black horse, who had just then jestingly accepted the challenge. "Good, my friend ; then we will race," he said, to the discomfiture of the joker. He had waited his time, until one whom he thought he could easily beat had shouted acceptance to his offer—cunning old turfite that he was. The jovial one was rather taken aback, but could not withdraw now, and race he must ; so the two dismounted and prepared for the contest.

It seems strange to a gringo to see a jockey take off his trousers in order to ride a race, but the jovial one did this ; the one-legged one did not happen to have on even one trouser, so could not. It is the custom in this country to strip nearly naked on such occasions. Our two friends divested themselves of drawers, ponchos, and sombreros, fastened handkerchiefs round their heads, and stood in their shirts. They then withdrew the heavy saddles from their horses, and rode bare-backed to the starting-point.

Now commenced the betting among the crowd, and bet they did with a vengeance ; there is no more reckless a gambler than your gaucho ; when the fever of play is on him he will gamble away his bridle, his

blanket, his horse, his knife, his all, and then walk away, stolid, taking his reverses like a philosopher—a ruined man, yet not cast down, for he will soon steal another horse, and may be luckier next time. We walked to the starting-point, to see the start, which is managed here very differently from the way it is managed in England. The riders start themselves. There are a dozen false starts at least to every race. "Are you ready?" says one; "Good!" then by mutual consent off they go. If one be dissatisfied with a start, he draws up short after a few yards, and they begin again, not without a preliminary wrangle.

At last both drop their *rebenques*, and they are off in earnest. The horses are at their full speed from the very first stride—they are specially trained to this—there is no pulling in, no making a fine race of it, but slash, slash, go the hide *rebenques* from the beginning to the end of the race, and at a tremendous rate they do go over the small distances they generally run here.

The knight of the rueful countenance won this race easily. Many more races followed, some for as low stakes as fourpence or fivepence; but all very exciting to the spectators, and productive of much gambling. Cockfighting filled up the intervals.

But the red sun had now set behind the horizon, and the sudden night of these latitudes was upon us, so the meeting broke up, and the crowd returned to the open space by the three ranchos to carouse and make merry. After a good deal of half-scorched, half-raw beef had been devoured by the fires that were now scattered over the camp, a very witches' ball, so fantastic it appeared, was started in the

pulperia, overflowing, so many were the dancers, to the limits of the tiger-haunted monte. The band consisted of a haggard and ferocious-looking gaucho guitarist, and a crazy, almost naked Indian boy, who accompanied him on a drum, which he beat in a monotonous tom-tom fashion.

The young ladies who were present at the ball were plump, dark, not uncomely, but smacking somewhat of the immortal Dulcinea ; fat and garlic being the chief reminiscences I have of them. They were all barefooted, and danced wonderfully, lithesome as snakes, in the rather licentious native dances. The sole ornaments each girl wore was a flower behind her ear, or a glow-worm picked up in the monte gleaming among her raven tresses.

The guitarist turned out to be rather a celebrated *Majo*, or troubadour, one of the wandering minstrels of Andalusian type, that have long died out in old Spain, but are still not uncommon on the Pampas. This bard chanted to us, in a nasal tone, some of his own compositions, plaintive *tristes*, stirring *vidalitas*, with choruses to them, in which drummer and bystanders loudly joined—songs in which the exploits of gaucho heroes are told—all the while he twanged his cracked guitar not unskilfully. Most of these native airs are of a melancholy wildness, monotonous, but of a strangely impressive monotony, like that of many primitive races ; airs, too, that curiously affect even a civilized ear, for they seemed to awaken and stir in the soul far vague memories, the buried instincts and sentiments of a remote barbarian ancestry.

The dance waxed mad and furious, the dancers

were beside themselves with frenzy, but neither man nor supple damsel seemed to weary, and all the while these ragged beggars, these outlaw cattle-thieves, were as smilingly courteous, as polite, as well-behaved, as dignified as the proudest hidalgo of old Castile.

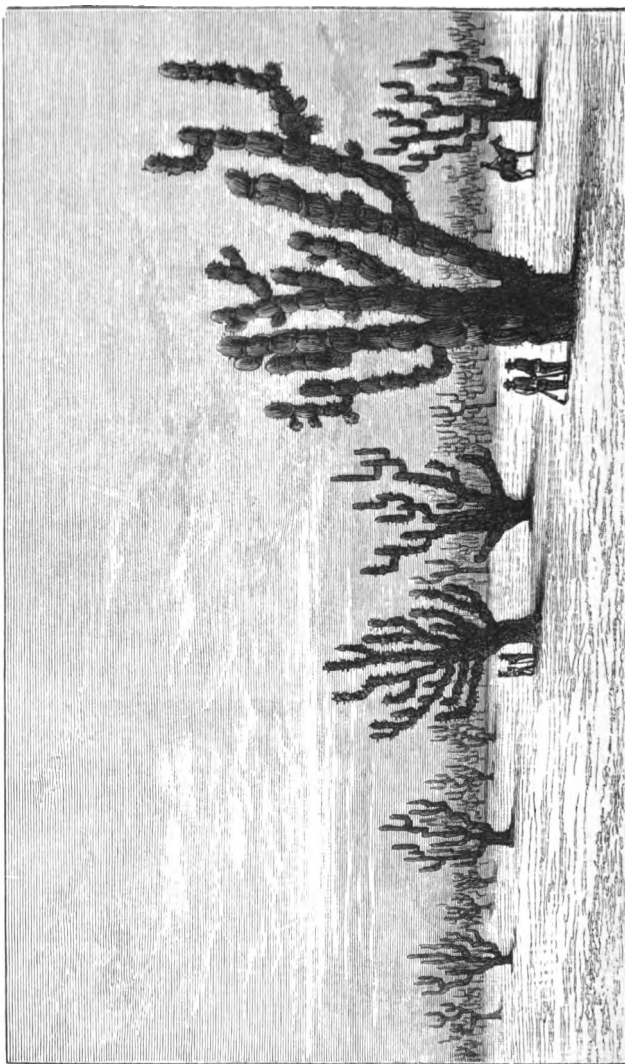
At a late hour we retired to rest, sleeping in our blankets, *à la belle étoile*, with our horses, under the clear dewy sky, with our revolvers under our saddles, which served us as pillows ; but all night long the camp fires burned, and the mad orgie continued, the dance, the shouting, the gambling, the gin-drinking, the guitar, and the monotonous tom-tom of that dreadful drum. How weary that wretched little Indian boy must have felt ?

March 28th.—When we awoke the next morning at seven, and prepared our maté, the revellers were still hard at it in front of the pulperia ; the tom-tom still banged away, while crackers were let off at intervals, as if to revive the flagging energies of the dancers up to the proper pitch. Don Bartolo indignantly refused to accept any payment for his good cheer, and would not be persuaded. We had only to pay for the gin we had consumed, for this came from the grog-shop, and cost about fifteenpence a bottle—what it was made of, I dare not say. There was not a headache in a gallon of it, but sudden death in a glass for any ordinarily-constituted white man.

We went down to the river, and found it to be a wide, rapid stream, with steep earth banks on either side, and sand-banks and quicksands rising here and there in the midst of it—not by any means a nice place to ford.

The natives call this portion of the Rio Dulce the Saladillo, but the maps designate by the latter name a tributary stream which here joins the main watercourse. The Rio Dulce is a considerable river ; it rises in the lofty sierras of Tucuman, and, after traversing the Salinas, flows by here towards the Chaco, pouring its waters into that extensive inland sea, the Laguna de los Porongos, which lies in a depression in the Great Plain, draining it, but having no outlet to the sea. By the bank we found the *chata*, a very rough sort of ferry-boat, awaiting us. Several men and women, and a harpist, all very dishevelled, half-drunk, and showing unmistakable signs of having "kept it up" all night, were to cross with us to their respective homes beyond the river. The boat was far too small and rickety to carry our horses across, but three dusky half-breeds volunteered to swim them over for what would be equivalent to three shillings.

It was a gloomy morning, with a cold south wind blowing ; the river was quite a quarter of a mile wide, swollen and rapid with the rain, so they earned their money well. The fellows were more than half-seas over, and had a powerful tot of raw gin all round after they were stripped, to keep the cold out. We hardly liked to trust our animals to them, and the wife of one of them shared our fears ; she vainly endeavoured to drag her inebriated lord back into the boat, but he eluded her. The lady then made us hand over his share of the pay to her, as she said that he was not to be trusted with it, and would be murdering her or some one or other if he imbibed any more square-face. The men, drunk though they were, took our horses



Giant cacti on the salt plains.

[Vol. I., page 261.

across very cleverly ; they were strong swimmers, going hand over hand, dog-fashion, one ahead, with the halters of two horses in his teeth, leading the way, the other two swimming after, rounding in the other animals, and urging them the way they should go with shoutings and splashings. We crossed in the *chata*, resaddled our shivering steeds, and pushed on at a gallop across a very desolate and dreary country.

We were now traversing the eastern corner of the Salinas, and could form a good idea of the character of those salt-deserts. No grass or herb of any kind grew on the sandy soil, but huge cacti, whose trunks two men could scarcely span with their outstretched arms—giants of their tribe—were frequent. I believe that in no part of the world do these plants attain so great a size, their rectangular arms branched out like those of huge candelabra, and for the most part, so ancient were they, the green covering was entirely stripped off them, revealing the hard wood beneath—decaying monsters that stood like weird skeletons, gaunt and stark, and unhealthy yellow of hue, all over the unfertile plain. The thorns of these cacti were fully seven inches in length, their fine points easily pierced the stoutest boot, and inflicted nasty wounds that healed with difficulty. The only other plants that we came across on this wilderness were a sort of espinas, or thorny shrubs, whose leaves had a saline flavour.

As a result of the recent rains, we came occasionally upon extensive shallow lagunas ; but where the sand was dry it glistened with dazzling brightness with the salt deposit that covered it. The reflection from this would soon have peeled the skin

off our faces, had not sun and exposure pretty well hardened and darkened us by this time.

In the damper places we were besieged by millions of mosquitoes, that literally covered ourselves and our horses. There were three distinct species of them. There were some that I could scarcely recognize as our old enemies, nearly as big as wasps, and striped like them, yellow and black; ferocious beasts, that pierced even through our clothes (and through Jerdein's boots, according to him), with their diabolical suckers. They were wonderfully tame, too, never flying from the avenging hand like their wily cousins in Europe; but what availed it to immolate a dozen or a thousand in this land of bichos?

We reached our night's halting-place before dark—a curious little settlement. First picture its surroundings: a plain of dry mud, in places covered with salt, and everywhere cleft with deep, broad sun-cracks, and cacti scattered here and there, alone in the way of vegetation. In the centre of this not over-cheerful prospect was one of the ordinary unfinished squares of low houses of unbaked mud that I have had so frequently to allude to; the square, the buildings, the plain, the inhabitants, were all of the same depressing yellow colour. Such is the jaundiced pueblo of Salabina, among whose prosperous fleas we passed an uneventful night.

March 29th.—This day we forced our way through hostile legions of mosquitoes and thorns, to the village of Juanilla. This is indeed a spinous region. The thorns of this day's bushes beat anything I have ever experienced in the way of thorns; I cut some and carried them off as trophies, and am now writing

this with one converted into a pen-holder. It would be the envy of any porcupine ; it is a foot long, and its base is larger than a sixpenny bit.

At midday we came to a miserable rancho, whose sole occupants were a woman and her child. She gave us permission to light a fire under the mimosa-tree in front of her door, and we soon grilled the beef we had brought with us from Salabina. As we sat by the fire, eating our succulent asado, a bundle of brick-coloured rags sauntered slowly down to us. This was the lady of the house, who led by the hand her little naked, fly-blown child. A lean spaniel bitch followed, also with its offspring, a still leaner, most melancholy-looking puppy ; indeed a miserable procession. The woman was pretty, or rather would have been pretty had she been fed, washed, and combed out. Two long raven plaits of hair hung down her back to her heels ; her eyes were black and large. She came down towards us slowly and stately, with all the Spanish *hauteur* of mien and carriage. Then she sat beside us, and, with a long nasal drawl and slow delivery of speech, which the Spaniards of South America have acquired from the Indians, she asked—not begged—for a bit of bread for her child. He was ailing, she said. Bread, she thought, might be good for him ; she had none in the rancho, *charqui* alone (dry leather ! what a diet for a sick baby !). Miserably poor the woman seemed to be, scarcely able to drag along her existence. Famine had dimmed her fine eyes, and weakness had reduced her to a half-daft condition. She did not pay attention to any remark we made till it was repeated three or four times. She was

subdued by want to an utter apathy and torpor, a not uncommon state of things in poor Santiago, notwithstanding that its people are so hospitable and ready to share their little all with the stranger.

"Will the senora do us the honour of joining us at our meal?"

"Como no, senor?" she replied; and I think our fresh beef, biscuit, and caña did the poor soul good. The spaniel, too, came up, and with plaintive patience waited for an invitation to have a share in the good things. She, too, had an ailing puppy who would be benefited by bread, and she found means to tell us as much in her own pathetic way.

We made the woman a little present of yerba and sugar before we left, and she insisted on giving us a bottle of prickly-pear jam in return, for with all her poverty, she was far too proud to accept anything in the way of alms.

After crossing eight leagues more of salt plain we reached Juanilla, where were three or four houses and a store. Outside this store were sitting several very stately gentlemen, chattering and smoking. They rose, and politely begged us to dismount. We piled up our impediments under the eaves of the house, and entered into conversation with the gossiping *compadres*, who were evidently the big men and elders of the place.

The people about here are for the most part of pure Spanish blood, many tracing back their descent to the old conquistadores, followers of Fernandez Pizarro; but, curiously enough, the language spoken hereabouts by all is not Spanish, but the Indian dialect, *Quichua*, the ancient tongue of the

Incas of Peru. These elders all conversed in this language, but of course understood Spanish as well, as many of the lower orders do not. The Quichua tongue is only spoken in the northern provinces of the Argentine Republic, on the frontier of Bolivia. Our new friends of Juanilla were all fine types of the antique colonist, reminding one of the portraits by the old Spanish masters. Velasquez painted heads like these, long, fierce-eyed, stern, and bearded. In the becoming native dress they looked like men of a long-past age, as they verily are in all their manners; tall, gaunt, angular men of the true Don Quixote breed.

We chatted and drank gin with these antique Santiagenas, while a small boy was sent in search of maize for our horses. In the midst of the slow dignified conversation, a sudden commotion was heard in the pueblo, and even these stolid sages showed unmistakable signs of excitement. What extraordinary event was it that could so stir these profoundly still natures? Nothing less than the race-horses—two of them—that were being brought out for their afternoon gallop. The whole population of Juanilla—some thirty, including women and babes—turned out to inspect the beautiful animals. This was the one event, the sole excitement to break the sleepy dead-and-alive day of this dull South American village. These two horses are the pride, the hope of Juanilla, the objects of the greatest solicitude. They are tended with minute care, fed at intervals, day and night, in a scientific way, till they become as hard as nails, or as *charqui*. Before their alfalfa is laid before them, every unwholesome bit or particle

of foreign matter is carefully picked out. In fact, they have a fine old time of it, and are treated as gods, even as some sacred Bull of Memphis, kinging it in his manger.

We saw the horses gallop, and agreed with the proud owner that the *tordillo* (grey) was a likely animal to put one's money on. When the maize arrived—very dear it is, by the way, in this province of the desert—we found it was ungrained, so we had to sit down and disintegrate the tough ears ourselves. This is no easy work, and would inflict sore havoc on a delicate-skinned hand, which ours are not, anyhow. After a square meal of puchero we turned in, in the primitive way of the country, under our blankets in the middle of the main (and only) street, for there were no policemen here to disturb our slumbers and bid us “move on.”

CHAPTER XVI.

March 30th.—On leaving Juanilla, our route lay across a rather less desert country. We were off early, and before the mosquitoes had slept off the last night's orgie. But they got up soon after us, when the sun warmed their wings, half-paralyzed by the cold of the morning dew. We cooked and devoured our mid-day asado in the middle of the village of Atamisqui, in front of the butcher's house. A typical dwelling of the country was this: a one-roomed rancho, with no window. Inside was nothing save fleas and dirt, but outside were all the careful housewife's apparati. First, in front of the door, was a mud structure like a bee-hive—this was the oven wherein the bread is baked; near this was the hollowed stump of a tree, forming a big mortar, in which a woman was crushing maize, or algarroba pods, with a wooden pestle. The meat (charqui) hung in festoons from the branches of a large mimosa.

This is certainly a most out-of-door people. In this province the cooking of a household is done outside, the family eat outside, at night lock up the house and sleep outside; in short, exist altogether outside—wisely, seeing what worse than pigstyes their ranchos

are. But why do they take the trouble of constructing houses at all, since they apparently make no manner of use of them? I cannot imagine, unless, upon mature consideration, it be for the laudable object of becoming householders, and so having a vote; but I forget we are in enlightened, universal-franchised South America, not in feudal England. Here we found that the inhabitants understood but little Spanish, and spoke Quichua exclusively.

In the evening we reached Loretto, the largest town between Cordoba and Santiago, but that is not saying much. The photographer of Cordoba had spoken to us of Loretto, and marked it down on the road-plan he prepared for us as "a town of women." Such towns, where men are few, the population being almost exclusively made up of the fair sex, are not rare in some parts of the Argentine Republic. In all parts of this province the traveller is especially struck by the disproportion of the sexes. This I have heard attributed to the revolutions, and to the sweeping conscriptions the tyrant governor of a province often decrees, in order to strengthen his personal power. This Argentine confederation has been, and still to a lesser extent will be, until the Unitarios get the upper hand for good, a collection of almost independent states or provinces. Each has its separate provincial government, its provincial army, its local satrap, who, as often as not, sets at nought the impotent edicts of the central National Government. In this province of Santiago, some few years ago, reigned almost as kings, or, more exactly, as powerful feudal barons, the Taboadas, a noble family, haughty and ambitious. The flower of the land was taken by

these to serve in the provincial army, which they maintained on a far higher footing than was necessary to protect the Indian frontier. Thousands of gaucho cavalry were kept ever in readiness to advance against the neighbouring provinces, when disputes arose between the Taboadas and rival satraps.

It was this state of things, I am told, that accounts for the now paucity of men in Loretto and other towns. The Nero-like cruelties and lusts, the unbridled tyranny of these Republican presidents, dictators, and governors, would hardly be credited by folks at home. These men, ignorant as a rule, mere gauchos some of them, raise themselves to the little brief authority by the means of assassination, treachery, and crime ; and with these same they protect themselves through their rapacious career, until the assassin's knife makes way for some greater tyrant. The Monteneros, or organized bands of gaucho outlaws, become the ready tool of any would-be despot who offers hope of plunder, and the wild hordes of the Pampas are brought down to overrun the civilization of the city. It is this system that has ruined what would otherwise be flourishing towns and centres of commerce and industry. The stranger is struck with astonishment, and is at a loss for an explanation when he comes across so many towns, considerable and ancient many of them, in this Republic, that are now falling in ruins, and whose grass-grown streets are almost deserted by man.

Juan Facundo Quiroga, the outlaw gaucho murderer from the Western Llanos, Rosas, his assassin, and the rest of them, have all had a turn at impoverishing their native land, and making her a bye-word among

the nations. Like Sylla and Marius, his types in ancient Rome, each new tyrant proscribed his political adversaries, and so were the noblest and best of the land slain or sent as exiles into Chili. But civilization is now having its revenge; the barbarism of the Pampas is fighting hard, but it is no longer the power, the terror that it was.

About half a mile or so outside the "town of women" was a rancho. Here, indeed, was a man, but he was not a whole one, for he was lying very pale and weak on a *catre* in front of his hut, having been severely wounded by a jaguar that he had hunted and driven at bay. He was feebly sucking *maté* when we approached. Two small, naked, brown children sat by him on the ground, each with two broad rings of flies settled round his eyes, like the black rims of spectacles—for, like the Egyptian infant, the Argentine country child never bethinks him of brushing away these flies, but sits down, seemingly perfectly comfortable, with fifty or sixty thus roosting round his optics. There the two pot-bellied little urchins squatted, stolidly chewing algarroba-pods, which seems to be the sole diet of the poorer children of this province—not a very nourishing one either. To procure enough sustenance in this way necessitates about thirteen hours of persistent chewing a day; thus the stomachs of the young here, like those of all savages who live on vegetables and roots alone, are bulky and oxlike in proportion.

This man could sell us alfalfa and charqui, and behind his house was a small pond of muddy water, so we determined to camp here for the night, instead of thrusting ourselves on the hospitality of the Loret-

tanás ; besides, it was far from certain if forage would be procurable within the walls of the town ; and yet, again, would it not have been an over-adventuresome and perilous thing to have passed down those mud streets, and found ourselves alone and unprotected males among so many women ? Caramba ! It was too perilous, and legends of fierce Amazons rose to our memory, and the fearful laws of that city of fair girls where Tennyson's Princess held her sway, so we off-saddled and prepared our camp by the side of the mosquito-haunted laguna—smoke could keep off their stinging—but women ! not that we Falcons are misogynists. Heaven forbid !

But from the watch-tower of the city did the sentinel maiden perceive the four horsemen from a far country, and she reported us to the governoress, or governess. Then was a consultation held, and the elders said, " Let us send some forth that they may slay these gringo intruders—gringos and males to boot ! it is horrible ! " But the younger women were loth that this should be done, for they had perceived that the horsemen were not uncomely, and, being women, they felt much curiosity to know what these men in so strange apparel and stained with long travel might be.

Now, happily, the younger women were the majority in the council, so there were sent forth to invite us as friends within the walls two delegates—one an elder and stately matron, one a graceful, dark-eyed girl. Afar off we saw them approaching, so we tried to look our best, shook the dust off our ponchos, gave our sombreros a gay, cavalier-like askewness, twirled our moustaches, and put on our most superior smiles.

They came up, and then we felt small indeed, for they paid no manner of attention to us ; they had walked hither, not for us, but to visit the sick man, who was their relative, and to bear him grateful delicacies. All the grand stuff I have written above was the mere offspring of our wanton imaginations, the conjecture of our vanity, when we perceived the two black-draped figures coming out of the town towards us.

After these ministers of mercy had seen to the wants of the wounded man, they condescended to notice us, and inquired of him what we were. On hearing our tale, the elder woman came up, and, with a very pleasant manner, invited us to her house in the town.

“Señores Caballeros,” she said, “I have an apartment in my house, which is not in use, and which I shall be happy to place at your disposition for the night, if you will accept of it. There is a well hard by, and I can supply you with a sufficiency of beef, maize, and alfalfa.”

We accepted her gracious offer, resaddled, put our baggage on the pack-animal, and followed her into the town. The poor horses evidently did not relish this, for we had ridden them fifty-five miles this day, and they naturally thought the time for repose had arrived ; but they had not far to go ere they were again unsaddled and at ease.

While our asado was cooking in the courtyard, we took a stroll through the town. The small number of men in the place was certainly extraordinary. At last, in one of the stores, we did find quite a considerable group of our own sex drinking—cutthroat-looking gauchos, all with long knives, some with

revolvers, but who politely insisted on our drinking with them.

Here, too, was an individual who deserves particular mention — a dark man, beardless, with bright, beady eyes, and much of the Indian in his blood. He was well-dressed, but in a barbaric fashion, that differed considerably from that of the gauchos round in its details : a scarlet kerchief was round his head below his sombrero ; his poncho was of gaudy colours and strange pattern ; his silver spurs were massive, and gold earrings were in his ears. When he spoke it was with a pompous nasal drawl, very deliberate, and offensive to ears unaccustomed to it.

This man was a Bolivian Colla, a travelling herbalist or quack doctor. These Indian and half-breed Collas have a great reputation all over South America ; they travel with their packs of drugs to the southernmost camps of Buenos Ayres, and northwards to the shores of Panama. They are looked upon with much reverence by the gauchos of the Pampas as great medicine-men, conjurers, and miracle-workers. That there is much humbug in these Collas is true, but there is much besides ; there is a sort of primitive college in Bolivia where the would-be Collas receive their diplomas. This college has no buildings, no books, the primeval forest serves for both. The elder Collas take the young aspirants out into the midst of that glorious Bolivian vegetation, and expound to them, day after day, the properties and secret virtues, the poisonous effects, of all the herbs and animal distillations, as handed down by tradition from generation to generation, from Colla to Colla, long ere the Spaniard stepped on the American shore. All the

instruction is oral ; none of this lore has ever been committed to writing. I doubt if one out of twenty of the learned dons and doctors of the college of Collas can read or write. When the young man has imbibed all this antique wisdom, a wand, painted in spiral stripes, is given to him, he is solemnly called by the name of Colla, and he is sent forth to wander over the wide continent on his healing errand. Not to be despised is the medical science of these unlettered men ; that traditionary system, that empirical wisdom of many centuries, contains many wonderful and useful secrets unknown to our European schools. I have heard of several extraordinary cures performed by them on sceptical Englishmen, not at all likely to be taken in by a common quack. For all fevers, snake-bites, and diseases peculiar to this country, give me the Bolivian Collas with their striped wand. They know the leaf that is the magical dispeller of fever ; they can extract charms from innocent-looking insects that will allay the pains of rheumatism ; they can teach you how to mix your mother-in-law's maté with an essence that will bring peace to your household ; they will sell you chips of wood, the which, if you throw them in a stream or pond, will poison or intoxicate all the fish, so that they float on the surface and can be easily caught ; but as a surgeon the Colla is not to be relied upon ; of anatomy, physiology, or any other ology, of course he knows nothing whatever, though he will talk all sorts of incomprehensible jargon about them for your benefit.

March 31st.—From Loretto a two-days' journey brought us to Santiago del Estero, the capital of the province. Our route lay across a much pleasanter

country than that we had left. The vegetation, more tropical in nature, was fresh and green after the recent rains ; below the bushes was spread a soft carpet, not of grass, but of lovely flowers—verbenas, polyanthi, tulips, camomile, and others. Towering above the lower bushes were stately trees—the Quebrachos colorados—betokening that we were near the limit of the monte, and at the commencement of the tropical forest. The bushes were not too near each other here, as in the denser montes further south, but scattered, so that through the interspaces the eye was relieved by extensive views over the sea-like spreads of flowers. The convolvuli and creepers, too, that overflowed the bush, the trees, the bushes, were all in manifold flower, and in fruit as well ; all bore fruit. There was the prickly pear, with its heavy load of juicy orbs, and the ancoche, with its pearl-like drops, sweet to the taste and wholesome. There was a huge cactus, too, hereabouts, that bore plentiful fruit, somewhat like that of the prickly pear in outward appearance, but larger ; some of these were bursting open with ripeness, and disclosed the delicious pulp within, cool as spring-water, and of a blood-red colour. This is called the oukli here, a lovely fruit, and one of the most useful in South America.

In the rainless, arid districts of the Andes, in Santiago, and other provinces remote from the sea-coast, where the rainfall is irregular and rare, and where, after long months of cloudless, burning skies, the pastures wither up, the lagunas dry, and the cattle perish of drought ; in rocky regions, too, baked by the vertical sun, where no other plant can find sustenance, the blessed oukli flourishes. Those stout, prickly

stems and manifold round fruit, covered with thick, green rind, blushing slightly with the red pulp within, are fleshy and juicy to excess, full of an insipid sap sucked in from the heavy dews of the night. These plants are admirably constructed for the absorption of the floating vapours.

In the *seca*—the drought—the ranchero will go out and cut down with his machete a quantity of these soft, pulpy cacti, which the cattle will eagerly devour, both stem and fruit, therein finding an abundance of both food and drink. Were it not for the oukli, many portions of this province now inhabited would have to be left utterly desolate. We found the cool fruit, which can be eaten with impunity, very grateful.

In the pleasant fields we crossed this day, seemed to have gathered all the winged people of the province; never did I behold so many birds together: thousands of cooing doves and chattering parrots, and strange rainbow-coloured little creatures that never rested; coranchos, vultures, and owls were there too in legions, but preserving a more dignified appearance, and seeming to despise the frivolity of their cousins.

A land of fruit and birds and flowers, but of bichos and espinas too!

We heard from people that we met that the Rio Dulce, which we had to cross once more, was swollen by the rains, and not practicable at the passage of Gauchana, so we had to follow a longer route, and ride by the banks of the river to a point about a league distant from the city of Santiago, where there was another chata.

We passed by a little town called Mamodo, where was the usual square, this one more unfinished than

any we had yet seen. There were but six houses scattered round it, and the jungle grew so dense and tall in the centre of it that it was impossible from one side to see the houses on the other. I do not know how these pueblos are founded, but the august founders, whoever they may be, evidently, as a rule, expected that enormous cities were to rise on the spots of their choice, on so extensive a scale did they draw out the skeletons of these future Babylons. This they told us was an ancient pueblo, yet jaguars and pumas roamed unmolested in its square. At a rancho here we tasted a new and strange drink, which we all pretended to like—algarroba beer. To make this, the pods are well mashed in a hollow tree-stump, water is poured on them, fermentation takes place, and in twenty-four hours you have your foaming ale. I cannot say much for algarroba beer, but algarroba spirit is by no means to be despised, and the cakes made from the pounded beans are very nice indeed.

After riding about forty miles we entered a forest nearly entirely levelled to the ground by what must have been a most terrific hurricane. On emerging from it we came to an estancia called Roblez, where we passed the night, being received with true Santiagenan hospitality. There was a Frenchman staying in the house, an engineer, who was engaged in constructing canals of irrigation for the sugar plantations near Santiago. He was in possession of a Paris paper three months old, which we devoured eagerly.

April 1st.—This morning we rode down to the ford on the Rio Dulce, which was but a few leagues

distant. We found the river in high flood. It here flowed between sandy shores sloping up to a dense jungle, and was of considerable breadth. There were some men willing to swim our horses across, perilous work in this *crescente*, for heavy trees floated down rapidly on the turbid water. These men drove the horses into the stream nearly a mile above the spot they proposed landing at on the other side, so strong was the current. We in the rough chata accomplished the voyage in the same manner. When we reached the other bank, we were landed on a quicksand. Several Indians now commenced to run rapidly backwards and forwards over this, and so soon formed a fairly hard road for ourselves and horses. This method of making a temporary solid path across a quicksand is very effectual. In Africa they first drive the oxen across a river, that the sands may so become sufficiently hard to allow the heavy waggons to cross without danger of their sinking permanently into the treacherous bottom.

When we were beyond the river we beheld, as about a league off, the ancient city of Santiago del Estero. The gleaming dome of the old cathedral dominated all, contrasting strangely by its size, and the wealth lavished on its construction, with the barbarism and poverty of the broad province it looked down upon.

We were now entering a new country. As we approached the city the untilled wilderness vanished, canals of irrigation flowed sluggishly on either side of the road—for there was a road—and all round us, with a rustling and a crackling sound, waved great plantations of sugar-canes; we were in the tropic

north again, with a sudden burst, as it were. No longer were around us the parched montes and salinas, but a damp, rainy, steaming land, covered with a rank vegetation, the unhealthy tepid tropics of Central South America.

We rode into the city, a largish town, but thoroughly Argentine ; there are but few gringos here ; a mean place, so mean that there is not even a tramway in it, and no South American city can even pretend to be respectable without that. The miserable houses are of mud, brick being the exception. Paving there is none to speak of. The streets are of soft black mud. A disreputable, dishevelled-looking sort of a capital, whose inhabitants have a large proportion of Indian blood in their veins, the indolent, useless Indian blood, that is the curse of this Republic.

As we rode in we saw the children, mahogany-coloured, with bright dark eyes, and straight black hair, wallowing naked in the rich mud of the streets. There was a wild, barbaric look about the dirty city and its inhabitants that struck us much. We rode to the one hotel, the "Hôtel de Paris," a new institution. Of old the traveller had to throw himself on the hospitality of the inhabitants or camp outside. A native keeps this—the first native hotel that we had experienced in this Republic ; may it be the last ! The landlord was a haughty aristocrat, who would not condescend to look after the comfort of his guests in the least, but stalked like a monarch through his palace, eyeing his guests as if they were so many intruders on his peace.

The hotel was a strange old place, and not wanting in magnificence ; the house once of some governor or

great man, a tyrant Taboada maybe. The patio was large, with a beautiful columned gallery around it, delicately-painted, but now crumbling to pieces from neglect. There was something of the ruined Moorish palace in the look of the whole building. There was a large courtyard behind the patio, in the centre of which was a huge wooden structure like a hencoop. This was the cock-pit, with its tiers of seats.

We were divided into different bedrooms overlooking the patio—large rooms with gaudy draperies on the walls, now hanging in mildewed shreds, but betraying former grandeur and ostentation of wealth. I was quartered with another traveller, a Bolivian, who was driving cattle south, but was here laid up half-way with a very bad attack of chuchu, or intermittent fever; not a pleasant companion, for he groaned awfully when the shivering fit came on him. He told me he was taking eighty grains of sulphate of quinine a day, which is a largish dose, but not unfrequently ordered here by the doctors.

The *plaza* of Santiago is fine in its way, and surrounded by rather imposing public buildings. A white-plastered column, commemorative of Liberty or somebody else, is in the centre of it, of course tumbling to pieces, for here, as in China, dilapidation is but rarely repaired.

The day of our arrival the municipality had awoke to a spasmodic fit of cleaning up: some gaucho prisoners, guarded by stunted, dirty, half-breed soldiers, were (smoking the while) hoeing up the grass which had been allowed to rankly overgrow all the flags of the desolate Plaza, wherein no human being ever

seemed to walk, fine promenade though it would make.

The street sights of Santiago are of the country—chiña girls, wild and half-naked, ride cross-legged on mules laden with alfalfa for sale. Sandaled gauchos loaf about solemnly and noiselessly. At intervals in the gloomy streets are stores where cheap Brummagen and Manchester goods, gaudy, and of bad quality, are exposed to view. With the exception of these last, the houses are like prisons, with grated windows admitting but a feeble light from the street. Outside some of the best of these dungeons, white high-caste ladies, bonnetless, with their two raven tails hanging to their waists, and in dainty high-heeled shoes, sit on chairs in the street, chatting, fanning, drinking maté, and smoking cigarettes, in a very free and easy manner. These are the noblest of the land, wives and daughters of deputies and generals—and in this fashion do the *élite* of Santiago take the air. It is a very out-of-door life that of this people; and, indeed, the habitations are not such as would tempt one to stay indoors much—an out-of-door life, but not a French out-of-door life—there are no brilliant *cafés* here, no splendid shops, no *flâneurs*. The citizens have no cheerful promenades, so stand and sit—a melancholy-looking race—outside their prison-like houses, like so many prisoners out for an airing.

We returned to our hotel to dinner—a casual establishment. Truly the native here considers that time was made for slaves alone. At the bar we asked the dreamy, half-bred waiter for a vermouth each, and some water. After some pondering he

produced the vermouth, and left us for fifty minutes before he returned with a tumbler of water.

The *table-d'hôte* dinner was two hours late.

"*Como! senor*, the cook is taking a walk." This was offered to us as quite a reasonable excuse, and the native diners seemed to look upon this delay quite as a matter of course. There was one person at the table who expressed impatience—we looked sympathizingly towards him—this man must be a fellow-gringo we opined. It was so; he was a Swiss sugar-planter, and an agreeable man. He told us that sugar-planting, a new industry here, was very profitable. Labour in Santiago was cheaper than in Tucuman, the peons being paid only one shilling and sixpence a day, finding their own food and lodging. Again, fuel was plentiful here, and cost but the cutting, for virgin montes and forests came up to the edge of nearly every plantation. The soil, too, was of excessive richness; the sugar-cane, that most impoverishing plant, not having as yet had time to exhaust the land, as is the case in Tucuman.

When I retired to my palatial bedroom to rest, I found that my companion with the chuchu was shaking the very walls with his fever-fit, shivering and groaning under a mountain of native blankets, his saddlery being piled above all. A sudden gust from the patio extinguished my candle, so I shouted to the waiter for a light. After much delay he appeared, shuffling along with his bare feet; sleepily and calmly he sat down in a chair, and asked me with a patient drone if I wanted anything. He seemed to be mildly surprised at my impatience, and doubtlessly pitied this poor foreign white man, who so

valued time, which was so cheap a commodity to him. After another very long delay he reappeared with an unlit tallow dip ; this he placed on the table, and asked me for a match. I had none. He went out again—another long delay. On his return he deliberately rolled himself a cigarette, sat down again on the chair, struck a match, and lit up. He pulled a few puffs, became wrapped in contemplation of the burning match which he held in his hand, and not till the flame reached his fingers did he start, suddenly recollect himself, and condescend to light the candle. Then he sat down once more, rolled another cigarette, and politely offered it to me with his own to light it by. What could one say to a fellow like this ? and such is the cool manner of the dignified and polite half-bred waiter throughout this free country.

A wonderful place in every way was this palatial ruin of a Santiagan hotel—a dreamy, casual, *laissez-faire* Castle of Indolence, where host, waiter, cook, and all, seemed to consider cigarette-smoking as the one duty of life, and in that they did indeed exhibit industry unbounded, never leaving an opportunity neglected.

There is no luxury in the life of this city ; it is the life of the camps carried into the town : the perpetual asado and puchero for dinner—very nice by the camp fire, but one expects something else in a capital of a huge province.

At this grand hostelry your boots will not be blacked, you must look after your horses yourself, carry your own baggage in when you arrive, pile your saddlery, &c., up in your bedroom, in short, do everything yourself. What in some lands would be

considered a menial work, a gentleman here performs for himself. How different from Brazil with its slave system; there the white man will do nothing—will hail a slave at the other end of the house to hand his glass to him, or his pipe, though it be on the table within reach of his arm without rising—a system degrading to slave and lord alike.

As is usual in this Republic, even in far more important cities than this, our bedrooms in this *caravan-serai* were windowless and chimneyless, so that the doors had to be left open on the patio all night to ensure a sufficiency of ventilation. It is strange that hotel robberies are not more frequent in Buenos Ayres than they are, as the facilities for them are great. Those timid British tourists who lock their doors so carefully, and before starting for a continental tour provide themselves with all manner of patent door-jammers, would in this land either perish of suffocation, or waste away with nights of dreadful suspense.

We, anyhow, were not much troubled with such anxieties; we enjoyed this night the unaccustomed luxury of sheets and pillows, and were able to take off our clothes. Under such sleep-compelling circumstances, even the groans of my poor fever-stricken companion, in his bed by mine, could not keep me awake.

From here to Tucuman is a three-days' easy journey on horseback by the usual route, but on account of the flooded condition of the Rio Dulce, which we had yet once more to cross, we were recommended to make a *détour*, and follow its banks to a point some fourteen leagues from here.

CHAPTER XVII.

April 3rd.—Having enjoyed a day and a half's rest in the not very interesting capital of the province of the desert, we rode off at daybreak on the 3rd of April. We went through the town in our usual picturesque procession, with the baggage-animal trotting on ahead, with kettle and asador swinging under his neck rattling merry music ; and the sack on his back well full of sugar, maté, biscuit, and beef, a four-days' store, for as we were not following the regular route, who could tell how far we might have to travel ere finding a place where we could re-victual ?

We rode all day ; first through the canalized sugar-plantations in the neighbourhood of the town, then across a wilderness of trees and flowers. The deadly chuchu plant was plentiful at our feet, so, too, thick-growing white poppies and variegated tulips. We followed the river, generally about a mile from it, a dense jungle intervening. At midday we halted to feed in a small pueblo, where a laguna provided us with tepid muddy water, but there was *nada mas* to be got in this place in the way of provisions, as Manuel, after diligent inquiry, informed us, not even

caña or gin! What a barbarous country! Far, indeed, from civilization must be the spot where fire-water cannot be procured. Then we went on again across the plain, steaming and dank with its rich black loam—how different from the dry south. The atmosphere was that of a vapour-bath; it was late autumn, and the rank vegetation was rotting all around us, unhealthy and leprous-looking. We understood now how it was that this country was famed for its pestilential chuchu, being a prolific mother of fevers, while the Pampas and the arid montes further south are quite healthy, where, as in the Sahara of Africa, hunger and thirst and old age are the only diseases known.

It demonstrates how little the natives here know of their own country, to say that we found that the chata, or ferry-boat, fourteen leagues off, the people of Santiago had told us of and recommended, was not in existence, and had not been so for nearly ten years. So after riding all day, we found that we had to follow the bend of the river still further to the south-west out of our direction, in order to find some other *paso*. About an hour after dusk we came upon a house by the river bank, standing alone in the wilderness. The whole family was sitting outside maté-drinking—a patriarchal-looking tribe. The head was a stalwart, hale old man, straight as an arrow, in gaucho dress, shod with colt's feet, and belted with many dollars, with a head that might have belonged to Abraham, Isaac, or Jacob. He had several sons round him, one, a youth of about fifty, was married, had married daughters, and was already a grandfather; thus our host was a great-grandfather; but, to our

surprise huddled up within the rancho was another very aged man, with long white hair and beard, and blind, with his palsied head wrapped up in a white cloth. This was our host's father, the venerable ancestor of all the little colony, the great-great-grandfather of the little babe there at his handsome mother's breast. This old gentleman lived in a world of his own, in a time about three-quarters of a century back at least. He would talk to no one, ignored his descendants and all present things altogether, and was wont, so our host told us, to tie himself in a knot there in the corner, and shiver and moan on day by day, with eyes that, though blinded, had yet a far-off look, and mumble to himself all sorts of ancient memories. He would talk often of the king of Spain, whom he evidently considered still ruled half the New World, and of many events of long-past history that his grandsons had not even heard of.

This was a handsome family, from the old Conquistador, as we called the ancient, downwards; there was no taint of the Indian blood in them. And so the happy and peaceful life of this little community of five generations of men flows on its even way in this remote waste, with only the season of the marking of cattle and such-like rural excitements to vary its uneventful calm; for out here even the outermost wave of the revolutions of the cities is unfelt, and those lawless bands of armed men that fatten on pronunciamenta, robbing men and violating women, do not extend their raids thus far.

There is, at any rate, one virtue which shines out very strong in this South American race, as it does

to some extent among all the Latin races, and but feebly, it must be confessed, in our own. Family affection, filial duty—these ties are kept up here through life; the prodigal son will be received with joy and the fatted calf, without word of reproach, even be his hands red with murder. No one can fail to notice the exceeding indulgence of parents for their children in this land; our habit of bidding our fledged birds fly off and look after themselves is not understood at all here, perhaps it would be better for the race if it were.

At night the preparations for rest were made in a way that would surprise an English farmer. Although the night air was cool, almost cold, our host bid his sons bring out the beds. Three *catres* were then arranged in a row outside the house, which, emptied of every one, was locked up for the night. The patriarch turned into one *catre*, the host and his wife into another, the damsels into the third, while the men, the children, and ourselves, camped out alongside in our blankets. This curious habit of locking up the house and turning out for the night is common in these northern provinces; even in chilly weather the native prefers to sleep under the stars to within doors, lulled into slumber, as we were to-night, by the lowing of cattle, the hum of cicada, the cry of wild beasts, and other manifold sounds of the forest and the wilderness, not to forget the snores of patriarchs, for the great-great-grandfather raised a nasal trumpeting this night that drowned that of all his five generations of descendants, his oxen, and the strangers within his gates put together.

April 4th.—When we had ridden but a few miles

this day, we perceived that ahead of us the monte, for leagues, as far as the eye could see, was of a red colour, like that of burnt bricks. Earth, tree, and bush had all assumed the same curious hue, the effect being something like that of early winter on some of the vegetation of northern Europe. We could not at first conjecture what the strange appearance signified—it was as if some pestilential blast had withered up all the life of the land? On approaching, we found this to be a vast multitude of locusts, that were settled so thickly on everything that no twig or leaf, or inch of bare earth was left visible. There was nothing to be seen anywhere under the sky but the mahogany-coloured bodies of these fearful creatures, they covered all. They had nearly finished up this district. As we rode through them they rose from under our feet in thousands, with a multitudinous crackling sound as of a huge bonfire, and then, when we had passed, settled down again, but having revealed in their short flight the devastation they had wrought; little but bare barkless stalks were left of tree and bush, even the grass had been devoured down to the ground.

After riding over several miles of locusts, we reached a hut by the river, where were two men, who made their livelihood by burning charcoal and ferrying stray passengers across the stream. For this purpose they had constructed what they rather boldly called a boat. Imagine two rough logs, about three or four feet long, lashed together with hide thongs in the shape of a V, then a plank nailed on top of these, so converting the V into an A; here you have the boat. The apex of the A was of course the bow of

the vessel. Only one passenger could be carried at a time on this rickety craft, and he had to balance himself gingerly, as he squatted down on the transverse plank, and held on to the two logs.

One by one we were ferried across. The Charon would launch the boat each time with its nervous occupant looking exceedingly ridiculous, and then swim behind it, pushing it on with his hands, so steering it diagonally across the current, till ultimately he beached it on the opposite bank. The river was much swollen, very rapid, nearly 300 yards wide, and big trees kept floating down, often threatening to collide with the little raft, thus there was no small element of danger in this passage. No accident occurred, however. We were all safely landed, and then the men proceeded to swim our horses across.

We had not ridden half a mile beyond this when a strange sound was heard suddenly, coming from all round us, a sound low and ominous, terrible to the husbandman ; it was the noise of the wings of myriads of locusts. The word had been given forth by the captain, and, with one consent, in a moment the vast army rose up with the sun after their night's feed, as is their custom, to renew their journey of devastation. The light was obscured by the number of them, and the sky was reddened. We rode through several leagues of them, all bound in a contrary direction to ourselves, so we had to meet them in the face, a most unpleasant sensation. Our horses evidently had the strongest objection to riding against these dense living showers, that pelted against us without intermission.

We passed a rancho, by which was a small plot of

maize. The family were all out, endeavouring to drive off the invaders with branches of trees and shouting, but in vain, for they crowded on over their dead, and would not be repulsed or checked by any slaughter ; so the poor people stood in despair, and hung down their hands, as they beheld the speedy ruin of their little farm.

By midday we reached a deserted rancho. In its ruined corral was a well, from which we managed to draw out some rotten water, but we saw that there were so many dead and swollen snakes and other beasts in the well, that we dared not drink, fearfully thirsty though we were, for the day was very hot. Neither could we find pasture for our horses. Between Santiago to Tucuman the stages were long, and we were unable anywhere to procure algarroba or other hard food, so our animals had a very hard time of it.

Rather late this night, very thirsty, we reached a farm that is called Chourki ; here there was water and some pasture, so we rested by it for the night. We camped out under a carob-tree in front of the house, together with the farmer, his family, some tame ostriches, and a little flock of goats.

We returned his hospitality by doctoring a horse of his that had been frightfully clawed in the back by a puma. He told us that his place was in the province of Tucuman, so we must have crossed the frontier some time this day.

April 5th.—This was our last day's ride, and brought us to the city of Tucuman, which is about fifty miles distant from the farm of Chourki. We saw ahead of us a range of giant mountains looming, these were

the Andes of Tucuman, the Sierras of Aconquija, whose highest summit is 17,000 feet above the level of the Pacific Ocean. After riding some leagues we reached an extensive swamp, of the perils of which we had heard some exaggerated accounts; we had been told that it might easily befall us to lose a horse or two while traversing it.

We found it to consist of treacherous soft black mud, in some places covered with water, in others with bright green grass, forming a quaking crust over the morass; canes and other swamp-loving shrubs, six feet high and more, grew all over it, rendering progress slow and difficult. A nasty, unhealthy place, a nest of chuchu, where only mosquitoes could resist the poisons of the malarious atmosphere, for under the hot sun the black mud was rotting and fermenting and stinking, breathing forth pernicious fevers. Once beyond it we reached Naranquita, a pueblo consisting of a store, a few ranchos, and a sugar factory with its lofty chimney; a sugar plantation surrounded the village, and a grove of oranges. It was an unhealthy spot that should be left to the mosquitoes that infest it. Nearly every one in the place seemed to be prostrated with the fever more or less, and those who were not suffering then, were sallow, emaciated, and haggard from old attacks of it. We rode on towards the big mountains until late in the afternoon, when we perceived signs that we were nearing an important city. In the first place, the foot-track broadened into a road, and on either side of us were great plantations of sugar-cane, with deep canals and hedges of prickly pear dividing them one from the other. Large orange-groves, too, were frequent. Above all towered huge

sugar factories, by which were the mud ranchos of the peons, grouped in little villages ; by the roadside were canteens for the use of the men employed on the plantations, presided over by Indian women.

On reaching an eminence, we saw before us a long straight road, and at the end of it a fair city with glittering domes and snowy-white houses, backed by the distant Sierras, rising range behind range into the clouds. Between us and the town was a rapid shallow river, the Rio Tati, a branch of our old friend the Rio Dulce. Here we found a long wooden bridge of considerable height, so as to be above the level of the frequent floods. This bridge is peculiar in its way ; its architect certainly has hit upon the most original idea in the way of bridges possible, in so much as this ambitious and solid structure, after starting from the level of the lofty *barranca*, crosses the lower plain for several hundred yards, and then suddenly stops short, just where your common everyday bridge generally begins—at the bank of the river, at the water's edge ! We rode along without observing this at first, and were loudly praising the high state of civilization of the country we had now reached, where the rivers were spanned by bridges, and were congratulating ourselves on a passage dryshod, when we were surprised to find the wooden roadway slope suddenly down to the water, leaving us to ford the stream saddle-deep.

Once beyond the foaming Tati, we ascended the steep street to the centre of the town. As we clattered along over the rough paving-stones, tired and dusty, our first impressions of the capital of the garden of South America were agreeable enough. This

was owing to the smiles with which the fair Tucumanas welcomed us into their city. It was now the hour when the ladies come out and exhibit their charms in the public places; lovely and vivacious seemed these white beauties to us after the very plain Indian females we had travelled among lately. Dark-eyed girls, in mantillas, were fanning themselves on verandah and in street. A hopeless love for them all must have been expressed on our swarthy features, for I noticed that the little coquettes tittered merrily behind their fans as we passed, evidently taking cruel delight in wounding so severely our susceptible gringo hearts.

All South America vaunts the beauty of the women of Tucuman—South America shows good taste.

We rode across the Plaza, with its fine public buildings. A double row of orange-trees borders the promenade round it; these, now covered with ripe fruit, yet no railing protects them. Imagine the London gamin, left to himself on the Thames Embankment, were it thus lined; but the Tucuman street Arab heeds not the ripe golden fruit—it is not worth his while to steal it in this land of plenty.

Now we enjoyed a spell of luxury for a space, and surrendered ourselves to a gentle life; for in this city, among others, is a hostelry yclept the "Hôtel de Paris," kept by one M. Doucet, a Frenchman; and surely this is saying enough to indicate that it cannot but be an oasis of gastronomic comfort in this monotonous land of puchero and asado. This was a very Capua for us; our host was erst of the "Café de Paris" at Rosario, an establishment frequented by the Anglo-Saxon, so he knew how deftly to mix the

insinuating cocktail and the matutinal egg-nog. Contact with the white man had also civilized the native waiters of the hotel.

There was one, a fresh hand, but an intelligent, who had found time already to study and commit to memory many of the principal habits of the white man. N.B.—By white man, of course, is signified Englishman, to the exclusion of niggers, Spaniards, and all foreigners whatever ; this is the common and proper definition of the term. I rung my bell for something or other the day after our arrival ; this particular waiter promptly turned up, and before I had time to say a word, the varlet jerked out,—

“Cognac con soda, senor ?”

“No,” I replied with virtuous indignation, for I flatter myself that there is nothing in my personal appearance, no nasal flush or grogginess of eye that betokens habitual morning dryness. “No, why do you ask me that ?”

“Ah, senor,” he said with a childlike smile, “there have been several English here, and whenever they rung the bell they asked for a brandy and soda.”

Such are the pitfalls that the rash inductive logician is apt to fall into, I meditated ; this knave has formed this hasty generalization as to the habits of all my countrymen from the eccentric and vile practice of a few individuals, and thus unjustly “But stop,” this aloud, “on second thoughts I think I will have a brandy and soda, waiter, if Senor Jerdein will join me.” After all, the poor fellow had been doing his best to formulate into laws the mysterious Anglo-Saxon nature. It might confuse his intellect, cause

him to despair, and renounce his laudable design, were we thus at these early stages of his study to place before him glaring exceptions to what he considered to be the most elementary and general rules of Anglo-Saxonology.

We had now to dispose of our faithful horses, and entrusted Manuel to sell them for us. He took up his abode under a cart in the stable-yard, and there received the would-be purchasers of our steeds. There were some sharp fellows, who tried hard to do our worthy follower ; but he was on his mettle, and, with his bland and simple smile, was quite up to these Tucumans, who fancied their own cuteness, and imagined themselves much more knowing than a Cordoban. We stayed at Tucuman some days, and visited the neighbouring country.

In a translation of a work by President Sarmiento, I read the following florid description of these regions:—"Tucuman is a tropical country where nature has displayed its greatest pomp ; it is the Eden of America, and without a rival on the face of the earth. Primeval forests cover the surface, and unto the gorgeousness of India unite the beauty of Greece ; the walnut interlaces its long branches with the mahogany and ebony ; the cedar and the classic laurel grow side by side, and beneath them the myrtle, consecrated to Venus, finds a place. The old trunks are covered with various species of flowering mosses, and the bind-weed and other vines festoon and entwine all these different trees. Over all this vegetation, which defies the brush of fancy in combination and richness of colouring, fly myriads of golden butterflies, brilliant humming-birds, green parrots,

blue magpies, and orange-coloured toucans. . . The city of Tucuman is surrounded for many leagues by a forest of orange-trees, rounded to about the same height, so as to form a vast canopy supported by millions of smooth columns. The rays of the torrid sun have never shone upon the scenes which are enacted under this immense roof. The young girls of Tucuman pass the Sundays there, each group choosing a convenient place. According to the season, they gather fruit or scatter blossoms under the feet of the dancers, who are intoxicated with the rich perfume, and the melodious sounds of the guitar. I cannot half describe the voluptuous beauty of these damsels, daughters of the tropics, as they recline for their siesta beneath the shade of the myrtles and the laurels, enjoying such odours as would asphyxiate one unaccustomed to the atmosphere."

Alas! we had evidently arrived here at the wrong time of the year to enjoy all these charming sights, and sounds, and smells, for it was now the rainy season, no make-believe one in this province. A perpetual pall of inky cloud obscured the skies, the rain fell continually, beneath our feet in street or orange-grove was stinking, deep, black mud, suggestive of fever and rheumatism rather than of dalliance in tropical woods with voluptuous damsels. We found that expeditions into the country and the cordilleras were just now provocative rather of bad temper and grumbling than of enthusiastic admiration of the glorious nature around us. When we were taken out to do anything, we would not admire it at all—nothing was wonderful in our eyes; the plain of Tucuman was but "an unweeded garden" to us, and the

Andes detestable nuisances ; such is the effect of weather on the travelling mind.

One day our host took us out for a drive round the neighbouring sugar factories in a tumble-down, vermillion vehicle drawn by no less than six horses, with two outriders on the leaders, dirty, bare-legged, half-breeds, each armed with a tremendous whip. The several portions of the carriage, the driver, the outriders, the horses, were all lashed together firmly with strips of raw hide, so as to obviate all chance of disintegration on the way.

In this bone-jolter we were carried along some terrible roads ; for so civilized is this province that roads actually exist between the several plantations, but they are not of a high class, our six horses could scarcely drag us through them. Tall sugar-canes waved on either side of us, a ditch and then a cactus fence in all cases dividing them from the road, which was but a space left between two plantations, unmacadamized, and untended in any way, its natural swampiness being increased by a remarkably intelligent custom. The mud that is dug out in the construction and constant dredging of the ditches is piled up on the sides of the road, forming two banks, sloping down towards its centre. Thus the highway, instead of being slightly convex, as with us, and draining into the canals, was concave, and very much so ; indeed, all that can be said in its favour is that, though a very inferior road, it would make a passable ditch. We were ever and anon getting into some more fearful slough than usual, when our coach would refuse to advance, and commence to sink gradually into the bowels of the earth, until the long whips and the tall

language of our Jehu and outriders stung the horses into supernatural efforts, and they tore us out. We visited several large factories, all provided with expensive machinery from England, and the processes of sugar and rum-making were explained to us. We tasted several samples of caña. One was a 44 caña, not an A.D. 44, or a 44 shillings a dozen, but a 44 above proof—fire-water, with a vengeance, calculated to make even a Quilp cough.

We entered into a very fierce and learned discussion on the way home regarding the respective advantages and disadvantages of coolie labour, as in Demerara ; free nigger labour, as in the West Indies ; slave nigger labour, as in Brazil ; and free Indian and half-breed labour, as here, on sugar plantations. We were admirably fitted for settling this mooted question, as we had in the course of our travels enjoyed opportunities for studying each kind for at least a day ! We brought a new pet for the *Falcon* back with us in the carriage, no less than a young lion, a six-month old puma, that we purchased on the way from an Indian for five shillings ; playful as a kitten, about the size of a Newfoundland dog, and with a purr as of a trombone.

We enjoyed ourselves much in Tucuman, and actually learnt a new vice, one that is much indulged in throughout the north-west provinces of the Argentine Republic—coca-leaf chewing. We have heard a good deal about this drug in England lately, and one of our professional walkers is said to have kept up his strength by its use during a recent sensational walk. The following is what I learnt concerning it in this, the land of its use and abuse. The Indians of

Bolivia discovered the properties of coca ; they either chew the leaf or drink an infusion of it, and their white conquerors have acquired the vice from them. That it does possess the wonderful sustaining powers attributed to it is certain. When an Indian undertakes a long journey on foot he takes with him a little bag of these leaves, and as he goes perpetually chews them and swallows their bitter juice. He will traverse many hundreds of miles of country thus, without taking any other sustenance or requiring rest ; but when the gigantic effort is over, he lies down on the ground utterly prostrated, and so remains without moving for days, until he has slept off the wearisome and terrible reaction of the drug. From what I heard from intelligent men here, possessing some medical knowledge, it seems that, taken in moderation, it is a stomachic, and has really useful sustaining powers—would not be a bad substitute for tea or coffee, and is probably better than these. But those who exceed in the use of coca experience the most disastrous results ; the intemperate enjoyer of the drug becomes apathetic, an utterly useless wretch, impotent in mind and body ; his energy dies, his digestive organs become seriously impaired, the worst symptoms of dyspepsia are induced, and helpless idiotcy not unfrequently occurs. Mr. Ledger, of Tucuman, the discoverer of that most useful species of quinine-tree that bears his name, the *Cinchona Ledgeriana*, told me that in his opinion the injurious result of excess in coca are more rapidly brought on, and are more terrible in consequence, than those attributed to excess in any other drug—opium and Indian hemp included.

I purchased a pound of coca-leaf at a chemist's (every chemist here sells the drug) for four shillings, and started chewing vigorously, to see what effect it produced. I certainly took a large quantity of it, but experienced no appreciable symptoms whatever; perhaps it only affects the simple-living Indian, and cannot touch the gringo.

END OF VOL. I.

LONDON :
PRINTED BY GILBERT AND RIVINGTON, LIMITED,
ST. JOHN'S SQUARE.

