White Waters and Black

by Gordon MacCreagh, 1886-1953

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Illustrations

To
THE BUG-HUNTER
Stout Companion of the Trail

Illustration
One of these is the Author

Chapter I

AN AMBITIOUS EXPEDITION.

This is a story of eight white men who propose to bury themselves in the jungles of the Amazon for a period of something between one and two years, depending upon their health, their luck, and their tenacity. It begins in La Paz, the capital of Bolivia. I, the writer of the record, heralded by not very veracious newspapers as an ethnologist and transportation expert, am here to prepare the way for a scientific expedition. Primarily to gather a mule-train to carry the cumbrous impedimenta which must accompany such an expedition over the farther heights of the Andes and to make the thousand arrangements necessary to such travel; and, incidentally, to study and make motion-picture records of all the mysterious doings of all the wild Indians whom the expedition is going to meet.

The object of this expedition is ambitious. It proposes to explore, and to collect biological specimens over, an entirely new territory. It must, therefore, find an unknown route over the mountains, beyond the limits of civilization, down into the foot-hills, and along some mountain river which will connect, it hopes, with the river Beni, which is known to connect at the Brazilian border with the Madeira, the fifth largest tributary flowing from the south into the Father of all Waters, the Amazon. This will be the first lap, through what is known as white water, in contradistinction to the great tributary which flows in from the north just below Manáos, the Rio Negro, the Black River.

This first lap it will take us about a year to accomplish. The expedition proposes to rest and refit at Manáos and then to ascend the black water to beyond the limits of civilization again and try to find some other unknown tributary which will lead up to some possible route over the mountains once more, to Bogotá, the capital city of Colombia. This will be the second lap, and will occupy perhaps another year.

An ambitious proposition, to say the least of it. Two years in the unknown jungles, traversing country which will very certainly offer some hard going. The personnel which has been selected for the undertaking is to consist, as I have said, of eight white men; six of whom are professors of eminent standing in their respective branches of science; five of whom have never seen a jungle nor known anything about travel other than in trains; two of whom are men well past middle age and set in their ways; one of whom is known to be the typical cantankerous professor of fiction and the stage; and another one of whom has a well-established reputation as a college disciplinarian. This last one is to be the leader or, as he prefers to call himself, the director of the expedition.

Such an expedition, it seems to me, will contain all the elements necessary to startling drama. Some of the drama will be comedy; some of it, beyond any manner of doubt, will be tragedy. The doings of these eight white men with their various idiosyncrasies, herded together in the enforced close association of jungle

travel, will be worthy of record. How will they react to the hardships of travel? How will they adapt themselves to the astounding unfamiliarities which they will meet?—or won't they adapt? How seriously will they jar upon one another's jangled nerves when feet are sore and blankets are wet and food is scarce and malarial chills are plentiful?—all of which conditions will very surely arise.

So surely, too, will it be an interesting record. At all events, a novel one. For nobody has ever been sacrilegious enough to keep a running record of the intimate doings of a party of eminent professors loose in the wild woods. I, one of the eight white men, propose to keep such a record; and I propose, if possible, not to encumber it with a single item of scientific value. Therefore I trust it may be a document different from most records of travel.

Here I am, then, in La Paz, officially known as the New City of Our Most Blessed Lady of the Peace of Ayacucho. Highest capital city in the world—twelve thousand feet at the statue of the Blessed Lady in the plaza—and probably the coldest, despite its sixteenth degree of latitude close to the equator.

Many gifted persons, including Bryce and Franck, have adequately described La Paz. One of the rigid rules of my record shall be to describe only such things as other people have left out; for is it not the object of this expedition to cover "unknown" ground? I deal lightly, therefore, with La Paz.

Why, I wonder, has nobody with a descriptive pen written a pan about the approach to La Paz? For it is undeniably the most startling piece of gorgeousness ever seen; and the preparation for the spectacle is as cunningly staged as though arranged by a movie-director.

Imagine, first, some four hundred and fifty miles of the most desolate travel in the world. Desert right from the start of the climb up the western slope of the Andes, which at Arica butts up against the sea-beach and rises without any shilly-shally or hesitation, sheer away in sand mountains and slopes so steep that the railway has to be installed with a cog-wheel system. Fourteen thousand feet of absolute desert, "absolute" being a scientific term of desertology meaning that nothing grows. Not a single thing. Not an oasis nor a mirage nor a solitary cactus. Just ridges and peaks and ravines and scarps of endless red-brown shimmery sand through which a broad black ribbon twists and winds as it climbs the desolate miles, the black being a hundred-foot swath of cinders and sizeable lumps of coal coughed up by the engine as it strains over that grade. This "pavement" is an inch or so deep; because it has never been washed off since the road began—for it never, never, in any circumstances rains on that desert—which explains, incidentally, how one can climb over a fourteen-thousand-foot pass without coming to a snow-line.

Up into the mountaintops the train goes without a break in the monotony of dirty scintillating sand. Though there is a certain measure of relief which serves most effectually to distract the attention: most passengers become deathly sick. *Sirroche*, or mountain sickness. It starts with a headachy feeling as one gets into the higher altitudes, and may develop from acute pain, through nausea, even to death in the case of people who have poor heart action.

With me has come an assistant to photograph the Indians of the unknown jungles. He has suffered badly. I'm worried. I don't know how he will stand the rest

of the trip. He isn't at all strong; and he is a nervous, high-strung young man. I fear for him more than for any of the professors.

But I digress. We're on a ghastly train in a desolate land. Once beyond the pass, one looks for fertile valleys steaming in the distant haze and so forth. But there are none. There's just a short dip, and then miles and more miles of flat, barren plateau. The Altiplano of Bolivia. For the Andes here have split into two great parallel ridges a hundred miles or so apart, known as the Cordillera del Mar and the Cordillera Real. The lofty plain between them was once upon a time the bed of Lake Titicaca, now shrunken to a paltry hundred and fifty miles in length by fifty wide.

Illustration
„Absolute Desert"—Where it Never Rains and Where Nothing Grows

Illustration
The Scenic Railway Down to La Paz

The train crawls along that cold, dead plain in a straight line till, looking at the tracks, one disproves the axiom that parallel lines never converge. As the dreary miles rattle behind, one comes presently into rain country, and things make a desperate attempt to grow. The Altiplano is a few thousand feet above vegetation level; but Nature struggles amazingly, and a spare, coarse llama grass hides the clayey mud in thin patches.

Presently one sees a few low, straggling mud huts and bare-looking fields. Potatoes and sundry edible roots may be coaxed from the soil, one learns. Presently again, alongside an icy-looking stream, one sees an exhilarating patch of something that is brilliant green, and one is impelled to yelp with delight at the cheerful relief to the eyes. But an old-timer explains that this is the oat crop, which will never ripen in the chill altitude, and which must be cut green and used for mule-fodder in that land where no natural fodder grows.

Sullen-looking, apathetic, dull-featured men and women, Aymará Indians dressed in brilliant ponchos, stand by the tracks and scowl at the train. It happens along once a week and is the only thing of interest in their lives.

This keeps up for miles and more cheerless miles. All day one sees nothing but desolate, cold plateau, frozen crops struggling to grow, and a soulless people. Till presently the vast snow barrier of the farther Cordillera begins to loom high on the horizon, and the traveler wonders where this town is that he is approaching. One can see everything that exists on that flat plain. There's no room for a town of fifty people to hide. Yet no town snuggles anywhere along the base of the mountain range.

Finally one arrives at the least dreary station, and some one says, "Half an hour more to La Paz." And still one sees nothing. Then the train shrieks, and rumbles ahead once more. Two hundred yards, perhaps, from the last barren blankness—and then suddenly it is skirting the edge of a vast precipice. A great jagged gash, hewn by a giant cleaver abruptly into the surface of the plain. And the city is away down there at the bottom of it.

Sheer fifteen hundred feet below, roofs of red tile nestle in the very bottom of the gash, amidst the heavenly blue of trees, tall things that grow and live—Australian blue-gums and willows, carefully transplanted and acclimatized. And the sight is what the sight of an oasis must be after forty days and forty nights a-hungering on the Sahara.

Then the train begins to crawl dizzily over the lip and down the sheer wall of the precipice; and one gasps and thinks what a poor thing is the Grand Cañon by comparison.

Painted cliffs and serrated pinnacles of pink and blue and pearl-gray and chrome orange against the towering snow background of the Cordillera; or, as the train takes a curve, against the bluest sky and the whitest clouds ever seen.

Chapter II

THE WAY OF THE ORGANIZER IS HARD.

In La Paz I am in the throes of organizing a mule-train for the long trek over the mountains into the unknown beyonds. The director of the expedition writes me from New York that four tons of baggage are coming with him and the rest of the scientificos. I brought two tons of miscellaneous gear, myself; and I stand aghast at the contemplation of this mess of impedimenta. Hannibal crossed the Alps with less. I'm wondering what they're going to do with it all. I know, of course, that this expedition has been blurbed in the press as "The most perfectly equipped that has ever started to explore South America." But six tons of gear for eight men! One thousand, five hundred pounds apiece! I have traveled over half of Asia with less than a hundred.

However, far be it from me to carp. It has always been my ambition to connect with one of these luxurious expeditions that one reads of. There will be tents, large and roomy, and cots to sleep upon, and fireless cookers and canned delicacies and a physician and a case of all the medicaments and most of the instruments known to science.

All these wonders were rumored in New York before I came away to collect mules; and all are so pleasingly different. I have traveled hitherto with a blanket roll and a frying-pan and a medical case consisting of a bottle of quinine and a Lauder-Brunton snake-bite outfit.

A train of eighty pack-mules I am collecting, calculating a hundred and fifty pounds per mule; and ten more mules to carry the irreducible minimum of fodder for the eighty, for we shall be crawling over mean, bleak Andean passes for eight days or so before we begin to reach the lower levels where things grow that mules may eat; and nine more mules to carry as many arrieros, who are the men who must drive the eighty and ten; and eight more saddle-mules to carry eight intrepid explorers who are about to risk their lives in the wilds of the uncharted Amazon jungles for the sake of science. I quote the last without shame. It is from a New York newspaper.

Mules, mules, mules! There aren't that many mules in all La Paz, for the quite staggering reason that there isn't anything for them to eat except the green oat and barley stalks that the Indians grow for fodder. Which makes idle mules expensive. From the north and from the south and from the east and from the west I gather mules. I contract for them to be delivered upon a certain day. Not before, lest they eat up all the green barley stalks in the Altiplano; and not after, lest those that come on time run up demurrage bills. I am steeped in mulish calculations.

Alas for me that I am unable to do sums!—that figures give me an immediate brain panic accompanied by paralysis! And alas again that my good assistant has caused a frightful confusion by forgetting nearly all the instructions that I gave him; and by forgetting, over and above that, just what he has done; and by forgetting, yet miraculously further, where he has mislaid his notebook of expenditures!

I try to disperse some of the gloom attendant upon one hundred and seventeen mules and nine mule-drivers and one personal assistant by unpacking the weapons for the expedition and cleaning out the grease and testing them; and I am inspired, for I had the selecting of them. A beautiful and comforting collection.

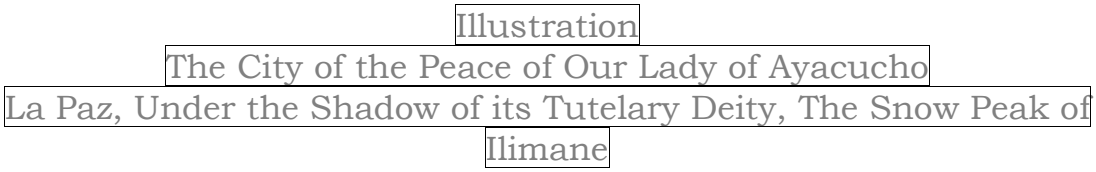

Illustration
The City of the Peace of Our Lady of Ayacucho
La Paz, Under the Shadow of its Tutelary Deity, The Snow Peak of Ilimane

Illustration
The La Paz River Hand-laundry,
where Clothes are Washed with Icy Water and Elbow Grease

Illustration
Where the Gringos Live in La Paz,
The Street of the Twenty-first of October

Rifles: four, one to each two men. Savage 25-3000—pretty, pretty guns! Balanced so that one can shoot with one hand, which I maintain is the first requirement for unknown country where sudden things may happen when one is carrying in the other hand scientific equipment which can't be put down in a hurry. Trajectory, owing to the phenomenal velocity, is point-blank up to three hundred yards, which makes snap-shooting a snap. Weight, five and three quarter pounds, for which those scientific gentlemen will bless me during each long jungle hike. Yet muzzle-impact, owing to that same velocity, in spite of the light-caliber bullet, is nearly a ton. Sufficient to knock endways anything in all the Americas, no matter where one hits it. Two thousand rounds for the same.

Shot-guns: four, one to each two men, to interchange with the rifles. Stevens, sixteen-gage. Hammerless, of course; for hammers in the jungles gather twenty

pounds of trailing vines per minute. A good serviceable gun without any frills to it. I should have preferred twelve-gage; for sixteen is feeble on water-fowl and has poor range. But sixteen seems to be the standard size in South America; and I hope to be able to replenish ammunition at Manáos. I'm thinking of the weight; and shot-guns will be used more than rifles; three or four times as much, at least.

Revolvers: Colt's army .38. Thirty of them. These at the instance of the director of the expedition, who plans to arm every mule-driver and camp-follower against the marauding bandits who he insists infest the Andean passes. Though for my own choice I carry a luger automatic pistol. It is good enough for snap-shots on deer and brush turkeys, and frequently obviates the necessity of carrying a rifle.

A noble and an inspiring battery, of which I am proud. Yet I know that those scientific gentlemen who will shortly arrive will, each and severally, fight with me about my selection; for every man is a crank about the gun he prefers to trust his life to; and scientists are cranks anyway. But it was necessary to have standardization, on account of the ammunition question.

The Bolivian Minister of War looked at my arsenal askance and asked whether we were planning a revolution somewhere down in the Yungas country. But despite the nervous revolutionary conditions existing here, he passed my stuff through with the charming courtesy that I have met in all Bolivian gentlemen.

Wherein I take issue with certain well-known travelers who write disparagingly of South Americans in general. I haven't met all of them yet, it's true. But I rise here to say that I, a stranger rushing about and asking a host of troublesome questions, have met more sheer courtesy and desire to help, here in La Paz, than I have found in any other part of the world—and I have done much profitless journeying to and fro.

I have been planning routes—reason for a good deal of my troublesome questioning. It is baffling to find that nobody knows what happens over beyond the mountaintops. People have been there, plenty of them, but few have ever come back. No, not cannibals and sudden death and heroic adventure. It means simply that when one has once traveled down those transandine rivers, which are the only highways to the lower tropical plains, the return is so frightfully difficult.

Vergil wrote something—didn't he?—about its being a considerable manoeuver to get out of hell? "…*Sed revocare gradus, superasque revolvere ad astres, hic labor hic opus est."* And from what they tell me, the lower jungles are very much like hell.

There is one recognized route away to the north, and another away to the south. I haven't been able to meet anybody in all La Paz who has personally traveled either, all the way. But even if I had, it wouldn't help me very much, since the main object of the expedition is to discover and map an unknown route. How is one to gather information about an unknown route?

The Minister of the Interior lays before me all his maps—wonderful charts showing a Yungas dotted with prosperous little towns. The Department of the Yungas, by the way, is the transandine sub-tropical and tropical jungle which, with the Department of the Beni, stretches away off to the far borders of Brazil.

"Who lives in these towns?" I ask the minister.

He is delightfully naïve about his ignorance. "Quien sabe? Perhaps Indians, perhaps fugitives from justice. At all events, they are people who pay no taxes."

How, then, does he know that the towns are there?

He doesn't. He shrugs with comical disgust and laughs.

"But, my good friend, I am not a maker of maps!"

I ask him about a mysterious lake that we are to locate and explore. There it is on the map, as solid and as definite as La Paz itself. The minister obliterates it with a pencil. "Inexplorada!" He scratches out a section of some two hundred thousand square miles. "About this lake, I know, señor. Nobody has seen it. We have rumors that it exists and that mysterious beasts live in its depths, but no more than stories brought in by hunters of feathers. But ah, señor! now—" his face lights up with enthusiasm—"now, thanks to your so glorious and intrepid expedition, now we shall know where to place this lake on our future maps!"

One gathers that the Minister of the Interior isn't awfully excited about that tropical region back of the mountains. But one piece of information seems to take definite shape out of all this questioning.

Espía, the head-waters of navigation on the Bopi River. If we can once contrive to reach the town of Espía, all our troubles will be at an end; for there we can make arrangements for boats and guides and all that we need; and there is a mission or some such thing, too, which will be helpful. The minister will see that I get a letter to the head of the mission, who will immediately place himself at the service of the expedition.

But it becomes impressed upon me that I must myself draw a map, so that one may follow us intrepid *expedicionistas* upon our so glorious journey for the advancement of science and the development of that beautiful Bolivia—to say nothing of lesser countries like Brazil. Let me outline the projected jaunt which is to occupy perhaps two years of the time of eight white Americans.

It has been determined that shall we find this Bopi River, follow it, we hope, to the Beni River, mapping and collecting everything collectible as we go, and proceed on down to the Madeira River, where we come into known country. Since we are actuated by a fierce zeal for exploration, we scorn this splendid tributary of the Amazon from the south and shoot on down to Manáos by river steamer.

This is to be the first leg of the expedition. At Manáos, having traveled half-way across the continent, we rest up and replenish our gear; four more tons of stuff are to meet us at Manáos, of which twenty pounds will be quinine. Then we shall work our way up one of the northern tributaries of the Amazon, probably the Rio Negro or the Rio Waupés, and try to find another "unknown route" over the mountains to Bogotá in Colombia. Thence home.

This uncomfortable passion for unknown routes is explained by the simple axiom that where nobody has been before, somebody may find something that nobody else has; and by the corollary that scientists risk their lives and ruin their health for the sole purpose of discovering a "new species."

A little joy has come into my life. I have found a giant financier, a contractor for pack-mules, who wants to make a deal for all the mules I need, and who thinks he knows the way to this Espía place. He has never been there himself, but he has

been part of the way, and the rest of the trail has been described to him by a man whose name he has forgotten.

This is the most comfortingly tangible piece of information I have yet been able to unearth. Espía exists, and a man who thinks he can find it is available. My troubles are already over. I think I shall close with this jewel of a contractor.

Much excitement is afoot in the city. The newspaper has printed a long imaginative article about the expedition. The rest of the hardy scientific adventurers will arrive shortly, bringing with them the million dollars which is expected of every American expedition. Our exploration of the unknown back country will be of inestimable value to Bolivia. We are outfitted with the most modern equipment for the discovery of oil as well as of mines of precious stones, which, as everybody knows, exist in vast quantities, waiting only for men brave enough to go and discover them. We expect to find, in the dim jungle fastnesses hitherto untrod by man, queer beasts and fishes; dinosaurs, in fact. There is an inspired picture of a man on horseback being pursued by a rapacious ostrich with a beak like a snapping-turtle's.

I, who have been going about my business with decent reserve, find myself the center of an unpleasant notoriety, and am besieged by applicants for jobs—from dark-eyed, vampish stenographers to Chinese cooks. The Bolivian Government opens tentative negotiations for the attachment to the expedition of two young officers of the army, doubtless for the purpose of keeping an eye on the oil and mines of precious stones.

Feeling myself in a manner responsible for the fair name of our expedition, I go to the editor and demand of him by what process he has evolved this stirring dream of adventure. He points to a New York newspaper: "Interview with the Director of the Expedition." Strange! That doesn't sound like the accurate ambitions of science. New York newspapers do get hold of queer tales for their Sunday supplements.

The delights of organization become more varied every day.

My assistant has fled! Folded his tent like that elusive Arab and as silently stolen away.

I went on a trip into the mountains to look over a possible pass, and, since his constitution couldn't stand the altitudes, I left him behind. It appears that as he brooded alone upon the approaching horrors of the trail and of the jungle and of wild Indians, he was seized with an infection of the attitude of the good townspeople, who look upon such an exploration as sheer heroic madness; and he packed up in a panic and fled. I learn from the American consul who made out his passport that he was headed for the Arica coast and a steamboat and that he seemed to be verging upon nervous breakdown.

Upon the whole I am relieved, for the man was not physically robust enough to embark upon such a trip. Also, his flight is not without recompense. There is always a certain satisfaction to one's personal vanity in being able to play the *deus ex machina.* I shall be able to satisfy the adventurous yearnings of one of the clamorous applicants for a job.

I write my ex-assistant off as Number One, the first to leave the expedition. A few days remain to me for selecting a substitute, who must be built of sterner

stuff. And then the city will be honored by the arrival of six eminent men of wisdom, en masse. The municipality is going to have a band for them.

Chapter III

WISE MEN OUT OF THE NORTH.

Están llegado. They have arrived. I am impressed.

The tumult and the shouting dies,
The captains and the kings depart.
Still stands thine ancient sacrifice—
An humble and a contrite heart.

That represents me. I have duly rescued them from the adulation of the mob and have set them up on high seats amidst the piles of baggage in my house; and I stand now in all humility before so awe-inspiring an aggregation.

An Eminent M.D., Director of the Expedition. An Eminent Entomologist, assistant director. An Eminent Botanist. An Eminent Ichthyologist. An Eminent Statistician. And an Eminent Scribe, aged twenty-one, who knows more about everything than all the rest of them.

I gaze upon them and I wonder—as I have wondered before. They are men of wide diversity of interests and of opinions hard-set in the knowledge which they know is theirs. How shall we all bear with one another in the enforced close association of a long and arduous expedition? As we progress into the interior and as wearisome time progresses with us, and with time all the cumulations of difficult travel are rendered more difficult by the inevitable malaria? Very set indeed are two or three of them, as I judge them upon this short acquaintance. Difficult, therefore, to get on with when tempers are ruffled and nerves on edge.

Let me not convey the impression that I am disparaging. These are splendid men who devote their lives to arduous study and toilsome travel for salaries that immigrant mechanics would scorn. Yet for the very reason that they are so zealously ready to sacrifice themselves to the sacred cause of their particular branch of science, will they be impatient with all things that interfere with the strait and narrow furtherance of that cause.

Some of them have been professors. They have taught classes at college. Their opinions, therefore, are inclined to be pedagogically didactic. The Director is amusing in this respect. He is a good deal older than the others—with the exception of the Statistician—and he quite evidently expects them to defer to him as would his pupils. I can see already that this irks them.

I wonder. I wonder. Men isolated in far mining-camps sometimes arrive at a pitch of hate in which they shoot one another. What will these professors do?

I am realizing that they will afford a fascinating study in psychology as our journey progresses. I shall attempt, as I record my observations, to show

something of the effect of the trials of tropical jungles upon the tempers of eight white men cooped up in a camp together.

Of seven, I should say. For shall I be able to psychoanalyze myself? I don't know. Without doubt, I, the recorder, will shine as an angel of forbearing patience against the tantrums of the rest. For, after all, I can but record how they react upon me, myself remaining the basis of measurement.

I flatter myself already that I shall be less affected than some, at least, of the others, for two perfectly logical reasons: (1) because I have done much of this sort of travel before; and (2) because I like it and have come on this expedition with the firm conviction that I am going to have a good time.

In three days we start, provided that all the rush of last-minute hold-ups that come to every big expedition, however efficient may be the transportation expert, can be satisfactorily smoothed out. The most awkward of the tangles is about mules. Everything dealing with mules comes inevitably to a tangle. The tale of this one is a preliminary insight into the difficulties which I anticipate with the professorial complex.

I have closed a contract with the mule-financier for the whole train and am ready to start. Such were written instructions. Now it devolves that a certain great American mining company, eager to do their bit for the advancement of science, offer through their local manager to place their organization at the service of the expedition.

They can convey the men and about half the baggage, by train and by auto-truck, over the southern route to their farthest mine; and there they can arrange for guides and pack-mules to go on to Espía, a ten-day journey instead of fifteen.

This is, of course, munificently generous. The Director can hardly afford to refuse an offer which will save so much money to the expedition. Yet my contracts have been made under the seal of the American consul. The Director, in his zeal to accomplish as much as possible for the holy cause of science with the funds at his disposal, insists that half the contract be repudiated. A startling instance, here, of the type of mind that will sacrifice everything to the furtherance of the cause. The Director's naïve argument is that the contractor ought to be well pleased with a contract for half the baggage, since that will be more business than he has ever done in the course of a normal year. Of course it is; and the contractor will be pleased enough to get it; and, since he is a half-breed, he probably expects to be outmanoeuvered, one way or another, by the white men. But that, it seems to me, is scarcely the way for an eminent director to view an agreement, even if it is with a mere mule-packer.

It is an impasse. I can get the Director's point of view. He must conserve the funds. But the mule-packer must have some sort of hazy, unscientific point of view. I bow before higher authority. All that I can do is to introduce the director to the mule-man and let them argue it out in the office of the American consul.

In the meanwhile I go shopping with the Statistician, who has suddenly awakened to the horrid realization that he must ride on a mule amongst craggy passes and precipitous paths. He has been so absorbed in calculations that the thought has never entered his mind before. He had arrived here by train, and he would presently, after sundry further uncomfortable travels, be seated in a boat at

Espía. He didn't know how; nor was it his business to inquire. He is rather indignant at the idea that he must risk his life in this manner.

I can foresee much distress for this gentleman. He has never ridden on anything wilder than a Pullman car. He has never slept in a tent. He has never fired a gun. He is particular about his food. I shudder for the awakening that will soon be his.

An irascible old wolf, he seems to be, too. He has quarreled with every member of the party already, and he is at this writing not on speaking-terms with any one of them. They tell me that on the steamer, when they threw dice for drinks and he lost, he refused to pay, insisting that they had framed him up for a joke. Yet, underlying his eccentricity is a vast store of kindliness. If I find him a saddle with high pommel and horn and straps wherewith he may be fastened into his seat, he promises me a whole pound of tobacco which somebody gave him as a parting gift and which he doesn't smoke. Neither do I: it's one of those intimately advertised brands.

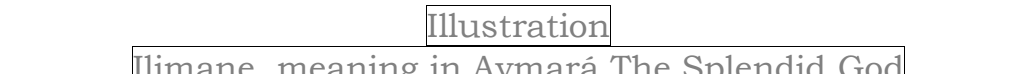
Illustration
Ilimane, meaning in Aymará The Splendid God
In the Foreground are eucalyptus trees carefully imported and acclimatized


Illustration
The Serrated Cliffs of La Paz Gorge

So, in the middle of the confusion of getting packs made up and attending to the hundred and one last-minute commissions, I must go with this difficult old gentleman and scour the market for a fool-proof saddle. And then he tells me his typewriter needs fixing.

It must be clear to the reader of this record that the equipment of a transportation expert should include a wishing-cap and a magic carpet.

Last minute news: The mule matter has been settled. The Director has come to an "amicable" agreement with the contractor. The latter gets as much as the mining company can't carry for nothing. The contractor seems to be fairly satisfied. A little quiet sleuthing elicits the fact that he didn't have enough mules anyway; he was about twenty short of the minimum requirement for carrying our six tons. He thought that we should get away on the customary mañana.

I found a wonderful saddle for the Statistician—horn and crupper and flaps and straps, and stamped leather all over. A bargain at twenty-three dollars.

But he hasn't given me the tobacco.

I have also fixed his typewriter. He had come to the end of the ribbon and didn't know how to reverse it.

To-morrow morning we start, via the mine. I'm getting my contractor off this afternoon. He bets, with a grin, that he will get there first in spite of the rival auto-trucks.

The Director, who has a bandit complex regarding all South Americans, indulges in a spasm of gloom, and wonders whether or not he will get there at all.

I am perfectly willing to go with the contractor. But, "My God!" moans the Director, who then will expertly transport the mule-train we must make up at the mine, and who will tuck a certain helpless scientific gentleman into bed during those ten days of haphazard tenting along the trail?

To me it is all one. I should have a very much easier time with the contractor. But, "for the sake of science," I cheerfully accept the position of nurse-maid.

Is there going to be any interest in the orthodox detailed description of travel?—"At such a day at such a time we reached such a place and so and so happened?" I think surely not. I shall record, therefore, only such things as may strike me as worthy of taking up the time of a blasé metropolitan; and I shall carefully eschew nice exactnesses of time and place and season. By which virtue, as I have promised, my record shall be devoid of all scientific value and shall therefore be different from all other records of travel.

Chapter IV

THE HIGH CORDILLERA.

We the intrepid explorers have left the City of Our Lady of Peace, with the plaudits of the assembled multitudes ringing in our ears. Heroes we were, to a man. For the discoveries which we are going to make will be all to the glorification of that beloved Bolivia, and will be of a value the most inestimable to *la patria;* and we are plunging into the unknown, probably to our deaths.

A very pleasant and complimentary gentleman with medals and a blue sash told us all this and presented us with importantly sealed letters to all *intendantes, illicates,* and *jefes* of administration, bidding them further us on our way with all the means at their disposal. The Intendente of Espía was not overlooked.

We have crossed the High Cordillera by unknown passes and have discovered—Espía.

What can I record about crossing the High Andes? Nothing, I fancy. Mountain trails are mountain trails, whether they be over the Himalayas or our own Rockies or the Andes. Many travelers have written about crossing mountains. Our manner of crossing was in no way different from theirs.

For me every foot of it was full of interest, the interest of some new thing around every corner; even though it were no more than a painted crag or a sweep of windblown snow. Some of it was hard. Much of it was cold, terribly cold. And all of it was wondrously beautiful.

Up and up and always up! On bare mountain scarps from the very beginning; for the La Paz plateau, the Altiplano, is a good three thousand feet above timberline, to start with. First on long slopes of sparse llama grass; then on the barren steeps where nothing grew at all; then into the snow.

Merciful Heaven, what snow! Thin, powdery stuff that gave poor foothold and kicked up in clouds under the mules' hoofs. Clouds that lifted on the wind and blew back like fine bird-shot into the faces of those behind. And what wind! There is always a wind on those slopes, either rushing up from the comparatively

warmer Altiplano or hurtling down from the snow peaks to see that the plain never gets too warm. It was our fate to be going against a down wind which rejoiced in the powdery snow. So that going was exactly the same as butting into a blizzard. And since the blizzard was caused entirely by the hoofs of pack-mules and fodder-mules and riding-mules to the number of sixty or so, the obvious thing for an astute person to do was to get ahead of that stupendous train.

This remained my ambition for the rest of the journey. But it was unfulfilled. It is a clammy thing to get up of a chill morning in a lopsided tent pitched at a precarious angle on a half-cleared snow slope. So it was inevitable that while I yet hugged the blankets some hardy arriero would be up and packed and away with his string of mules. Hence my days were spent trying to squeeze past stubborn beasts on narrow trails, beasts who had learned by uncanny experience to hug the cliff-side of the trail and to let ambitious passers edge round on the precipice side. A procedure not encouraging to ambition.

What matter that I was theoretically the boss of those mules and arrieros? Mules are beasts much too wise to be respecters of persons when the business of mountain trails is on hand. And arrieros are people much too stubborn, from long association with their wise beasts, to permit any mere gringo tenderfoot to interfere with the order of their going. They have but one argument, the old irrefutable one of the man who knows his job:

"Señor, we have done this thing before. This is our business and our responsibility."

What answer could the boss make? Particularly since they were amazingly right. So there was no time during all those strenuous days of interminable "excelsior" that I couldn't look up and see a thin trail of mules, dotted black against the snow, winding up and up and disappearing round a knife edge of out-flung scarp, to reappear as crawling ants flattened out against the perpendicular white wall of the farther ridge and to disappear finally over the jagged sky-line.

Those heartbreaking sky-lines! White and hard against the thin cloudless blue. Actually cloudless from one toilsome day to the next, notwithstanding the blizzard through which we toiled. For we have, naturally, chosen the dry season to make our crossing. So the skylines stand out clear and deceptively close, and incalculably high. Surely each one is no farther than a dozen miles away, and surely each one is the last! For quite surely no pass can be higher than the next chill eminence. Even we who ride feel the effort of breathing the thin air. How those unhappy mules keep climbing, under these loads, is a wonder.

There was a period earlier in the ascent when I experienced some of the exhilaration that comes with crisp air and looking down from an eminence upon a white sea of lesser peaks.

"Smokin' my pipe in the morning, sniffin' the mountain cool," I thought that I would get off and "walk in my old brown gaiters along o' my old brown mule." I must confess, too, to a feeling of confidence in my own feet rather than in those of any mule beast when one walked "a foot on the edge of the mountain, a foot on the edge of the pit, and a drop into nothing beside you as far as a beggar can spit."

But all those braggart thoughts oozed away within the first mile of the attempt, and I was grateful to leave my fate, as many have done before me, to the sure

cunning of my wise old mule! "The Other Mary" was that good old mule's name—because she always chose the better way.

Content was I and grateful to let Mary pant up those endless inclines which some clairvoyant in the far lead insisted was a path; and more than grateful when each towering sky-line opened up to a cold white vista of farther inclines and yet higher sky-lines. When the inclines were too steep even for Mary, she had a startling habit of protesting. She would look craftily out of the corner of her eye and when she found me becoming unwatchful and gazing round at the terrifying delight of the scenery she would turn and bite swiftly at my foot. The cunning of the very devil had my meek-eyed Mary. For she would make her protest only at places of dire peril, where narrow was the way and strait was the path, and fear for my life prevented my entering into any serious altercation with her.

I have seen bold horsemen—in motion pictures—perform heart-stopping antics upon a two-foot path with a thousand feet of sheer rock on one side and a thousand feet of nothing on the other. I boast, myself, that upon my own two feet I will stand with my toes as far over the dizzy edge as any other intrepid explorer; for I have traveled mountain trails before. But perched high in a precarious seat on the back of another creature whose mysterious emotions I have no means of understanding, I have no illusions about security.

It has been in my experience to see a horse in a much safer position become startled at a black smudge left against the cliffside where a charcoal-burner had rested his pack, and leap with legs all aspraddle into the air, crabwise so that the half of him came down over the edge of the path; and I have watched him hang there, pawing desperately with his fore feet while he screamed with fear and while the rider clung helplessly to his neck, unable either to dismount or to reach for anything else. Just a few seconds of tense horror, till that scanty foothold gave way and both dropped from sight—and the screaming of both continued long after they had dropped.

There are other unpleasant memories of horses, though that was the worst. A mule, of course, is no such hysterical fool as a horse. In the same ratio that his sure-footedness is greater than that of a horse and his endurance is again greater than his sure-footedness, so is his wisdom greater than his endurance. None the less, all that I ever said to Mary when on a narrow trail she tried to bite my toes was, *"Tcha! tcha!* Giddap, old girl." A wise and beautiful old moth-eaten mule was Mary.

But there had to be a last trail and a final topmost sky-line eventually. At eighteen thousand feet on the fifth day the snow cliffs could not continue rearing themselves up indefinitely. So they gave up the valiant attempt, with the abruptness that Andean scenery delights in. We staggered round a jutting ice corner and stood suddenly in a deep cleft between dark walls so steep that the snow could cling only in patches. The next instant we snatched at our hats and ponchos, for a hurricane shrieked through this gap as though all the winds of the farther Amazon Valley were trying to get through it at once.

A killing wind it would have been had it been as chill as the drafts from off the snow peaks into which we had butted until then. But this heavenly hurricane was warm. No tropical blast, by any means, for that hot air arising from the plains had had plenty of time to get cooled off while coming over the heights; but none the

less on our cheeks, chapped with the snow winds, it blew mild and it carried with it the wet vague smells of the plains.

This was the pass of Songo. A bad pass to get to, but a wonderful pass when reached. For it was no long and arduous, boulder-belittered climb of a day, like the Jalap La into Tibet, which very evil place it has been my misfortune to traverse. A clean, deep cut into a towering hogback is this Songo. Half a mile, perhaps, from end to end, and four hundred yards from its sudden gape to its highest point.

And beyond that—the Promised Land! Peak below dwindling peak and vast sweeping scarp of snow. Miles beyond tedious miles of it. Then a far fuzzy belt of bare brown earth below the line of everlasting snow, a belt that merged in the distance into patches of yellows and reds. Grasses which merged dimly into greens. Trees. Things that were alive and grew. Birds and animals and men. Warm life once again after all those ages of dead snow. Green jungles of discovery that faded out in the far distance of steamy blue haze.

I can understand the *Thallatta* of Xenophon's Ten Thousand as they topped whatever mountain ridge it was; the "Nombre Sanctissimo" of Balboa from his peak in Darien. For that sea of jungle stretching into the remote haze was quite as much the goal of our endeavor where all things and anything might happen.

Just a glimpse of our land of promise was vouchsafed to us, and then up out of nowhere there whirled a white wet mist. Moist plains air, condensing against the snows. In a moment we were enveloped, and men and mules loomed spookily huge out of the fog. We in our thoughtlessness laughed. It was eerily queer and a new experience. But in the dimness around us the arrieros cursed by the name of the Green One and by the Most Sacred Shoes. Mules floundered with clattering hoofs on an insecure footing. Packs bumped into other packs and the rawhide ropes squeaked and strained as the beasts pushed and tugged in panic.

Pack-mules will, you know. Wise as they are, as soon as pack touches pack they seem to lose all sense and to struggle each one desperately to push forward in a direct line. Not an inch will any one give. As I watched them later, on the down trails, the explanation of their panic came to me. Experience or the instinct of their forefathers has taught them—or the clever beasts have told one another—that straight ahead, without a hair's-breadth deviation, is safety; while sideways, perhaps, is the long last step into nothing.

Illustration
Eighteen Thousand Feet. The Last Glacier
To the Right is the Pass

Illustration
Going Over the Top

Illustration
The Long, Long Trail a-winding Over the Mountaintops

Even on the trail in clear daylight this desperate instinct is paramount. Up there in that sudden Songo mist, where they could see no more than a few feet, they milled about, bumped one another, locked packs, and strained against one another in crazy fear. Therefore with good reason the arrieros swore; for presently a clatter and a thud told that "somebody's load had slipped off in the road." There were many such clatters and thuds before that mist lifted. Certain more resounding thuds were followed by a squeal, proclaiming the news that some nervously irritable gentleman had kicked another right sturdily in the short ribs.

A good place to remain in such a milling mess was upon one's own mule, keeping it as nearly in one place as possible. Which I did. There was nothing to do but wait, since no mere gringo possesses a vocabulary sufficient for pacifying mules.

While we waited, an evil spirit of the upper air visited us. A thin whistling noise like the whine of wind against aeroplane wires hissed down the cleft toward us. It whizzed through the mist overhead, so close that I, for one, instinctively ducked. A rattle as of dry reeds sounded as the thing veered. It croaked sepulchrally once, and was gone. *"Cien mil diablos!"* shouted an arriero. "Condor! Bend low, señores. If one of those should hit you you would be knocked clear to the last ridge you have just left."

Cheering thought. And unpleasantly possible. For a full-grown cock condor may weigh a good fifty pounds. Don't laugh in loud scorn. How much does a good husky Christmas turkey weigh? Fifty pounds is no stretch of a traveler's imagination. And hurtling down that gap, before the hurricane that swept through it, a condor would be a considerable missile. You've heard what migrating birds do when they fly against lighthouses. You've heard how a shot duck hitting a sportsman in the chest can knock him clear off his feet. Consider, then, the momentum of fifty pounds of condor multiplied by the square of his velocity in a high wind.

However, it didn't happen. The potentiality of accident, bogged as we were in the mist of that pass, was a plenty. But our fortune was good. The worst that happened was the kicking open of a crate of canned goods, by a frightened mule. No more condors came till the mist lifted.

The solid white wall began to break up into thin wisps and long streamers—the latter end of the fog-bank, I suppose—and then it was gone. Whirled out of the narrow gap as suddenly as it had been whirled in.

We were collecting gear and untangling mules when we were treated to the rare sight of more condors negotiating a high pass. And what an unforgettable sight. An arriero pointed suddenly and said "*Mira*, señor. Look how they come." My less keen eyes required some little time to distinguish a string of irregularly spaced dots against the snow far below. Like distant aeroplanes they looked. And like aeroplanes they swept into swift view, as steadily and much faster. Never a flap, never a tremor of wing to make them rise. Up they zoomed, one behind the other like a fast scout squadron, aiming to take the pass low.

Quite clearly it was a regular route with them, and they wasted no effort to make unnecessary altitude. I couldn't imagine that they would skim the surface, yet as I watched the first of the squadron lift in its clean sweep and flatten out to take the gap, my impulse was to duck. Ten feet of clearance was all that it was

allowing for; and ten feet it held as it hurtled into the pass. I gasped at the horrific size of the thing in its flight. A twelve-foot wing-spread, if it was an inch, and it seemed to fill the gap from wall to wall.

Then the great bird saw us, and performed a feat that wrenched my heart for the deficiencies of our man-made machines. How shall I explain it? The condor, without a flutter of those steady wings, just altered the angle of incidence. That was all. It raised the entering edge of the pinions and depressed the following edge. The instant result was that it shot forty feet into the air. The wind rattled harshly through the upturned pin-feathers, open like the palm of a hand. The bird croaked once in surprise and hurtled on down the pass. The whole manoeuver was performed in a flash. A swoop, a swish, a croak, and it was gone.

One after another the squadron followed their flight commander—eight or ten of them—performing the same perfect manoeuver with the same perfect ease. Just as the first one, sensing us in the mist, must have done. It was a wonderful thing to have seen. I was enthralled. I forgot about the possibility of one of those hurtling masses hitting us. Surely with such uncanny control it wouldn't. But the arriero says:

"Señor, the thing has happened. This is an evil pass."

Chapter V

DOWN TRAILS OF DISCOVERY.

Mary has been reduced to the ranks. No fault of hers. Just fate and the inevitable accident. Scarcely had we got over the worst part of the trail when I lost my first pack-mule. It was the usual story—a projecting pack caught against the corner of a projecting rock. The unfortunate mule lost its head at once and struggled desperately to bore through. The next mule nosed in behind it, jammed its pack, shoved blindly, and over went the first mule.

It was not a clean precipice, such as many a worse place that had been passed in safety. A precipitous slope, rather. Steep enough and deep enough to be the death of the poor mule. There it lay, badly mangled, and surrounded by the strewn items of its pack. Arrieros looked askance and muttered the customary commiserations mingled with the customary assurances that it would be quite impossible to retrieve the pack.

True to form they ran. It is one of the best tricks of the arriero breed. If they can persuade the gullible gringos that truth is on their side; and if they can bolster their persuasion with the assertion that the only next possible camping-place is so many hours ahead and that an hour's delay spent in retrieving the pack will mean arrival at the camp an hour after dark; and if the harassed gringos have already had experience of the awful mess and confusion of trying to make camp after dark with an army corps of mules—good. It means just that much profit to the arrieros, who retrieve the pack on their way back.

So the first precious hour was spent in argument. Argument, alas, supported by sundry of the more nervous scientificos, who believed the yarn about impending

night. The word passed along the straggling mile-long line, relayed from arriero to arriero, who quickly yelled each at his string of mules to stop them before they, too, should push into a jam on the narrow path. The nearest arrieros and a scientifico or two arrived, crawling precariously round the stalled beasts and under their bellies. The consultation decided that the pack had better be abandoned. There was nothing of any great value to it, anyhow. Just some food and a blanket roll. Food would soon be plentiful and we were rapidly approaching the lower levels where blankets would not be needed.

Plausible, but far from the truth. The most priceless article of the whole expedition lay down there with that scattered pack. In a stout case, protected by a stouter outer case, nested the only musical instrument of the expedition with which to beguile the long night watches. Men of science, I suppose, have been too busy all their lives to acquire any such futile thing as a social accomplishment. Not so I. For the delectation and uplift of my fellow-man I have mastered God's noblest instrument, the bagpipe, and it was that inspiriting weapon that lay amidst the lower debris. With all the world against me I was as adamant as the cliffs themselves. Arrieros spat with disgust and called upon the major saints.

But—well, we wasted an hour and then I took an arriero, a good man who came cheerfully enough when he saw that the bluff would not work, and we found a way down. From above, other arrieros let down knotted lariats to us, and hauled up the gear, the pipes first. Then arose the question as to how the stuff was to be distributed. Each arriero swore vehemently that each single one of his mules was loaded to the extreme limit and bow-legged with its load. Insistence would have caused endless grumbling and charges of discrimination and favoritism. I had been through all this wearisome bickering before now. So I made the magnificent gesture.

"Good!" I said. "Let the clamor cease. My Mary shall carry the pack. I will sacrifice myself and walk."

Hence the demotion of Mary. It was good diplomacy. I'm sure Mary didn't mind. And since it was all downhill now, I preferred to walk, anyway. I wanted to be my own man, free to run on my own feet, not a poor creature of a chain-gang, bound helpless to the whim of a mule. We made camp, of course, in comfort, long before dark.

I'm talking too much about myself. With normal egotism I have told first of all how I reacted to the ups and downs of the Cordillera. I must tell about some of the others.

Among some of the others dissension has arisen. The irascible Statistician seems to have suffered most. But he is not without excuse. Let it be remembered that he is not young. I can't guess very closely, but he must be of an age with the Director, who is surely past the fifty mark—a parlous age for a perilous expedition. An age sufficiently advanced for set opinions and set ways. An age moreover, in this case arrived at with no more thrilling adventure through all its years than riding in a Pullman car.

Add to that age the amazing aloofness of a certain type of scientific mind. Immersed in his own work, his brain stuffed to repletion with his particular branch of knowledge, the Statistician had remained singularly incurious about

many matters of the outside world. He had no conception, for instance, of how the Andes were to be crossed. Just a vague sort of idea that—well, he had traveled hither and yon in the United States. Over the Rocky Mountains more than once in security and comfort. Ergo, since the Andes were not so very different from the Rockies, he would similarly be conveyed somehow to the farther side, where presently he would connect with some sort of boat. All the petty details of ways and means were outside of his department. That end of things was in the hands of a fellow named MacCreagh; a rather obliging person who seemed to be competent enough in his way.

I have told of his consternation when he learned that over the Andes, Pullman trains were not. Not even the coaches of our savage Wild-Western days. He would have to ride on an obstreperous beast used, as far as he had hitherto known, only for army transport; a beast whose orneriness was a byword in the land. Well, he was plucky enough, in all conscience. What the ordeal must have meant to him, we can never understand. But I got him his saddle and he made up his mind to ride.

Consider this gentleman, then, when he found himself on dizzy snow trails where I, for one, felt the emptiness that catches the pit of one's stomach upon descending in a swift elevator. Had the circumstance not been so tragic it would have been a motion-picture comedy. Imagine the picture.

A precipitous trail, white where the snow could cling, and blue-black rock where the slope was too steep for snow. An endless string of pack-mules winding up and up ahead. In the rear of the line an intrepid explorer or two. Behind them, a giant Bolivian on a giant mule, hired by the Eminent Statistician at the last moment to be personally responsible for his life. From the giant's saddle-horn, a stout lariat leading back and fastened securely to the saddle-horn of the following mule. From the tail of the saddle, another lariat leading back to the saddle-horn of a third mule. Upon the central mule, clinging with both hands to the saddle-horn, the Eminent Statistician, eyes shut tight and desperately screwed down lest he look and be assailed by giddiness, and face set in grim determination.

All that was required to complete the picture was an alpenstock. And all the attendant ceremony and confusion were repeated at each bad place. And upon whom did the burden of arrangement fall? Upon me. Until I learned to be three miles away, effectually barred from recall by at least forty impassable pack-mules. Yet I can sympathize with the gentleman. The only difference between us was that he had even less confidence in a creature so closely allied to a horse than had I.

The thing had its laughable side, of course. And laughs at the old gentleman's expense were not withheld. But—give him honor—he carried on. There was yet time to go back; but for the service of his science he was determined to investigate the unknown on the other side, and he stuck grimly to it. A brave man.

But courage, alas! does not necessarily imply a cheerful acceptance of hardship. The strain on that man's nerves must have been terrific; and it was in his temper that the strain showed. There has already occurred a passage at arms, the missing of which I shall regret for all time. All over a matter of travel trifling in comparison with what had already been lived through. But the results, I fear me, are going to be more lasting than the petty cause.

This happened after we had left the snow and ice behind us and had reached the levels of the bare brown earth. The occasion was the morning after a miserable night before, which explains the contending tempers. In the night it had suddenly rained. A pure mischance of malicious Fate, for we are well into the dry season. But it seems that on this side of the great mountain barrier an easterly wind will sometimes pile up so much moisture from the steamy plains, to condense against the cold snow-banks, that the mist clouds just can't contain it any longer, and down it must come.

So down it came upon us—and we all unprepared. We had made camp. I must digress to tell comfortable sybarites how some of those high mountain camps are made. This particular evening we had halted in a hollow between cliffs, sufficiently level to set up army cots. As it was late—observe how craftily Fate works—only the barest possible necessities had been unpacked—just blanket rolls and supper. A clammy, cold supper out of tins; for we were not down to the vegetation level yet and no fuel was available. Ten thousand feet up in the thin air, and no camp-fire.

Illustration
The First Glad Sight of Timber at Ten Thousand Feet

Illustration
Getting down to where things grow
See the Tree on the bluff

Illustration
The Gateway of Good-by to the Snows

Ponder upon it, friends. Packs had been lifted bodily from off the mules and left roped. The beasts were head-roped together in bunches; I mean, a dozen or so head-ropes were brought together and tied in a central knot. To each arriero his own bunch, and each due by the next morning to be in a crazier tangle than is believable to a white man. Pegging out or hobbling would have saved endless irritation and swearing on the morrow's start, but pegging out was a nuisance and hobbling was a good deal of an undertaking; and the morrow was mañana, anyway.

Similarly was it a frightful nuisance, and with those inexpert arrieros a vast and clamorous undertaking, to unrope and set up and peg out tents. I would have insisted anyhow, for shelter is a luxury very dear to my heart. Followed naturally the pow-wow that is so dear to the heart of the genus arriero. On my side the Eminent Entomologist, the Scribe, and the Eminent Statistician—the last-named regretfully and very up-stage, because he isn't speaking to the bug-hunter just now. On the other side, all the arrieros. The remaining savants neutral.

We said, "It may rain."

They said, "But señores, we assure you on the honor of the Most Sacred One that it will not rain. We know this country, having been here before, countless numbers of times." (Two days before we had toiled eight miles along a ridge which ended in a clean drop of a thousand feet or so into a brawling torrent of ice-water;

also eight complete miles back.) "And, señores, as to shelter, the señores themselves know that a tent without fire is no warmer than the open air. And furthermore, señores, the mules carrying the tents have strayed down the trail, and we can scarcely run after them and bring them back before dark."

They won, of course. Arrieros always win unless the brutal gringo is prepared to ride rough-shod over argument. The Eminent Director of the expedition, being appealed to, remained neutral. He was too tired to do any more riding that day. As was everybody else. And by that time the argument had carried on into the dark, anyhow. So we slept without tents. And at 2 a.m. the rain fell upon the just as well as upon the unjust. Rain at ten thousand feet and 2 a.m. is very cold moisture indeed. And one is assailed by the immediate thought that on the morrow there will be another night,—possibly dry, but certainly cold,—and that there will be no means of drying out wet blankets between now and then.

The scurry and the confusion and the irritability and the general mess require no description. My only comment upon the situation is that the Bolivian law in no circumstances permits explorers to kill arrieros. The impasse ended with somebody's finding a big tarpaulin and all huddling together under it. A cold, stiff thing it was, feeling chilly wet where it rested on our heads. But it was really waterproof, except where it had chafed against the pack-ropes, which seemed to be at intervals of every three feet or so. There was nobody who didn't complain of a wet drip somewhere upon his person. And presently the outside water which seeped along the ground and made its own little runlets began to soak through various areas of contact.

That was not a good night.

Chapter VI

DISSENSION IN THE CAMP.

Imagine, then, the tempers of our merry party in the cold gray dawn. The immediate argument which arose was whether we should go on at once or stay in that place and dry out. The arrieros said that the trail, being wet and slimy, would be bad in parts. Whereupon the Eminent Statistician came out flat and positively refused to travel till the sun had had a full day's time to dry the trail. The arrieros shrugged. To them it was all one, they said. Yet on the other hand the Señor Director should bear in mind the consideration that the day's march would bring us to the beginnings of timber country where fuel would be available for fires and all our mess of wet gear could be dried out.

The savants, with the exception of the Statistician, were unanimously in favor of fire and dry blankets. The arrieros shrugged again, with their usual genius for creating dilemmas. To them it was still all one. Let the Señor Director but give his orders and they would be swift to obey. But let it not be said that they had not given warning that the trail would be very bad indeed and that we should surely lose a mule or two.

Whereupon the Eminent Botanist promptly went over to the side of the Eminent Statistician.

I listened in for about half an hour, in silent enjoyment, to the debate over the question which was beginning to be tinged with a lot of good words out of the acid vocabulary of science. Doubtless it was my duty to stand by my director and to offer whatever suggestions I might have for the conduct of my mule-train. But I had already been snapped up more than once for offering suggestions when they ran counter to the ideas of the arrieros, the good Director being apt to be swayed by the voice which said, "Señor, we know; we have been here before," rather than by the meeker voice which suggested, "In my opinion, out of past experience in other places, I think such and such would be best." The effect of which policy had already been to make it not my mule-train but the arrieros' mule-train.

So I held my peace, care-free and callous. The more readily since I saw that while the argument waxed in heat, the arrieros were calmly going ahead, loading up their mules. Presently I saw the Eminent Entomologist making faces at me. I stepped aside and he muttered in my ear:

"Let's get started; they'll follow."

Any suggestion leading to warmth was welcome to me. So we two slunk from the argument and round the bend of the trail, where we found a batch of mules with their arrieros already under way. These we followed with light hearts till a scrambling gallop behind us caused us to turn guiltily. It was the Scribe, hot-footing after us. The Scribe holds the honored position of private secretary and bottle-washer to the Señor Director, so we prepared to be haled back in ignominy. The Scribe is no scientist of elaborate diction. A youth, rather, of singularly direct speech. He said:

"Those old geezers give me a pain in the belly. Let's beat it."

So the three of us proceeded without shame on the longest and slimiest march of my life.

Later we were accused of foul desertion of our leader, which we were by that time sufficiently hardened not to mind. We were sorry, however, to have missed the high-brow quarrel which ensued between the twin stay-at-homes and the Director. The latter very wisely decided that it was imperative to dry out wet gear before some of it was utterly ruined. Whereupon the nervous one told him in scientific language that if he should give the order to start, he, the Eminent Statistician, would consider him, the Eminent M.D., morally responsible for his life. From which premise the argument developed through various stages of acrid recrimination—the one telling the other that the latter's life might well be of no particular use to the world, but that his was of a distinct value to science,—and ended in the Eminent Statistician's calling the Eminent M.D. a murderer and a blackguard, and the Eminent M.D.'s calling the Eminent Statistician an ill-tempered and feeble old fool—you will remember that they are about of an age—who had already nearly wrecked the morale of the expedition in its very inception, by his indiscriminate quarreling.

Then since all the rest of the arrieros had in the meanwhile started down the trail, the combatants followed perforce. The missing of that pedagogic discussion I regret: for I must confess to a certain wicked joy in the spectacle of two eminent

men of science belaboring each other with ponderous words. And humorous relief is much needed in this hardest part of our going.

But perhaps the thing isn't so humorous. Another has been added to the list of those who are not on speaking terms with one another; and the condition does not easily mend itself; for all the world knows that men of science, when they do fall out, seem to have an infinite capacity for nursing a hate.

No, most distinctly I should not laugh. An expedition with dissension among its members is going to be no comfortable joy-ride. But I have already paid the penalty for my mirth. Look what nemesis fell upon me the very same day.

We sped away—the Entomologist, the Scribe, and I—and we made an awful day's march. It was true about the trails. They were bad. Steep, of course, and slippery wet clay for the greater part. Two mules were irretrievably lost with their loads and two or three others went over but were rescued. We, however, saw none of all this. We were amongst the very leaders, having slipped away as we did, and the accidents all happened somewhere in the line that straggled, half a dozen miles long, behind us. Before that day closed, the half-dozen had more than trebled itself. What with the original delay and with the accidents along the route and the consequent hold-ups, a good twenty miles separated the head from the tail of the cavalcade.

I don't know how far we traveled. I know only that we got away very soon after dawn and we arrived well after dark; and—for us three, at all events—there had been no halts on the road. We breakfasted and lunched *au courant,* on sardines and crackers from the saddlebags. One may imagine how tired were those few mules which finished up with us. Multiply by logarithmic tables and one may begin to imagine how tired was I, who walked. Had I been able to find my beautiful obstinate Mary at any time during the last few hours I would have shed her pack right on the road and would most thankfully have ridden with the pipes clutched in my lap.

The reason for all this desperate push of ours was our early desertion rebounding upon our heads. We with our little bunch of mules had got so far ahead of the rest of the pack-train—with tents and blanket rolls—that we wondered whether they would catch up. On turning the outer edges of the bare mountain scarps we could see the thin trail winding back, far above us, for miles. But never a glimpse of mules. For all we could guess, they might be hopelessly delayed, God alone knew how far back. We dared not retrace our heartbreaking steps and be overtaken, perhaps, by darkness on the trail before we found them. And darkness was not so very far off.

Somewhere ahead of us, said the arriero whose mules we followed, was a village. The first village of the Bolivian Yungas. Santa Ana was its name, and it was, of course, below timber-line, and it was not far off.

"How far?" we asked him. "Can we make it before dark? and is there a posada, an inn, where we may sleep?"

"Oh, *lejito,"* said he. *Lejito* is a happily vague term, meaning "Not so very far." And it was a large and very important village. Surely there was a posada!

So we pulled in our belts, spurred our flagging spirits, and pushed on briskly for the village of Santa Ana. Those of you who have gone automobile touring have done the same thing. So you can understand.

It was true that there was a village. But it was a good four hours' hike distant, the last three after dark, when everybody got off and walked. And it consisted of fourteen adobe houses. And there was no posada. And its name wasn't Santa Ana.

It was a mere unsanctified Aldea. Though give it credit; it was below timber-line. There was wood to make a fire with. For which great mercy we were abundantly grateful. We staggered in and embraced that village—figuratively. And it came out with lanterns, all of it; and embraced us—literally. There was a *jefe*, of course, and he put both his arms about our necks and patted our shoulder-blades in the Bolivian manner. There was a schoolmaster, and he kissed our hands, and in the name of Learning he made us a speech of welcome.

They knew all about us. We were those intrepid explorers from the glorious sister republic of the North who were about to plunge into the uncharted jungles for the fame and advancement of their glorious *patria.* They had been expecting us for weeks, all on tiptoe for the most exciting event of their lives. So they shook hands again all round and introduced one another with all the formality of the sonorous Spanish; and each one of them considered it a personal honor that we should be resting in their village; and each one made his little complimentary speech about it and at the end of the speech embraced us with both arms round our necks, one hand holding a hot lantern against our spines.

Merciful Heaven! how they talked! They wanted to hear all the news of the outside world and all the details of the expedition and to give us all the news of their village. I was never nearer being talked to death. It was with difficulty that I contrived to inject a hint every now and then, between the breathing-spells of a dozen orators, to the effect that the rest of the expedition was lost somewhere back in their cheerless mountains; that it would surely not arrive that night; that all the bed-rolls were lost with the expedition; and that we were cold and wet and tired and hungry. The latter items with a diffidence that doubled the difficulty of getting the mere words in edgeways. How does one demand of strangers to give one food and a bed for the night?

But my diffidence was born of experience in camping in the Eastern States of our own glorious republic of the North. No sooner had the idea soaked through the excitement of those good people than they immediately proceeded to spend nearly as much time apologizing to us as they had spent in welcoming us. That they should so thoughtlessly have kept us standing and talking there when we must be dead with fatigue and hunger! It was a shame and a disgrace upon their village which we must be good enough to excuse on the ground of their extreme interest. Beds would be prepared for us immediately. And food. We must be famished. Would we honor the *jefe* by coming to his poor abode? All that he had would be ours.

All the traditional courtesy and hospitality—and grandiose speech—of old Spain was poured forth upon us in a flood. The *jefe* took us three unshaven, ravenous ruffians to his house,—two rooms of adobe and a veranda hanging over the brink of a gorge four miles deep, through the far bottom of which brawled a noisy torrent,—and there he roused his women-folk and bade them bring forth all the food in the house, and of the little he had, he gave us all; and was amply repaid by the privilege of smoking a cigar tête-à-tête with the three distinguished Americans.

And the conversation that he brought up as fitting to the occasion was world politics.

In the meanwhile the village without was in consternation. What about the bedding down of the three distinguished Americans? The hospitable inclination of those good people was boundless, but they had their women and children; and their-adobe mansions did not run to guest-rooms. There seemed to be the makings of a most embarrassing impasse. Till a noble foreigner stepped into the breach.

Conceive of a resident alien in a village of fourteen huts in the most inaccessible mountain fastness of all Bolivia. And conceive of his nationality. A Syrian! And a rug-peddler at that! Actually. He traded in the heavy blankets, virtually rugs, which the Aymará Indians of La Paz made out of llama wool. How he imported them and where he peddled them I do not know. But out of them he made his living, he told us. Out of them and German enamel cooking-pots!

It was his great good fortune, he said, that he happened to be in town just now, recently returned with his mule from one of his peddling trips. And his greater good fortune that his woman had run away during his absence. For thereby it was made possible that the envied honor of sheltering us was to be his. So he took us to his house and swept the mud floor with a cloth and upon it he laid a thick pad of his wares. It seemed that he dealt largely in used, rather greasy-looking blankets; and he explained that when people died he naturally bought their blankets back and resold them at a second profit. You can't beat a Syrian for business instinct.

Two separate beds he made up, since the width of a single blanket would not very well accommodate three people. With an easy grace he waved the bug-hunter and the Scribe to one. Whereupon I grinned and made faces at them; for not one of us likes to sleep two in a bed. They made faces back at me without grinning. So I grinned the more. And then the Syrian hopped into the other bed and held back the covers most cordially for me to enter as soon as I should be ready.

It was then that, for the first and only time in my life, I groaned for the fact that I was an effete Easterner who found heavy blankets a necessity at timber-line in the tropics. Of course he was a very nice Syrian rug-peddler. But still, he *was* a Syrian rug-peddler—and I suppose there is excuse for an illiterate man to draw no distinction between an "r" and a "b." Me, I slept least of us three, because I was nearest to the base of operations. That was the penalty imposed upon me by a just Providence for regarding with levity the quarrel between two eminent men of science.

Chapter VII

AN INEXPLICABLE HABITATION.

Never was chill gray dawn more welcome. Never was I less prone to hug the blankets. We three hardy explorers rose with alacrity, shook ourselves as thoroughly as politeness would permit, and invited our host to breakfast, on

sardines out of the saddle-bags. They were ex-army supplies which the thrifty Director had purchased in vast quantity; but the rug-merchant enjoyed them hugely. After *challona* and yams, which formed the regular diet of that village, they were a treat to him. Anything would be delicatessen after *challona* and yams.

After breakfast we went out to bask in the thin sun and the adulation of the assembled populace. We were particularly anxious to learn just why was that village. Think of it. It perched on the mean shoulder of an immense ridge that began away up in the blue shadows of snow and swept on down to a far purple-wooded haze. A great raw shoulder-bone standing on edge which afforded the ultimate minimum of shelter and space. A little flattening of the edge gave room for the village square, the inevitable plaza. This one was the Plaza of the Twenty-fifth of May and it was about sixty feet square. On one side was the street of Bolivar, fronted by five adobe houses, and possibly seventy or eighty feet long. On the other side was the Street of Sucre fronted by nine adobe houses and two hundred miles long—possibly three hundred or four hundred, for it led on unbroken, except by landslides, all the way down to the Yungas.

The houses presented to their respective streets a solid gay front of pink and blue and purple calcimine, and their rear verandas, on both sides of the village, literally hung over the steep sides of the ridge, propped upon stilts. Corresponding to the torrent which tumbled a mile or so below the *jefe's* side of the village, was a torrent which tumbled two miles below the schoolmaster's side.

And that was not so much farther than the good people of the village had to go for their drinking-water. An interminable path led back along the face of the ridge to where a tiny stream went to join the torrent below. There was no explanation of why the village had not been built in the sheltered hollow at the source of its water supply.

But a mere half-hour's walk to carry water was nothing to people whose food supply came from a hundred miles away. That village was too high up for anything to grow successfully, except a few yams and sickly beans. It was too high up for wild game, except an occasional bear. Meat—*challona* and *charque,* which latter consists of slabs of beef dried like *challona*—had to be fetched from the Yungas. There was no explanation of why the village had not been built nearer to its food supply.

There was no explanation of anything. In the mysterious Orient, villages—nay, whole towns—have sprung up because the wandering Buddha once put his foot down there or because Krishna kissed a cow-herd maid. But nothing of any sort at all had ever happened here. Nothing ever will happen in that wind-swept spot so far removed from the madding crowd. What caused the village, then? we wanted to know. Was it a mart of trade for the surrounding emptiness? Was there any industry other than the thriving rug business? Did the people do anything?

No, they said simply, and laughed at our American need for causes of existence. They did nothing. They just lived.

We concluded that the village had been set there, by a beneficent Providence, for the purpose of succoring ill-managed expeditions.

Illustration

Intrepid Explorers Honoring with their Presence the Village of the Ridge

Illustration
The Street of Sucre, Right
The Road to the Lost Paradise

Illustration
The inexplicable village of the ridge—
built up and buttressed with adobe brick to keep it from sliding into the ravine

Illustration
Adobe bricks of clay and tree-cotton and hair,
trodden into molds and baked in the sun

And the good people surely did everything in their power to offset, by their eager hospitality to us, the stark inhospitality of their locale. They all made speeches to us all over again in the morning, finishing and rounding off all the complimentary things they had been prevented from putting across on the night before, by reason of our need for rest; and every single man of them had thought up a lot of improvements on his previous impromptu.

They showed us the sights. The schoolmaster, no different from schoolmasters the world over, led us through the school—his back veranda, and made his unfortunate pupils recite their lessons before us. He had nine. Heavens, how that village increased and multiplied! Then he made the pupils stand at attention while he made us a speech on the benefits of education, pointing a neat moral to the effect that if those lazy scoundrels who were directed straight for the penitentiary would but pay more attention to their books they might rise to boundless heights, even to be intrepid explorers like us.

We thanked him, and by distributing largesse among the pupils avoided making a return speech and patting them on the head. Then the schoolmaster assumed his more dignified office of postmaster and showed us the post-office—his back veranda, and gave us indubitable proof that he did have a letter to distribute. I believe he had deliberately held up delivery, saving it for this occasion. It turned out that the mail-carrier who brought it was our arriero. Thus became clear the reason for his early start yesterday.

Then the *jefe* obtained possession of us again and showed us *his* sights—his silver badge of office and his pompously sealed commission as guardian of the peace and dispenser of justice.

Nobody showed us the view, which was stupendous and grand beyond words. Our good-by view of the snow country; for which I have no regret as yet. The Andean snow country is wonderfully beautiful, in retrospect. The hard, clear light of the dry season reveals tremendous distances and paints the far peaks pink and blue and amber. But the effect is that of pitiless photography with an anastigmatic lens stopped well down, rather than that of the softer, hazier, and more artistic landscapes of our own moister mountain atmosphere. Somehow one can't imagine an artist trying to paint the hard massiveness of the High Cordillera. Its beauty is

its own; and some day I shall properly appreciate it. Just now I am prejudiced. The pale pink and blue snows look cold to me; terribly cold. The vast amber and lilac slopes are steep and precipitous and desperately bad for a hundred-odd pack-mules.

I look, rather, in the opposite direction, where in the valley on the one side of our ridge a white mist rolls and eddies and spouts high in the little gorges, exactly like ocean breakers in slow motion; while the valley on the other side stretches away, green and shadowy black, for miles beyond miles, till it loses itself in purple haze. A valley which to us is full of allure and promise. For the vast jungles of the Yungas lie at our feet and the fleeting airs that drift up from the jungles are wet and warm and smell of adventure.

Once again I am prejudiced. I have become very fond of this isolated village planted on the bare shoulder of nowhere, and of its simple folk. Altogether a delightful, restful forenoon, till the remainder of the expedition straggled in, having camped some ten miles back, but having by no means slept off its wrath. The bickering of the white folks seemed to have communicated itself to the arrieros and even to the mules; for they swept through the village grimly, with never a halt for a rest and an exchange of gossip. It was a great blow to the populace that they could not make their speeches all over again to the rest of the heroic explorers who were plunging into unknown dangers for the greater glory of the *patria*.

The Eminent Director did dismount and shake hands with the *jefe* and the rest of them. But his disagreement with the Eminent Statistician was evidently weighing on his mind. He was in no mood either to receive or to give compliments; and, besides, he was eager to tell us three what dastardly deserters we had been.

I swung away down the Street of Sucre, with a warm place in my memory for that inexplicable village perched up there on the most inaccessibly isolated ridge of all Bolivia.

I wasn't going to be wearisome with any description of climbing down mountains, for everybody must have read more than enough of such descriptions. But here we are, after all, on the "unknown route," and many things are different from the only other two mountain ranges in the world which can compare.

Our own Rockies are in a more northern, a colder climate; and our timber-line, when it begins, has its own beauty of pine and balsam and fir. The Himalayas are in monsoon country; and there, below the line where everything is eternally frozen, everything is eternally wet. Ferns and mosses are the predominant characteristics. Tree limbs are thickly draped with lichens and aeroids; and moisture-loving orchids appear early in the descent.

Here within fifteen degrees of the equator, it is drier. The cold through which we have passed—thank Heaven!—is the cold of altitude. So when things begin to grow they grow suddenly in all the profusion of the tropical belt. We are still too high up for tropical jungle; but there is an overwhelming confusion of everything else. And everything is strange and new.

The Eminent Botanist, a heavily built gentleman whose normal demeanor is one of appalling dignity and seriousness, and of ponderous self-esteem, goes galumphing about from one treasure to another and croons endearments to Bignoniaceae and Leguminosae and Moraeeae and such. But to me, a mere

layman, the most surprising anomaly is cactus growing on trees, along with spiky-leaved plants that look like aloes.

Yes, cacti on trees—queer long things that shoot up in a single spiky hexagonal stalk, stiff and straight, seven feet or ten feet high, and balanced, apparently rootless, on a horizontal limb. What an astounding variety of cacti! Long thin cacti. Short pudgy cacti. Square cacti. Star-shaped cacti. Seven-branched-candlestick cacti. And one, a monster, a cactus-tree, eighty feet high and spreading like a spiny poplar. This is something new; unknown to botany and unnamed as yet.

The Eminent Botanist cavorts, beside himself. As I have said, he is a large man, but he prances around this treasure-trove and loves it and moans heartbrokenly for that he cannot root it up bodily and take it home with him. But he does the next best thing. His boast is that he has never taken any sort of exercise in his life; that he has had no time for games and useless sports. But now he holds up the whole pack-train; insists that a mule be unloaded, and into his own hands he takes an ax and hews down an acre of forest, laying waste a long lane in order that I may be able to retire far enough away with a camera to photograph the thing whole and alone in its exclusiveness.

Three hours are expended in this labor, for there is a terrible tangle of woodland to be devastated before the way lies clear for a picture. The Botanist wishes that he had taken the precaution of hardening his muscles and his hands by judicious exercise in the past; and he becomes annoyed with me because I insist upon so meticulously clear a view. He cannot understand why a foolish little twig before the lens should interfere with a picture of an eighty-foot tree. I become annoyed with him and tell him that I shall give him a course in optics later. What he must concentrate upon just now is brawn-work, not brain-work. The arrieros become annoyed at the delay; and those of them who do not sit about in attitudes of disapproval besiege the Eminent Director to order an immediate resumption of the journey, urging the well-worn plea that the next nearest possible camping-place is many miles distant and that we shall never reach it before dark. The Director becomes annoyed at the importunities of the arrieros and enters into spiteful debate with the Botanist about delay, who enters into spiteful debate with me about twigs.

It is a party divided against itself that eventually starts off after three hours, in a vast hurry and ill humor, and pushes forward with anxiety against the threatened night—and arrives suddenly, with plenty of time to spare, at a little sheltered clearing where there is water within handy reach and a kindly old hermit who has a hut and a goat and an orchard of two orange-trees and a lemon-tree and five or six pineapple bushes.

We hunger for oranges and pineapples, with all the eagerness of seafarers of the old wind-jammer days for their lime-juice; for we have been living out of cans for three weeks. The kindly hermit, with a grand gesture as though he were presenting us with a whole Florida grove, makes us free of his orchard. But alack-a-day! it is too high up for oranges and pineapples to thrive! These are the acidest things that ever set teeth on edge.

Chapter VIII

TRIBULATIONS OF CAMPING.

That camp was an epoch. It was an indication that we had descended at last to the threshold of the land of promise. The citrous grove was proof that we have come down to the five-thousand- or six-thousand-foot levels. In it I slept decently warm for the first time since leaving the Chilean coast at Arica. It was here that, by the advice of the kindly hermit, we first used our patent mosquito-nets over our camp cots. There are no mosquitoes at the six-thousand level in the Yungas; but morning disclosed long streaks of coagulated blood down the sides of quite half of the pack-mules, where the vampire bats had feasted on them. Vampires in their turn were an indication—since they can't find expedition mules all the time to live on—that we might begin to keep a lookout for game as we proceeded from there on.

It was there that the Botanist made his formal demand to the Director that we stay at least a week; for the country was new to science, untouched, and the varieties of plants to be collected and tabulated were legion. But the Director sternly set his face toward Espía. At Espía we should have to halt perforce while we made whatever arrangements we might for our further progress by water. At Espía, then, all—botanists, ichthyologists, entomologists, statisticians, ethnologists, *et hoc genus omne*—could roam the teeming country-side to their hearts' desire and collect all the specimens known—or, better still, unknown—to science.

It was in that epochal camp that the expedition was served with its first bulletin. I find it difficult to write of the official bulletins without disrespectful comment. Consider in all seriousness what happened. Daylight and a reasonable physical comfort being available for the first time since we set out over the mountain trails, the Director seized the Scribe, his private secretary, purposefully by the arm and withdrew with him into their tent, with a brief injunction to me to set up camp without disturbing them.

It had been my pride and boast that I was perfectly capable of setting up camp without asking assistance from anybody; and it had been, further, a secret thought of my own that the Director usually fussed around and disturbed me frightfully. I mention it en passant, as an instance of the great gulf that lies between a mere lay mind that has nothing to trouble it and a pedagogic mind heavily weighted with the burden of direction.

Incidentally it occurs to me that it is time to make some mention of how a great expedition camps along the "unknown trails." Our routine was simple and invariable. First of all, as a matter of courtesy and deference to greatness, the Director's tent was set up. A simple job; for the tent was small and easy to locate. In it lived the Director, with a pack-trunk full of "documents" and his confidential secretary with two pack-trunks full of printed letterhead stationery and a Remington typewriter. Then came the real labor of the day, an enormous twelve-by-fourteen circus marquee thing which was a permanent cause of dissension. Imprimis, because the requisite floor space was so great that in few camping-

places in those up-ended mountains was there room for it. More than once, an otherwise convenient spot would have to be discarded and another three or four miles be negotiated in the dusk. Secundim, because that flapping bulk in the mountain breezes required the combined efforts, muscular and vocal, of all the arrieros to heave and pulley-haul it into lopsided uprightness and drive home its twenty-four pegs before the wind devils should make a Roman holiday with it. Finally, because I, being a mere frail mortal, was unable to resist the insidious devil whose name is I-told-you-so. When we had fought the malignant thing till tempers had gone where the tempers of sailormen go when rounding Cape Horn, I would stand off and inform the cursing crew that I in my wisdom had advised the Director, long before we left New York, to purchase a set of little two-man tents which could be strung out anywhere along the path.

But I am previous with my "finally." The culminating cause of dissension was the fact that this "big top" had to accommodate all the rest of the expedition with as much personal impedimenta as each savant thought he could not possibly do without; and each individual savant had, quite naturally, a fixed conviction that the tools of his personal trade were the most important and necessary to be sheltered from the inclement out-of-doors.

"All the rest of the expedition" means, of course, the intrepid explorers. Common arriero people, who received no ovation from their compatriots about plunging into the dark unknown, slept wrapped up in their ponchos in any old place they could find.

All the rest of us—except the Eminent Statistician. Sunny Jim had insisted from the very first on having a tent to himself. He maintained that the Director had promised him—in writing which he offered to produce as evidence—not only a personal tent but a personal servant. I myself remembered some such vague lure held out to me in the far-away days of organization in New York, as did one or two of the others. So we were not without a certain secret admiration for the bellicose Statistician who, being cheated of his personal servant, clung so tenaciously to his right to a private tent. And since that cantankerous party was speaking now only to the fish-expert and me, we were glad enough to leave him to the privacy which he insisted upon.

But though we envied, there were times when we did not love him for his stout maintenance of his rights. Times when a bare, bleak mountainside was the best that presented itself, and space had to be found, somehow, somewhere, for that extra tent. Mutterings were frequent, and we wondered more than once at his hardy tenacity in the face of black looks. We came to the conclusion that the misanthrope insisted upon retiring into privacy in order that he might pray undisturbed to Astarte.

What a labor and a confusion was that daily camp-making with those terrible wall-tents! Tents that were designed by a transport officer during the Crimean War for the use of soldier-men who were available in trained platoons and who pitched camp in a wide plain. I think back on all the carefully tested improvements that have been made in tents since that archaic model, the elimination of weight and poles and pegs and ropes, till I come to a certain modern tent that I know. Eight by eight; may be set up anywhere; one jointed pole, four pegs; full head-room; ground-cloth sewed in; waterproof; bug-proof; sleeps two men; total weight,

twenty-four pounds. I visualize this efficient piece of equipment and I find it difficult to forgive that wilful pedagogue for those wall-tents.

How often I have thanked my Maker that He had given me the forethought to stipulate in my mule-arrangement that all responsibility for the animals—unpacking, hobbling, feeding, etc.,—should fall upon the arrieros! Which fact they flung in my teeth when I called upon them to struggle with those accursed wall-tents.

Those of you, who have camped with tents, of whatever pattern or in whatever locality, will give me sympathy. But you will not altogether understand. For I am quite sure that not one of you has ever camped with a wall-tent. You have probably, in these modern times, never seen a wall-tent, except, possibly, as an all-summer habitation.

Those of you who have known the vexation of the water problem will smile at this halozone story. Halozone is a daily ceremony and a recurrent aggravation. Up here in the mountains, where the water is primaeval spring and contaminating human habitation is not, we insist every evening, as soon as we arrive at camp, on filling a water-bucket and meticulously dropping into it a halo-zone tablet and standing thirstily round it for twenty minutes till the last problematical typhoid bug and dysentery amoeba has been slain. And every evening we find that everybody has left the job to everybody else, and everybody growls that if a thing has to be done he must do it himself; and half a dozen halozone tablets are thrown in all together—but we still have to wait twenty full minutes. Those of you who have auto-camped or canoe-camped or hike-camped and thought it hard, may rest assured that this camping with "the best equipped expedition that ever left New York" is not unalloyed luxury.

Illustration

In Such Mansions do the Hermits of the Lost Paradise Dwell

Illustration

Sunset Over the Lost Paradise

In this chaotic camp, then, we received the directorial *Bulletin Number One*. A formal and impressive document. It was headed: "To all members of the Expedition." And it informed us in meticulous grammar and well-rounded phrase that we had now crossed the Andes. Information which was received without a tremor of surprise from a single man. The fact being satisfactorily established without argument, it went on to tell us that we were about to plunge into the dark and unexplored Yungas. Still no visible astonishment. But ah! the thrills followed fast thereafter! We stood upon the brink, the bulletin said, of a vast and wild country, where fierce animals abounded, where huge serpents lurked above the drinking-pools, and where, more vicious than either, treacherous banditti waited in ambush. Ha! there was startling news for us! We had read so far with blasé boredom. But wild beasts! brigands! That brought the pale to our cheeks. The document now held us spellbound.

Therefore, it went on to admonish us, with warning severity, that we must henceforth cut out this quarreling, we must coöperate—I bethought me guiltily of

the tent squabble—we must, above all, see to our weapons; we must see to it that they were loaded and that they were within instant reach.

Am I unjust in my lack of appreciation of this portentous screed? Am I merely a disgruntled crank when I wonder at the pedagogic mind that considered it necessary to give us this lecture in writing, a private carbon copy to each member, instead of calling us together and saying, "Boys [or 'Gentlemen'], I want to tell you so-and-so?" I don't know. I cannot judge, myself. But I cannot feel ashamed of my covert smile.

Chapter IX

SCIENTIFICOS AT LARGE.

The savants respond to the official communication according to their several natures. The Statistician views beasts and brigands alike with his customary belligerence. He straps one of the army Colts round his waist in an un-get-at-able position and swears at its discomfort. The Botanist exhibits a sudden antipathy to firearms, and under the cloak of derision refuses to load himself down with "motion-picture hardware." Almost does he convey the impression of one who is afraid of guns. The Ichthyologist signs for his weapon,—the Director issues all supplies under receipt, just like valuable apparatus delivered to his class,—accepts the thing dubiously, and frankly asks for instructions in its use. The Scribe, with naïve alacrity, signs up for two guns and drapes them on low-slung belts over his thighs. He is twenty-one and tall and good-looking; and the tout ensemble—with his well-fitting cord breeches, and his khaki shirt open at the throat, and his white sun-helmet—is very splendid.

I look upon these men and it comes home to me with staggering force that not one of them has ever fired off a pistol in his life. I cap that with the conviction, which has been growing in my mind, that not one of them has ever even been out in camp before. And I look upon them again with an increased respect. That insidious inferiority-complex thing has been inspiring my ego to offset the surpassing wisdom of these savants by indulging in a certain lofty scorn for the "tenderfeet." I have in all probability made myself as obnoxious, with my condescending knowledge of things pertaining to the great outdoors, as any Maine guide on seven dollars a day. But it comes to me now that tenderfeet who will unhesitatingly embark upon a journey into the unknown Amazon jungles for the love of their science are people who have a moral courage which almost gives them the right to a sympathetic consideration of their idiosyncrasies.

Little hardships which are to me but the cussedness of any long travel, must be sore trials indeed to some of these less experienced gentlemen.

"For the sake of Science," with a capital S, has been a catch phrase as much to be derided by the laity as "for Art's sake." But deference is due to men who are willing to sacrifice so much for the furtherance of human knowledge and for no material remuneration other than the pittance that is paid to college professors. Not a man on this expedition, mind you, is on salary. Flat field expenses and no

more. Honor is therefore due to them—to us, rather, let me say, my comfortable friends of the United States of America. Excuse is there, also, for their tempers and temperaments. I cannot help laughing at some of their queer reactions to the uneven tenor of their present way; but I laugh, I hope, with understanding.

Have I shown an insufficient respect for transcendent wisdom? Is it the inferiority complex again that impels a layman to laugh at a scientist? I don't know. I trust not. I hope that I have not been off balance in my observation. I feel that I must defend myself, and I hasten to establish my impartiality. They are not all of them cranks, by any means. But since it is the abnormal—or let me say, rather, the unusual—that registers itself most strongly on the consciousness, I have mentioned the queer characteristics first.

Let me sum up, and incidentally offer belated introduction to the characters involved in this drama of ultra-civilized men who have plunged into the primaeval wild.

The Statistician you know already. He is tall and gaunt and has a sparse, straggly beard. He peers crabbedly through bifocal lenses. The typical cranky professor of mathematics. What mystery is there in numbers that renders a man who studies them too closely different from his fellows? Why are so many stories told about professors of mathematics? Yes, the Statistician is distinctly a character. But there is something straightforward and uncompromising about his truculence that I like.

Illustration

Conundrum: Why does one blindfold a mule?

Simple Answer: so that he can't run away.

Illustration

The Most Intricate Method of Mule-packing in the World

The Director you know partially through his deeds. He is—I don't know. I don't understand him yet. He is tall and was once a powerful man. But his health is not what it used to be. He has suffered considerably coming over the altitudes. He worries much over unnecessary cares of direction. His is the type of mind that is constitutionally unable to delegate authority to another. He must do everything himself; and of course there is much too much for any one man to attend to. For the rest—judging from the experience of the tents and the food supplies—he seems to have fallen short in estimating the difficulties of such an expedition.

The Botanist I have described. Big and florid and slow of movement as well as of thought. Devoid of all humor to the extent that he takes himself very seriously indeed and has a great sense of his importance. Therefore he is continually getting himself into the amusing positions that are the lot of all pompous men. And therefore he is difficult to get along with. But there is an underlying solidity and reliability about him that is comforting.

There, that much for the unusuals. Now we come to the others who have given no cause for comment as yet.

The Entomologist. A whole man. Of medium height, dark, wiry, short-sighted, so that his big round glasses give him the inquiring look of a spectacled bear. And

with the indefatigable patience of a bear he turns over stones by the wayside and rips bark off trees, looking forever for microscopic bugs which he may pick up with fine tweezers and drop into an array of carefully labeled bottles full of alcohol. He has an astounding knowledge of these bugs. No mite ever so small but he can immediately give its genus and species and private name, as well as its family history. I can't guess his age. But he is man enough to have sound sense and balance, and boy enough to laugh at the absurdities of some of the rest of us.

However, he has a curious complex, too. He has an innate respect for science as an abstract ideal, and he feels, though he laughs, that one really ought not to laugh at brother scientists. In his eyes I must appear to be a ribald and dissolute person. But I catch ants for him and he forgives me. He is a man of experience. He has hunted bugs all over the desolate earth, and he is altogether a good man to have on an expedition. And he wears the most disreputable hat in North and South America.

The Ichthyologist, too, stacks up well. He is young and earnest and energetic and has no illusions about the things he doesn't know. He is anxious to ask and to learn; and his ambition is that he may be privileged to discover something worth while during this expedition. This is his first chance, and he aims to make the most of it. I feel sure he will.

The Scribe. You know him already. He is buoyant and loud and has all the confidence and omniscience of his age. He contradicts the Director, his chief, with a cheerful abandon and he is prepared to enter into an argument with any one of the sober men of science on any subject at all. He jars upon their refined sensibilities frightfully. But he is a good lad, with all the courage in the world, and has the makings of a good man in him. This expedition will do him a world of good. My assistant has nicknamed him "Young America," which explains him better than pages of description.

Finally, my assistant. The man who is to help me to find out why wild Indians do the things that they do and how they do them; and to take motion pictures of all their queer doings as proof that we do not lie. When that other man of the Bolshevic ethics ran away so suddenly in La Paz city there was some little difficulty about replacing him. There was even a thought of cabling to New York for relief. But Fate for once was kind and led me to a gentleman, resident in La Paz, who didn't like his job and who was more than willing to come adventuring across the continent.

I say, "gentleman" advisedly. He is from the South; suave, polite, well bred, I might say painfully correct, and has a most useful knowledge of Spanish. He has had legal and business training; so his complex is an ultimate scorn for the ineffectual fussings and putterings of men who have not been trained along practical lines—such as scientists. He has therewith a delightfully sardonic tongue; so that he is a thorn in the side of most of us, which is probably very good for us. We call him "the Respectable Member."

I ought really to describe myself, too, for I feel that few readers fully appreciate all those sterling characteristics which I could so well depict. But modesty forbids. I shall tell you only how I dress—cord breeches, high boots, khaki shirt, Stetson, and gun. Yet somehow I don't seem to look nearly so moving-picturesque as that lithe young Scribe. But I have taken immediate advantage of our remoteness from

civilization, as have the others, to consign the safety razor to the bottom of the duffle-bag. So I am beginning to look very much like *Lohengrin*—the Respectable Member says like a Boer farmer.

Chapter X

AN INACCESSIBLE PARADISE.

Picture to yourselves, then, this train of intrepid explorers proceeding blithely down the trail,—which is still called the Street of Sucre,—through the rain forests of the lower transandine slopes. I am in the lead most of the time, generally with the Scribe and the Entomologist. Well in advance of the mile-long mule-train, for we are getting into country where there is a chance of a shot, every now and then, at a deer or a bear; and fresh meat is welcome after our long diet of canned goods and *charque*.

It is good camping along this Street of Sucre, which leads, they tell us, to Espía. The "street" is all as wide as three feet in some parts—room and no more for a mule, walking on the extreme edge, not to scrape his pack on the left-hand cliff and be twisted over the right-hand bank. It winds interminably along the flank of the tremendous lateral ridge that we have been following for some days now. Water is available all the time; for the trail—the road, I should say—maintains a consistently average level of about a hundred feet above the narrow V bottom where a mountain torrent shares our ambition to reach the Father of All the Waters, el Rio Amazonas. Sparkling, limpid mountain water—into which we carefully drop a halozone tablet.

It is good going. The ups and downs are not so steep as they have been, though steep enough to lose us another mule yesterday. Intersecting gullies have formed little silt bottoms wide enough to mitigate much of the offense of those cumbersome tents. Fire-wood at last is plentiful, which makes possible that pleasantest phase of the trail, a camp-fire after a long day's hike. Nights are divinely cool after the terrible cold of the high trail. Mornings are bright and snappy; for we have descended through the mist belt and wake with a clear sun slanting down the gorge. Mornings full of pep and pleasant anticipation of what the day will bring. Even the Eminent Statistician smiles in a vaguely inviting way and would be cordial if he could think of anybody whom he has not insulted. Even the arrieros load up their packs with less than their usual appalling blasphemy about the ancestry of their mules.

An arriero mule-packing is a ceremony worthy to be dwelt upon. It takes two men to load a pack. First a mule has to be caught. Then he is blindfolded with a very dirty scarf; otherwise he will surely seize his opportunity to kick somebody and run away. Then he is kicked in the stomach as an admonition of what he may expect if he becomes obstreperous, and he is reminded with picturesque variation about the unchastity of his mother. Then begins the real business of loading.

Those of you who have taken our own mountain trails and know the simple mystery of the diamond hitch, listen to this. First of all, sheepskins are plastered

over the beast's back. I say "plastered" advisedly; for they are the gummiest, wettest, most unsavory sheepskins that were ever used by man. Five or six layers of sheepskins; and there is some concerted program of applying them in rotation—yesterday's lowest and wettest layer on top to-day—which is not so sanitary for our duffle-bags and general gear. Over this semi-porous padding a double loop of rawhide lazo is thrown, a loop left hanging on each side. Then the two men, one on each side of the mule, heave up their loads simultaneously, holding them with chest pressed against the beast; then one man passes his loop over, and the other knots the two together. A sort of loose cradle has been formed containing a load of approximate even weight on each side.

This is the nucleus. On top of this is piled as much as the men think the animal can carry; and there's many *a* wise old mule who knows enough to groan and to tremble at the knees as the load piles up. Finally, when some sort of compromise between the animal's bluff and the men's judgment has been arrived at, more rawhide *lazo,* or lasso, as we have adapted the word, is wound round and round load and beast together. Yards and yards of it; the men bracing their feet against the poor beast's ribs and pulling, and the wily beast swelling himself with a cunning as great as Houdini's. The resultant load looks like the parcel-post package that Grandma is sending from Alton, Illinois, to Sonny Boy in the big city. But it holds. That is to say, if the men have kicked the mule often enough in the stomach when he was swelling against the strain, it holds till the end of the day's journey.

An intricate and a cumbersome method of mule-packing; and to us gringos it seems a marvel that these packers have not through the years evolved something more efficient. But the reason is the same that accounts for so much of the slipshod ineffectuality of a certain class of South American. This is *costumbre*, traditional custom. Their fathers did it that way, and their father's fathers also.

Yet we find this archaic pack not without merit. We used to get up in a fever of hurry and confusion, making up our bed-rolls under the urgent shouts of the arrieros, and snatching a breakfast in all the bad temper that goes with hurried breakfasts. But that is past. We rise leisurely now and wash at our ease and dawdle over our meal and lie back and smoke in the pleasant morning sun. For this comfortable method of mule-packing takes at least seven minutes and two men per mule; and we still have enough mules surviving the vicissitudes of the trail to give us a good hour and a half from the time the cussing wakes us till we must start. It required considerable quarrel to persuade the arrieros that it was not an incontrovertible law of God that they must pack our bed-rolls and breakfast things first of all, for their grandfathers had been used to doing it that way.

It is a wonderful country here. Pleasantly warm in the soft breezes from the plains; yet high enough still to be not too hot. Everything grows without effort, and since we have not reached the tangle of tropical underbrush, the forest is open enough to be explorable. We are not in jungle as yet. Queer seed-pods hang from huge trees. Cucumber-shaped pods and pipe-shaped pods and flat dollar-shaped pods. They all seem to contain a fluffy cotton of some sort. The Botanist collects them by the hundredweight and carries them for miles—and then throws them away, to collect finer specimens of the same thing.

Fruit of a hundred shapes and sizes dangle above our heads. Giant beans trail from high climbing vines. We gather these and look greedily toward the Botanist. But he shakes his head dubiously. Maybe they are all right. Probably they are. But possibly they are not. He cannot tell us. They are all new. They must be carefully analyzed at some later date. For the present we dare not take a chance. The Respectable Member regretfully discards a delicious-looking custard-apple sort of thing and asks of the wide world of what value in the world is a field botanist.

Narrow, heart-shaped leaves of low-trailing vines advertise yams. We suffer from lack of potato substitutes and we unearth yams of all sizes and colors. The Botanist delivers a standing lecture upon yams. It appears that there are about a hundred varieties of yams or yam-like roots known to science, and of these about a hundred and three are poisonous, although the active principle of some of them may be dissipated by heat.

The Director, the M.D., is a considerable botanist himself; though he specializes on medicinal herbs. He knows an awesome deal about poisonous roots, and he bears out his colleague in a general denunciation of yams; but neither can he without preliminary analysis tell us which of them may be rendered innocuous by cooking. And it appears here that the expedition is not equipped with the necessary outfit for making such an analysis. Whereupon all the rest of us inquire of the wide world of what value in the world are field botanists.

But we do find an eatable root at last. We arrive at the habitation of a group of hermits—we can't call these isolated humans villagers—and they show us a bulbous water-lily root. They call it *ualusa.* Its flesh is purple and fearsome to contemplate. But it boils like a potato and, except for its color, might be mistaken for one. We carry away a mule-load of *ualusa.*

Later there are other hermit dwellings. Almost villages, these. Spanish-speaking people who wear white men's clothes live in them; and, since the country and the climate is what it is, they live with a minimum of labor, which means that they live pleasantly and are satisfied with their lot.

But to us effete creatures of civilization it is a matter of amazement to note how little is the ultimate minimum necessary to contentment. The possessions of these good people are almost nil. What they own they make with their own hands. A bed, a table, and a couple of chairs to each family; hand-hewn with the ubiquitous machete and interlaced with rawhide. The machete and a broken knife or two are prized heirlooms. Their plates are plantain leaves, their cups are gourds, and their single cooking-utensil is a clay pot. One rich man has a German enamel saucepan. Clothing consists of trousers or skirt, and a loose shapeless jacket; both home-made, of a thin cotton cloth. A blanket with a hole in the middle does duty for a poncho and completes the outfit. We begin to understand where the Syrian trader finds his market.

Like all isolated folk, these people remain isolated. Distances are so enormous and travel is so difficult that they just don't attempt to go anywhere. There is nowhere to go. Their language is Spanish and their religion is Catholic. They claim to be *blancos*, white folks, distinctly superior to the mestizos and cholos (admittedly half-breeds) of La Paz city. But they have never seen La Paz; and—this might be in darkest Africa—they have never before seen white men.

Yet their courtesy and their hospitality are pure Bolivian. What their adobe huts contain is ours. What information they have of local conditions and routes is at our service. What help they can render they proffer as though it were a privilege.

They have chickens and eggs and a milk-goat or two, and they are eager to trade their produce, apologizing the while that they are not rich and cannot present us with these things. And our Eminent Director—pitiful Godl—unloads a mule-pack and solemnly opens store; for "the funds of the expedition must be conserved." A woman wants a few needles and some thread, and she brings an egg in payment. Her purchase will cost two eggs. So she resigns herself to wait till next morning, when her hen, she hopes, will have laid another egg. But the look in the eyes of Judy O'Grady is the same look that is in the eyes of the colonel's lady when the latter wants a new squirrel wrap and must wait till the colonel draws his next pay.

I am glad that the responsibilities and economies of directorship do not fall upon my shoulders, and with my assistant I go to make an experiment in the manufacture of candy. A craving for sweets obsesses all of us, and in the victualing of the expedition no provision has been made for such effeminate luxuries. But a bountiful Creator causes cocoa to increase and multiply in these foot-hills with the minimum of attention. Sugar we have in camp stores, so we steal it. And we split the fat cocoa-pods and wash the white surrounding jelly from the beans; and a girl shows us how to roast the beans in an earthen pot and how to grind them between the same kind of stones that Adam used; and we mix the coarse resultant with sugar and cook it up in the pot and add a whole vanilla-bean from a near-by vine; and finally we pour the mess out into the trough of a split cane and set it aside to cool, and keep a vigilant eye open for goats.

We don't know whether or not this is how chocolate is made. But our long irregular bars of brown stuff taste not altogether unlike chocolate; and we all gobble great wads of it; and the unanimous voice of Science proclaims us as geniuses. Encouraged, we make lumps of the unsweetened for drinking-purposes, which is quite simple; though we wish we knew how to extract the surplus cocoa butter, for it floats in greasy globules on the surface of our beverage. None the less, Science votes it the equal of the advertisement, "grateful and comforting."

Coffee is no trouble at all. The same giggling girl shows us how to roast coffee-berries in the same pot and how to grind them in the same adamite stone mill. And what coffee that makes! Here our product is beyond criticism, flawless. That mountain coffee grows sparse; but, like mountain tea, what a flavor it has and what aroma! Such coffee is not available in the marts of New York.

The same is true of the mountain tobacco. But here we can claim no credit. The natives gather it and dry it by hanging it under open rain shelters in heavy shade, where it dries very slowly. And they know all about aging it in the wood, too. For they ram it hard into hollow sections of tree trunks, or they wrap it tightly in twisted vine rope; and then they hang it away under the ridge-pole of their adobe huts, and five years later, or ten years later, they roll it into cheroots and smoke it. In a body we suggest that we jettison three or four mule-loads of camp impedimenta and load up with cheroots. But the Botanist says gravely that he doesn't think the Director would consider such action justifiable. So we have to discard that bright thought. And, anyway, there isn't a very great supply of cheroots made up; and, as the Botanist says again, it wouldn't be doing quite the

right thing to hold up the whole expedition for a week or so while we waited for our cheroot supply.

Not that he wouldn't like to linger in these foot-hills indefinitely; for the specimens he wants to collect are legion. The Entomologist agrees with him whole-heartedly; for bugs and crawling things, too, are legion. In fact, he goes so far as to make his formal demand to the Director that we camp there or thereabouts for a definite period of at least a week. The Ichthyologist backs them both up. He has been spending his nights stalking tree-toads with my private acetylene bulls'-eye lamp which I brought for night shooting; for he is keenly set on making a collection of batrachians. He has also found some interesting pollywogs in a puddle. So a week or two more in this prolific paradise would suit him excellently.

For me and my assistant there is nothing to do here. These people, for all their seclusion, are not Indians. They have no queer manners or customs, no tribal ghost-dances or devil-huntings or handicrafts to record. They are Bolivians. Their speech is Bolivian and their traditions are Bolivian. Idleness, therefore, is our portion. But this is a good country to be idle in. The air is languorously warm and the nights are cool. The oranges and the pineapples are beginning to be sweet. There are bush turkeys in the hollows and there are bear in the hills. It is easy to answer our recurring American question as to why these people live here and what on earth they do. The answer is the same that was given to us at the inaccessible village of the ridge: They do nothing; they just live. But here we find that the answer is within our understanding. It is easy to console oneself with the reflection that so was Adam idle in the Garden of Eden. So I throw my weight in with the rest who demand a delay.

But the Director is as uncompromising as the angel with the fiery sword. "Espía," he reiterates with finality. There lies our first objective. The beginning of the Promised Land. There are the head-waters of navigation. There the rest of our goods and gear will be waiting for us—if that rascally contractor has not stolen them. Also, the Director is full of fears for that other half of the expedition material that he was compelled—on account of my ill-advised arrangement—to entrust to a Bolivian pack-mule contractor.

So to Espía we must speed, without wasting time or dallying by the way. At Espía will begin the real work of the expedition. Espía exists, these good people assure us. They have never been there, but the vast slope along whose flanks we travel leads to Espía. Three days' journey farther; or perhaps five; or maybe eight. Quien Sabe?

Chapter XI

THE PROMISED LAND.

We have arrived; and the horror of Espía is heavy upon us all. But before I tell of this despairful place I must try to mitigate the evil of the telling by recounting a story about a bandit which befell upon the road to Espía. It is really a very good story; and it explains how one person may go a-traveling and come back

with thrilling adventures to relate, while another may cover the same ground and find perhaps only hardship. The anomaly doesn't necessarily mean that one of the two is a teller of traveler's tales. It may be that he tells the truth; only his temperament has reacted differently from the other man's under the same stimulus. I venture the theory, in short, that adventure lies in the man himself and not in the happening.

Listen, while I expound my thesis. The Eminent Director, as you must have realized by now, is a man of fervid imagination, which is supplemented by an unusual modicum of that strange suspicion that a certain type of American feels for what they call Spiggoties. His attitude is evinced in his anxiety about the mule-packer who contracted to deliver half the equipment at Espía, and in his awe-inspiring bulletin. With this background it is easy to understand how he has been obsessed ever since leaving La Paz with the positive conviction that the expedition is the mark for all the organized banditry of the mountains.

Even in La Paz he was nervous and bemoaned the fact that the newspapers had heralded us as a million-dollar American expedition. Crossing the High Cordillera he had peace. But ever since we passed through that first hospitable village of the bleak ridge he has insisted that we were being followed.

It appears that years ago as a youngster he made the passage from La Paz over the old Sorata-Mapiri route to a place called Rurrenabaque, on the Beni River, which we also shall eventually reach. We have no means of knowing the condition of the country then. But it is difficult to believe that these desolate back-stairs trails are infested by brigands in these days. Yet the Director has regaled us at each consecutive camp-fire with tales of the dangers which we must expect from man as well as from beast.

There was an inoffensive sort of person who appeared at the last little hermit village we passed through. He didn't live there. He, too, was passing through, he said. To our imaginative leader this was proof.

"A spy!" he warned us immediately. "Where would he be going in this wilderness? Why did he carry a serviceable-looking Winchester?"

To the less excitable ones among us it seemed natural that a man might travel from one lost village to another, somewhere in the hills; and natural that a man traveling in a wild country should carry a gun. I never moved without my Savage 25-3000 slung over my shoulder, myself, though I was looking for bear, not brigands. But what argument can one advance against the ominous mutterings of experience which tell one, "I know these Andean trails?"

Do you perceive the elements of comic opera in the situation? Hear the dénouement and reflect how close is comedy to tragedy. We were hiking along a narrow trail that skirted a steep portion of our interminable ridge, the Scribe and I, well in advance of the rest, when round a bend came the model for all comic-opera brigands. Bearded like the pard he was, and fierce mustached and swarthy, and he wore a sombrero almost as disreputable as the Entomologist's hat, and a flaming scarlet poncho with an orange border. He rode a sorry mule and across the saddle-bow he held a Winchester .405. Upon seeing us he held up his hand in a commanding gesture for us to stop.

What did we do? We looked swiftly about us, and we stopped. Why? Because it was clear that where we stood there was room for his mule to pass without

pushing us over the edge of the path, while where he was we should have to scramble uncomfortably up the mountainside in order to get by.

The brigand expressed his vast astonishment at meeting two gringos, of all people, on that path which had never seen gringos before. He asked us all about everything and gave vent to the customary compliments about our fortitude in plunging thus into the unknown. (It was always a matter of wonder to me why all these naïve people whom we met should think it was so brave of us to come where they lived all the time, but such is the glamour that attaches to the magic word "Expedition.") The pleasantries done with, the bandit came down to business and held us up. He wanted a match—a whole box of matches, in fact; for he had been without fire for three days.

It was our ill luck that neither of us happened to have a match. So we told the highwayman politely that farther back on the trail he would come upon the rest of the members of the expedition, among whom he would surely find a match. He did not take our lives. He thanked us and passed on, and we breathed freely once more.

Fate so willed it that the next member of the expedition on the trail was the Eminent Director, and that where his mule stood there was room for two mules to pass. It was Fate in her most mischievous mood that caused the brigand to raise the hand in which he held his Winchester, in the customary signal of the road, and to call in his commanding voice, "Stay where you are, señor."

And there it was that Adventure with wide-spread wings swooped down upon both of those men, out of a blue sky.

The Director knew immediately that his worst fears were realized. The expedition was held up for its million dollars. Give him credit for his pluck, if not for his judgment. Without an instant's hesitation he pulled his army Colt from his saddle-bag and took a shot at his stick-up man.

Happily he was a pedagogue, not a pistol-shot. Happily the brigand was too astonished to shoot back; and he ducked round the bend of the trail like a rabbit. So no harm came of it. But there is the point that I wish to establish. Out of the identical happening which to two of us meant no more than a request for a match, a third man had found a hair-raising adventure. For it is surely the thrillingest kind of adventure to be held up and to shoot at a man with intent to kill.

And to this day, a week after the excitement, the Director insists that the man was a brigand and that his confederates were in ambush on the hillside; and that it was only his own prompt and determined action that saved us from disaster. And as such he has caused the incident to be written into the official "Journal" which he dictates to the Scribe whenever opportunity presents itself, as a day-by-day record of our progress which the sponsors of the expedition, he hopes, will publish.

And so to Espía, the place that was marked on the government maps as a town of considerable size. A guide from the last of the little hermit colonies said that he knew Espía perfectly well; and he brought us here and has left us. Our long train of dear, obstinate, companionable mules has left us. Our grumbling, wilful arrieros have left us. We are alone, thrown upon our own resources, and we are as crawling ants in the great emptiness of Espía.

Desolation vast and impending. Blank barrenness piled high upon craggy destitution. Up-ended slate and striated schist and crumbly sandstone, blue and yellow and hard, burned brown in a thin sun. Through the ragged waste a deep and crooked gash strewn with the rubble that the ages have torn from the angry cliffs. Zigzag through the gash, diagonaling from precipice to opposite precipice, a turbid and foul-smelling river.

Not a habitation, not a hut, not a beast nor a bird nor a track in the sand. This is the "town" of Espía.

In this town, then, we are encamped. Boxes and bales and bundles piled here and strewn there; a chaos in keeping with its surroundings. I am reminded of the opening verses of Genesis. Only, instead of the spirit of God moving over the face of the waters, is the spirit of discontent.

Our coming was an unfortunate coming of circumstance and weariness—and perhaps a little obstinacy. The last day of the trail through the rain-forest paradise had been a long one. We rode, the Director and the Scribe and I—for I, too, was weary—well in advance of the rest, who had fallen behind to hunt each for the specimens peculiar to his study.

The pleasant rain-forest suddenly ceased as though cut off with a knife. Before us lay a bare desert of sand and rubble a mile wide—the playa scoured out by the turbid river which in the rainy season filled it ten feet deep with roaring flood.

Through the middle of the yellow-brown barrenness a darker streak of brown marked the present confines of the river. No more than fifty yards across and fordable though evil-smelling. From away to the right came an other ridge to meet the apex of the ridge we had been following. From its ravine poured another river white and clear, to mingle with the dirty stream in front of us. The two formed the Bopi River, the "head-waters of navigation."

"There," said our guide, "on the other side of this river, where the two rivers meet, is Espía."

Still we did not understand that we were face to face with our expulsion from Eden. We rode through the ford, the three of us, the guide clinging to my stirrup, and continued on across the farther plain, expecting to find some settlement or something round the corner of the beetling cliff which thrust in from that side. But round the corner was only emptiness as vast and as cheerless as all that lay behind. Half a mile farther, the combined streams, swinging off the opposite cliff, slanted across to surge against the face of the cliff on our side and so cut off further progress.

The little plain, then, in which we were, extended from a point behind us, where the river swung away to make its curve, to the barrier in front of us. A barren emptiness a mile long and half a mile wide.

"This playa," said our guide, "is Espía." From here the Indians navigate in balsa rafts.

There was no time to question, no time to stand aghast. Our wits were becoming accustomed to the unexpected on the trail. The Scribe and I in the same breath urged the Director to go back, reford the river, and pitch camp on the farther side, where we should have the shelter of the rain forest and be in touch with the other stream of clear water. But the Director was a man no longer as young as he once had been. That day had been too long for him. He was weary enough physically to

be mentally sluggish. He expressed a fear that since this playa was the head of navigation, possibly rafts could not be taken the necessary half-mile farther up. He argued that under the trees there was no room for tents, anyway, and that, as far as open sand-bars went, this side was no worse than that side.

He even feared a possible ambush of Indians from the forest. It was quite clear that he was too exhausted with the day's travel to consider, without shrinking, the thought of fording that river again and riding around looking for a camp site. All that he wanted to do was to dismount from his mule and throw himself flat upon the sand. And then, while he hesitated, the first of the pack-mules began to emerge from the forest wall and straggle out toward the ford. That sealed our fate.

"Well, that settles it," said the Director, with relief. "We camp here for to-night; and to-morrow maybe we can look around and make some other arrangement."

Fifteen minutes later bales and bags were being unloaded in a pile on the sand-bar called Espía and the first night's camp outside of Paradise was in progress.

Chapter XII

MAROONED ON A DESERT ISLE.

That was two weeks ago. We are still here; and the indications are that we shall remain marooned on our private desert island for Heaven knows how long.

Upon sober reflection I don't know that the Director can really be blamed for the circumstance. My only comment is that to be a good leader of an expedition a man needs to be quick to think, alert to foresee, and swift to act. Our leader, alas! is none of these things. He could not have been expected to foresee all the calamity which has befallen us, but had he been mentally alert enough to visualize the more immediate disadvantages of this place—as, for instance, the water problem—and had he acted swiftly on that visualization, all the following unpleasantness would have been avoided.

Listen to the tally of the disasters that followed fast on one another's heels:

The first blow came with the first sunrise. The arrieros played the first mean hand. They had been showing some dissatisfaction, during the last few days, over the crazy hurry to reach Espía. They, too, would fain have lingered in the pleasant vale of Eden; and there had been considerable grumbling at the Director's insistence upon pressing forward. Now, with the first sunrise, they collected up their mules and gear and prepared to start off on their long trek homeward.

"But hey! wait a minute!" the Director held them.

"We don't like this place. We want to cross the river again and camp on the edge of the forest."

This was what those cunning arrieros had played for. They shrugged and said, why surely, if the Señor Director so desired they would load up and re-transport the camp with all its gear to any place he wished. But the Señor Director must remember that their contract had been to deliver us at Espía. They had faithfully carried out their contract; and if the Señor Director now desired to engage them on

a new arrangement, it would cost twenty bolivianos per mule for the day or part thereof.

Of course it was a hold-up. The regular price was five bolivianos, about a dollar and a half. The argument lasted half the morning. But the arrieros were as determined to work off their accumulated spite upon the Director, unless exorbitantly paid to pocket their grouch, as the Director was to "conserve the funds of the expedition." Considerable temper was expended on both sides; and the argument ended by the arrieros' herding up their mules, fording the river, and disappearing into the far fringe of trees.

It was not till they had irrevocably left us that realization came that their act condemned us to the desert island of Espía for a term of days which would end only when Indians should come and rescue us with balsa rafts. For without mules it was utterly impossible, of course, to transport three tons of expedition equipment across that river, to a new camp site.

It would be appropriate to add here that a leader of an expedition needs to possess, in addition to the before-mentioned qualities, the faculty of super-human diplomacy—or of nerve enough to take the law into his own hands. For, let it be whispered, there were those of us who urged that we were a long, long distance from the law and that we surely had guns enough among us to frighten those unruly arrieros into subjection.

A philosophic reflection comes to me about the innate respect for the law that subconsciously dominates the civilized mind. Peculiarly so, perhaps, the pedagogic mind, that holds its dominion over its pupils not by any personal prowess but by the disciplinary force behind it. There was our Director with all the courage in the world, ready to draw on the instant and fire at what he considered a bandit without the pale of the law, yet conscientiously averse to employing force against these other brigands who held us up within their legal rights.

Thus did conscience make castaways of us all. *Robinson Crusoes* were we, without even a footprint in the sand to cheer us. And we were worse off than Mr. R. Crusoe in that the next nasty jar that struck us in our exile was the immediate discovery that the water of the muddy river that so effectually marooned us was undrinkable. Its taste was that of soap and its odor that of sewage. That we suffered from no mere delusion of hypercritical fancy was borne out by our map, which told us that the town of Espía was situated at the junction of the Meguilla River—the clear water, so near and yet so far—and the La Paz River, which conjointly formed the Bopi River and the head-waters of navigation.

We were in no mood to believe any too blindly in that government map, but our senses of taste and smell supplied incontrovertible proof. Of the antecedents of the Meguilla River we knew nothing, but of the La Paz River we had certain knowledge that all the sewage of La Paz, that city of seventy thousand souls, emptied directly into it. Science makes the assertion that an open stream of running water purifies itself within forty miles, or a hundred miles, or something. We estimated from the map that the stream had traveled about five hundred miles since its unsavory intercourse with man. We conceded that it was an open stream and that it was swiftly running water. But when we could actually taste the soap and the other things which composed its turbid sediment, even the scientists showed a hesitation in believing the dictum of science.

We have scouted. We have explored every foot of our domain, in the fond hope of finding some damp spot of ooze such as thirsty travelers always find, which might be scooped out to seep a little pool. A goat-track zigzags up the face of the cliff which walls us in on one side and we have scrambled all over the face, hunting for a seepage. I have been to the top and have looked down on fertile valleys beyond. I have even been down the other side to such a valley and have drunk eight or ten quarts and have filled a canteen. But that was a ten-mile hike. Too far to carry water every day for a camp of eight white Americans and a Chilean cook.

Even to the Meguilla River is too far. A hundred yards away it sparkles cool and clear in the sun before it mingles with the foulness of La Paz—from the *other* side. The La Paz River is fordable on foot if one takes a heavy stone on one's head to give one weight against the swift current. I have done it, and have drunk fifteen or twenty quarts of the Meguilla, without halozone. But the La Paz, despite its filth, is, after all, a mountain stream and a cold, cold proposition to tackle. Too cold and too swift to tackle as a daily chore to bring water for nine men.

What, then, do we do—we hyper-particular explorers who insisted upon halozone in pure mountain water? We drink the La Paz River. We boil it and we halozone it copiously; and Science then maintains that we shall not die thereof. But we can still taste the soap and other things.

Why is Espía? We do not know. Why does the rain forest suddenly cease at the edge of this Death Valley? Why are the valleys on the other side of its inclosing ridges fertile while it remains barren of all life? The combined wisdom of eight scientific Americans and a Chileno cook can find no answer. We sit in helpless monotony and curse it and one another, even as its Maker cursed it and left it.

Never was place so thoroughly cursed. Neither insect nor plant nor animal nor human lived in that mile by half a mile of empty loop between the river and the cliff. Wherefore no member of the castaways has aught of interest to employ his time. So that we all lounge around in moody ill humor and hate the place according to the limit of our individual temperaments. Nor is the situation improved by the recurrent thoughts of what might have been. If only we had made our first camp on the other side of the foul river! Why had we not insisted upon forcing those damned arrieros, at pistol-point, to carry the gear across again?

Here, where nothing else grows, is fertile ground for discontent to flourish. Truly a place accursed. Even the parrots fly high overhead and scream curses upon it as they flash by.

Hope is nature's provision for saving the harassed human mind from shrieking lunacy. It is hope, alone, then, that keeps us from breaking out into howling homicide. Some day we shall escape from here. We don't know exactly when; but pride of race refuses to let the conviction die that eight white Americans can extricate themselves from a hole, however much alone and helpless they may be.

Don't be amazed. There is nothing strange about eight white men being alone and therefore helpless.

White men in these comfortable days don't realize how dependent they are upon the conveniences of organized civilization. Consider us for a moment, from the point of view of simple practicability. We are in one place and we want to go somewhere else. Well, how? Civilized man, when he wants to change his location, reviews in his mind the various means of locomotion and decides which will be the

most comfortable or the fastest or the cheapest—railroad, steamboat, trolley, automobile, or even horseback—and he calls up an express company to remove his baggage. All are services performed for him by other people; or are dependent upon previous services, such as roads, which have been performed in the past.

We are eight civilized white men encamped with about three tons of baggage on the edge of the jungle, alone. We are face to face with primitive conditions and reduced to primitive man's means of locomotion—our own two more or less good legs—and we wish to get to Rurrenabaque, four hundred or six hundred or perhaps eight hundred miles down the Bopi River. A lifetime of railroads and automobiles does not prepare a man's legs to travel through hundreds of miles of trackless jungle. Even the Indians who live in those jungles don't attempt such madness where a track has to be hewn with machetes as one goes. They travel by water; which explains why all the highways in tropical jungle country are waterways.

We are at the much vaunted "head of navigation." Why not build balsa-wood rafts, such as we have been told the Indians use, and proceed merrily on our way by water? It sounds easy and is what all explorers do in books. But regard the thing once again from the practical side.

A raft, to be efficient in a mountain river, must be light enough to be dragged bodily over the shallows; and to carry any baggage at all, it must have the maximum of flotation. Hence balsa-wood, which is phenomenally strong and is lighter than cork. Now, there are no balsa-trees in the forest we have just left. Well, what then?

Of us eight white men, possibly four are young enough and strong enough to ford, swim, scramble, ford again, and so make our way down our horrible valley far enough to find life and trees once more. Possibly we might survive with sufficient weight of tools, nails, and such, to build a raft. Possibly by experiment we might discover which trees are balsa-wood or any light wood suitable for making a raft. Possibly we might make some sort of raft. And then what?

What of the three tons of scientific baggage and the four scientific men stranded who could tell how many miles up that cold, rapid-broken mountain river? What of food, guns, ammunition—all of it weight, weight, weight?

No, that prospect is not practicable. A single slim chance remains—that some of us might make our way back to the hermit colonies of the rain-forest belt and somehow persuade, bribe, force some of those men to come down and help us in some miraculous manner to find wood and make rafts, and to pilot us down the river.

In our desperation that possibility was even discussed with our hermit guide who brought us to Espía. But he was aghast at the thought. To begin with, like all isolated people, those little communities are rooted to their soil. They have never been anywhere, and the thought of going wildly adventuring down an unknown river filled our man with horror. The balsa rafts which the river Indians make, and which he had seen once or twice, he told us, are very specialized craft, evolved out of the experience of generations to withstand the banging and smashing of the rapids; and the men who navigate them have to be born on the river and have to possess the accumulated knowledge and skill of generations. The hermit people of the uplands know nothing of all this.

We had read Dr. Hamilton Rice's account of balsa travel on the northern tributaries of the Amazon, so we were willing to believe our scared guide that that hope was impossible. And he, to cheer our flagging spirits, assured us that none of these upper-river Indians live anywhere near Espía. Their settlements are far down the river; and it is only occasionally that a few of them come up to trade for knives and machetes.

That grandiloquent term "the head-waters of navigation" apparently means that Espía is the highest point at which it is possible for a human to sit upon something and yet float. Though that stunt is not performed often.

Believe me, ye well-served ones of the cities, we eight white men are very much alone and very helpless indeed. There are those of the more nervously inclined among us who are disposed to question whether the expedition has not come to an inglorious end in this pocket of the La Paz main sewage outfall, and whether anything is left to be done except to scuttle out of this gorge before the next rain may fall somewhere high up in the mountain-mist region and come roaring down in a tenfoot-deep spate and flood us out, bag and baggage, like rats in any other sewer. A very possible contingency and an unpleasing thought to linger upon during a dark night. It has even been seriously discussed whether our best chance might not be to make our way back trail and camp among the hermits of Eden until—well, until something turned up.

Which would mean, surely, that the expedition had come to an end; for nothing could ever turn up in that lost corner of the earth. So that is not to be thought of. No; go forward we must, somehow or other, before the next big rain comes. For going back would be, if anything, more difficult. We should be stuck in Eden for a year and become hermits ourselves.

When I say a year, I don't exaggerate. Consider. It is not to be thought for a moment that all the members of the party, if any, could make their way back over the passes on foot. Even were they all strong young men inured to packing, the minimum of shelter—remember those awful wall-tents—and blankets and food could not be carried. Mules would be a necessity. Whence would pack-mules be forthcoming? Communication with La Paz exists, of course. But how frequent is it? Who would go and organize a rescue train to come and fetch us? The thing could be done, and it would. Somehow, somebody would go over the top and bring relief. But it would take time. And, after all, as some of the scientists suggest with hopeful resignation, a year would not be too terribly long a period to spend in a country so new to collecting and so unknown to science.

I am constrained to quote again, *"Facilis descensus"*. For we surely have arrived at Avernus. It has not been so laughably easy as to be a joke. But to get back would be a "labor" and an "opus" against which the descent would stand out as a pleasant stroll in comparison. Very effectually marooned are we eight white intrepid explorers. The La Paz River is our filthy Rubicon; and the arrieros, in taking away their mules, have burned the bridges.

Illustration

The Balsa Sent by Providence to Deliver the Castaways

Illustration

Our Hero—Plunging into the Unknown,
Carrying All the Hopes of a Whole Expedition

Illustration
The Ford of the La Paz Main Sewer

Illustration
Some of the Six Tons of Baggage Arriving at Espía

The Scribe, because he is Young America and because those of his type do such things, is willing to take the chance of working down-river somehow to the Indian settlements, to bring help. The Respectable Member, because he has a quixotic sense of duty and because one man couldn't manage it alone, is willing to make the attempt with him. I, because shame would compel me to make good on my superior out-of-door woodsman brag, suppose I should have to go with them. That would be an adventure at last. But I regard the project with loathing.

We have surveyed our mile of turbid foaming river and planned how we might lash tools and weapons to miniature rafts made of the driftwood left by the last flood and let them float down-stream at a rope's end, catching up with them as opportunity offered. Not a very efficient means of travel. But it goes to show how really hard we are up against the desperate end of things.

We are addressing one another as *Robinson* and *Friday* and *Enoch Arden*—some of us have left wives at home. (But they can't see any joke in it.) Young America is *Auld Robin Grey.* He has left so many girls behind that some of them surely will have given up waiting before he ever gets back. The Eminent Statistician, at the covert hint of *Rip Van Winkle,* gnashes his teeth and cries out against the impertinence, demanding the while that his enemy the Eminent Director do something about it. Not about the impertinence; but the delay. For the world of science cannot afford to have him absent from home for so indefinite a period. The Director assures him ominously that at least a year will pass before he ever sees home again—even with the best of luck.

Yet solace has come to me in our exile. I am going to be famous. I have discovered an ant. Scouting along the hillside, hunting always for a seepage, I came upon the miracle of something alive in Espía—an actual nest of ants. Deeming even in my ignorance that ants who lived where there was nothing at all to eat must be unusual, I brought samples to the bug-hunter. He is enthusiastic. He names fifty ants that are cousins and nephews and poor relations of this family, and gives a short history of each. But these ants are new. Neither you, my friends, nor I can quite understand the thrill attached to a new ant. But there is apparently a whole lot; also much honor. So the bug-hunter is going to name it after me. *Robinson Crusoe* never had such compensation for his exile.

Chapter XIII

DELIVERANCE LONG DELAYED.

Deliverance out of a blue sky. The Lord has had compassion upon His servants. I suppose even Adam, after he had been thrown out of Eden into the Mesopotamian Espía, found some remission of his evil fate. So to us, also, was compassion vouchsafed. I shall always look back upon this as one of the outstanding pieces of good fortune of my life. I understand just how that other *Robinson,* our precursor, felt when he followed up his footprint in the sand and heard human voices.

In the night, as we sat glooming about upon boxes and bales, we heard voices on the river—voices where nothing human existed. We went to investigate with guns and flash-lights, and found that the millionth unexpected chance had actually happened. Two scared Indians had come up from the far settlements to trade some jungle produce for a machete.

They were a miracle. No Indians had been there, so far as our guide knew, for a year or more. How they got there was the marvel beyond conjecture—a marvel which was manifolded when later we understood the means and received intelligent answers to our thousand questions. We were beginning to regard Indians as a tropical myth. But these fabulous monsters of the unknown jungles even spoke some Spanish.

There was a mission, they told us, away down the river and up another river. It could be reached in perhaps two weeks of hard travel down-stream if one stopped for nothing and kept going from dawn till dark. We shouted our joy and relief. This must be the mythical mission of Espía, of course, to which we had a letter. That explained their knowledge of Spanish. They couldn't tell us what mission or how far down this river and up the other one; but it was very far; two full weeks' journey down-stream. And they, the super-rivermen, had come all that way up-stream on a balsa raft. They had towed it every foot of the way against that current, forcing it up through the rapids and dragging it over the shallows. Without it they couldn't have come, for they needed it to ferry themselves across when the river in its zigzag course from side to side of the gorge surged up against an unscalable cliff, just as it did here at Espía and as it apparently continued to do a hundred or more times in its turbulent course.

And all this to trade in a machete for some jungle produce. Think of it! Think of a people so remote that they came to these last lost hermit colonies of the rainforest belt to trade for a machete, where a machete is a family heirloom! What conceivable produce of the lower jungles could they bring that would be of value to a community so destitute?

Rubber bags, they said. They might as well have said sea-boots. But they showed us. They lived in the lower jungle country where rubber-trees grew. So they wove a coarse cloth of tree-cotton fiber, made it into bags, and smeared these bags with rubber latex fresh from the tree. Wood-smoke quickly coagulated the latex, and five or six more coats were then applied similarly; till the finished article made a wonderful seamless duffle-bag, completely waterproof.

I have been interested to inquire what in heaven a hermit would want with a rubber duffle-bag. I have learned—think of the far-flung ramifications of the world's trade!—that the hermit pays a second-hand, well-used machete to the

Indian for as many bags as he can get; that he then trades the bags to the Syrian trader for as many new machetes as he can get; that the Syrian trader trades the bags to a German storekeeper in La Paz city for as many enamel pots as he can get; and the storekeeper finally makes a huge profit by selling the bags for money to gringos who go up into the high mountain tin-mines above the snow-level, where a change of dry woolen clothes is a matter of life and death—and where, of course, I have seen and coveted just such bags.

Everybody coveted those bags that our deliverers had. There weren't enough of them to go round. But as a syndicate we bought in the whole stock and we made those Indians rich for life. A whole new machete apiece we gave them; and gave therewith elaborate instructions for their immediate return down the river with a letter to the mission. In which letter we quoted the authority of the Bolivian Government and of the Bishop of La Paz and called upon the padres to gather all the good Indians of their flock and to come up with a fleet of balsas to our rescue.

The obedient Indians prepared to go on their homeward way rejoicing. But seeing one of them tie our precious letter into his hair, we received another reminder of what a slave civilized man is to organized service. A letter, that every-day two-cent necessity of life, is a means of communication to be relied upon only in a community well served by a post-office. Those Indians were going to be considerably wet before they reached home; and we could afford to take no chances on the miscarriage of that message. Such providential deliverance would not come twice in the same year.

So we decided that one of us should go with the Indians, to make sure that the padres should understand our dire need and the extent of the necessary fleet. It is good policy on any expedition anywhere in the wilds for two white men to keep together. But these Indians insisted that their balsa could never carry more than one extra passenger. And when we looked at the thing—a mere catamaran of five poles; they couldn't be called logs—we marveled that it could carry any at all. Indeed, if it hadn't been made of that marvelous balsa-wood its limit would surely have been one man.

So the Respectable Member has gone to raise a fleet. He was the only one who could be spared, for various reasons. At all events, the only practicable one; for our choice was of necessity narrowed down to the four of us who could speak Spanish. I think he felt rather nervous, being the first of all the expedition to go swooshing and sloshing down a wild river to the far-away settlement of wild Indians—and alone at that. But, as I have explained, he has an obsessive sense of duty. So he said nothing, but just went.

A South'n gentleman, suh, as I think I've told you. I imagine that man is having an adventure. I can't say I envy him it.

On him, then, our hopes rest. And it would be a joy and an education to a psychoanalyst—or to a cynic—to observe how, with the knowledge of something definite being done we resign ourselves to the contemplation of Espía for six more weeks or seven,—two to make the descent and four to come back with the fleet,—if a fleet of balsas be immediately available. There is a general air amongst us of shame-faced apology to one another for things which have been said and done during the prevailing mental stress of the past week or so. Almost all of us are polite to almost all the rest.

The Eminent Statistician, however, is one of those strong, unchangeable characters. He still talks only with the Ichthyologist and me. I have found out why he keeps the peace with me, and it is a great blow to my vanity. I had been pluming myself upon a surpassing tact and charm of personality. But it turns out that my only asset is that I am able to fix his typewriters when they go on strike. He has two typewriters; and if it were possible for one man to tire out two machines, he would surely do it. He is indefatigable. Heaven knows what he types so busily.

Every day or so he comes to me, mumbling curses upon the Corona and swearing that he will throw it into the river. And then he leads me into his holy tent of the tabernacle, and I find—as I found that day in La Paz—that the ribbon has run out and he doesn't know how to reverse it. Presently he comes forth again mouthing anathema upon the Remington Portable and swearing that he will hurl that into the sewer that flows by our doors and go back to the Corona. And I go and make some adjustment, and he puts his arm around my shoulders and says that I am the only man in the whole damn expedition who is worth the miserable food that I get to eat; and he will give me the blankety-blank machine. Up to date he has given me both machines and his saddle and that can of tobacco all over again—to be handed over to me when he shakes the dust of this "futile, piffling, mismanaged, abortive expedition" from off his feet.

I have an idea that the fiery man of complex figures gets mad and beats his typewriters. Never have I seen machines requiring so much adjustment. I use a Remington, myself, and the thing has been kicked by a mule—it went over the precipice with my bagpipe—and I had to do nothing to it other than change the ribbon. Young America uses a Remington, too, and he has no trouble. Yes, I'm sure the irascible Statistician slams his machines with his fist every now and then.

It is a busy Scribe these days. The official "Journal" has fallen 'way behind and has to be brought up to date. The Director dictates furiously, calling upon us to remind him what occurred on the date he happens to be filling in. This appeals to me as a very pleasing way of filling in a journal. One can write so prophetically.

There are bulletins, too, to be issued to the members of the expedition, scattered as we are over a mile by half a mile of desert playa. There have been two since our incarceration. One to tell us that we had survived the perils of the trail—bandits, etc.—just to be deserted by our dastardly arrieros and left in a precarious position where only the experience and foresight and calmness of our leader held up the tottering morale of the expedition and staved off complete disaster. The other to give us the information that the Respectable Member had gone down-river and that deliverance was on its way; and calling upon us to stand loyally shoulder to shoulder and to utilize our time not in loafing but in preparing ourselves for the ordeal of our approaching plunge into the jungles where wild Indians were a certainty and unknown beasts a probability.

Truly a marvelous mind! The Statistician, upon being handed his copy of this document, grunts his fierce scorn and crumples the paper upon the spot, without deigning to look at it. I am beginning to have an inkling that there is a purpose in these grandiose documents. They are issued, I suspect, with a view to publication as a part of that autobiographical official record.

Chapter XIV

IMPEDIMENTA.

In spite of these pleasing diversions, the monotony of Espía hangs heavily upon our hands. I had been planning to go with the Entomologist and the Scribe and a couple of rifles and some blankets, and to ford the La Paz drain and spend a week or two in the rain forest to see what we might accomplish in the way of sport and scientific discovery. But the Director opposed the dangerous plan, and fate came along and helped him.

A pleasant fate, on the whole, in the shape of that mule-packer with the other half of the expedition gear. The Director had been bewailing the loss of all that valuable material, and had already written into the official journal his condemnation of "my ill-advised and hasty contract," when there arrived suddenly the welcome train of mules, footsore and weary, but with every package and bale intact.

Of course it was in keeping with the natural cussedness of things that they should have arrived long after our providential deliverance by balsa. How welcome they would have been if they had come during those early days of our despair! And yet, perhaps it was providential that the contractor lost his way a few times and therefore arrived so late. Had he beaten that heaven-sent balsa to the post, who knows what would have happened? The whole course of the expedition would have been changed. So heavily did the horror of Espía hang over us at that beginning that the unanimous decision would surely have been to take the more important equipment, discard the rest, and try to work back over the trail and down some other one to some other river. Who knows? Who can guess? It might have been better or—we are getting used to Espía—it might have been worse.

Well, anyway, there they were; and there was the camp piled high with its full complement of six tons of baggage. Even the Director, who had collected it all, was aghast at the contemplation of it, and realized, in view of what we had learned about balsa capacity, the need of elimination. And what a wild confusion it was to take in hand!

I wonder whether the Statistician was right when he turned his back upon it and snorted, "Most mismanaged mess I've ever seen." Perhaps I ought to preface my description of it by adding to the qualifications necessary to the superman who would direct expeditions, that of prophetic foresight.

Contemplate a while our baggage, collected and packed under the direction of an eminent scientist who had been over an Andean trail before.

Aside from the personal baggage of each member—which was a plenty—there were one hundred and four pine-wood boxes, each box specially reinforced to withstand the hard knocks which were to be expected. One hundred and four of them! Three-quarter-inch pine reinforced by cross battens! They withstood the jolts and jars of mule-packing over the mountains, but they weighed, empty, forty-

two pounds, each single one! Over two tons of container material hoisted over the High Andes.

I mustered up the temerity to ask the Director why he had not used those light fiber telescopic cases such as Roosevelt carried on his expedition to the River of Doubt and such as every expedition has carried since. I didn't have the courage to remind him that I had told him where he might get these in New York. But the answer to my question was properly crushing: "The funds of the expedition must be conserved."

And what did all these powerful containers contain? I was avidly anxious to know all the luxurious wonders that this "best-equipped expedition that ever left New York" was going to disgorge at last. Waiting all these months has been as painful as sitting round the Christmas-tree, itching to open up the parcels, while the elders prated of how thankful wicked little boys ought to be for that God gave them a Christmas and that they were going to get any presents at all.

There was a premonition among us that the good Director, in loco parentis, was intending to withhold some of the choicest packages for a future opening. But kindly Fate had provided otherwise. Observe the need for foresight: *There was not a list of any sort to show what a single one of those boxes contained!*

So every one had to be unpacked right there on the sand of Espía, and the contents listed, and then some of them repacked, since no other containers were available. But what matter? There was nothing to distract us at Espía and all time was before us—provided it didn't rain somewhere up in the mountains.

One hundred and four strong boxes to be opened and unpacked. Each box well nailed down. Each nail well rusted in place. And for tools, two axes; two saws; two hammers; and a pickax! And remember that some of those boxes had to be opened so that they could be put together again.

But we accomplished it. Tact and patience and time were ours to spend. The Christmas presents now lie strewn all about us in alluring confusion.

Outstanding in its stark mass is one hundred pounds of oatmeal in glass jars! I remember that when I was a puling brat oatmeal was the religious exercise for the family breakfast and that a bowl of the gummy material had to be engulfed before anything else was permissible. I remember, too, that in my stubborn loathing of the stuff I frequently went without breakfast. A hundred pounds of it all in a heap dazes me. Cautious inquiry has disclosed the fact that I am no fastidious freak. It appears that the Director likes oatmeal, but nobody else eats it at all!

Another blinding pile consists of nine hundred and seven cans of canned goods in all their rainbow glory.

Rather ominously suggestive are three trunks full of medicines, two of them filled with heart stimulants exclusively. Those, we view with respect devoid of all criticism. Knowledge concerning our need for them belongs strictly to the Eminent Director in his attribute of M.D. We only hope to Heaven that we shall not have to take a thousandth part of the trunks' contents.

Magnificent in its utter uselessness is a twenty-foot folding canvas canoe—a thing of countless pleated pockets and steel umbrella ribs and bolts and wing-nuts. With it comes a slip-on cover of the same size and material which—so the book of instruction says—can easily be converted into a secondary boat by simply

cutting a sapling as a keel and lashing a few withes to it for ribs. Weight, three hundred and fifty pounds, nude.

The crowning glory is an Evinrude outboard engine. Weight, seventy-five pounds, to be attached somehow to the canvas end of this sinuous canoe.

These latter items interest me vastly, for the Director knows me by repute as a canoeist who has covered many waters in many lands, and the dealer assured him that any man with a little mechanical ability could fix that combination so it would run. Apparently the dealer omitted to tell him that an Evinrude engine lives on gasoline.

But this array of treasures is too bewildering to be described all at once. I take my bagpipe and retire to a far end of our desert isle, to compose a dirge about this "best-equipped expedition that ever left New York."

That confusion of equipment is due to receive an apology from me. I have been deriding it too much. It is a godsend—all the littered piles of it. Sorting, listing, repacking employ our time here in Espía—long hours and days of time out of what would otherwise be a deadly monotony.

As we sort, we find items of real and inestimable value; and a belated gratefulness overlies some of our derision—or, I should say, the derision of some of us. The Statistician remains implacable. He has been peering through his strong spectacles for certain items of scientific equipment which he says the Director promised when he lured him into this fiasco. Where, he demands of that much worried man, are the instruments for collecting geographical data?—theodolites, sextants, and so forth? Where are the analyzing outfit and the microscope for making blood tests and determining the number of malaria and hook-worm germs and such in the blood of decimated Indian tribes—items which to him, as a vital statistician, are of paramount importance? Where is the simplest equipment for testing the safety of drinking-water?

The Statistician finds none of them, and he flies into a terrible three-day rage. He denounces the Director to his face as a liar and a cheat and a murderer for thus bringing him out under false pretenses and exposing his valuable life to dangers which the ordinary precaution of a moron could have guarded against. He mumbles awful threats of what he will do to the other's scientific reputation when he gets back to New York, if he ever gets back alive. He kicks over the water-bucket containing the boiled La Paz sewage and retires into his tent to offer invocations to Astarte and to write furiously on his typewriters.

I am beginning to suspect what he writes with such grim denunciation. It is a savage condemnation of the whole expedition from the beginning; each oral and written promise tabulated with damnatory statistical thoroughness, each discrepancy, each glaring fault meticulously recorded.

The Director is distinctly nervous about all this potential libel. I feel sorry for him and am glad, and a thousand times glad, that I am not a director. On the other hand, I can understand the anger of a man who has left the Pullman cars and the sanitary drinking-cups of his fifty-odd years to follow a will-o'-the-wisp "best-equipped expedition that ever left New York."

Among the good things which the Statistician is too angry to appreciate are strong, serviceable tarpaulins, which are going to be of inestimable value later when the jungle rains strike us. There are folding canvas chairs. A luxury for

hardened explorers? By no means. An urgent necessity when all the ground of the inner jungles, where the sun never shines, is permanently wet. There are desiccated vegetables—a boon indeed, and another instance of civilized man's dependence upon somebody else's service; for table vegetables don't flourish in the jungle.

Immeasurably important are eight sets of a most excellent snake-bite outfit, put up in metal containers of cigarette-case size and containing a series of tiny hypodermic syringes loaded with permanganate, atropine, nitroglycerin, and caffeine, all ready for instant use, and the whole easily carried in a pocket. I have made a canvas case for mine with loops for my belt, so that I may have it permanently at hip. For I have seen more than one man bitten when the nearest remedies were at camp, ten miles away.

I am so enthusiastic in my admiration for this outfit that I overlook the most astounding omission of all—the total absence of cooking-pots. The cook has hitherto been struggling along with zinc buckets, hoping for relief when the hundred and four boxes should be opened. But zinc buckets are to be the tools of his trade for the next year. I don't know whether lack of cooking-pots astounds me most, or lack of lights. What do you think, you who have gone summer camping and have realized the inadequacy of the best of the patented super-power camp lamps, of this lighting equipment for an expedition composed of scientists whose work demands that they tabulate and write up by night what they have collected by day?—two ordinary kerosene lanterns! The same kind exactly as are displayed about our streets at night as a warning that a road-repair job is in process!

Perhaps this has been—and will continue to be—a greater source of discontent and irritation than any other deficiency in the whole hopeless collection. For a scientist is lost indeed if he cannot make voluminous field notes. Alas for the Eminent Director, who, owing to his experience of having crossed the Andes before, was entrusted with the purchasing of all this heterogeneous gear! His stock is very low just now with his fellow-savants.

As for me, I am less affected than the rest; for I have brought my acetylene camp lamp—as I have also brought my personal kit of tools. I foresee that on their account I shall be forgiven many personal idiosyncrasies. Already I flatter myself that the Director looks upon me as a valuable ally.

The Director, by the way, is going to kill the cook. There is a reason. Among the half-ton of canned goods were some canned meats which we have found a most welcome change from *challona* and *charque* and which we have eaten up, primarily to reduce weight, and with the secondary consideration that the jungles teem with meat. But there were certain choice tongues and deviled hams which the Director rigidly insisted on conserving against possible sickness when appetites would need to be tempted. Set aside with them were some canned peaches and other luxuries.

Well, what has happened is that our Chileno cook, having learned for the first time in his life the intricacy of opening a can, decided in humble innocence that he might as well eat up these goods that the gringos, his masters, wouldn't touch. Which he forthwith did, and he found this rejected gringo grub not at all bad. He laid bare his own crime when he asked deferentially what he might now eat, since all those discarded tongues and peaches and things were finished.

We who are still strong and healthy—since there is nothing the matter with the climate of Espía—feel that we shall never be ill; and we can afford to shriek with laughter at the episode. But the Director cannot forgive the man.

So our time goes, and packing progresses. I have hit upon a weight-saving idea, which has been unanimously accepted. In the equipment is a bale of gunny-sacks, brought for botanical roots. My proposal is to pack our less fragile gear in these sacks for balsa travel and lower down to have the Indians make baskets for us, thus relinquishing the sacks to their original destiny.

I am a little sort of genius. But there is some demur on the part of the Director, who retains his insistent suspicion that Indians will inevitably steal everything that isn't nailed down. Yet the saving of weight is so vital a necessity that he agrees gloomily that we can mount guard over our gear with guns.

But the time goes slowly. Some small relaxation comes with the visits of our hermit friends from Eden across the sewer, who think nothing of a two-day hike to come and marvel at all the wondrous collection of gear that gringos need for their subsistence, yet, in spite of visits and naïve cooks and exhilarating fights between scientificos, time hangs heavily and temperaments suffer accordingly. The example of highbrow bickering is bad for the general morale. The heavy-thinking Botanist has become embroiled with the Entomologist. Young America has worn upon the nerves of the Director. He has had the temerity to say that such and such an item dictated for entry into the sacred journal is not true. Such blasphemy is not readily forgiven. I believe the serious-minded elders fret at my lack of respect. Science enthroned in its aloof obscurity chafes at being discovered human.

Into the desert of Espía has drifted an atmosphere akin to that existing between the Lowells and Cabots in the land of the bean and the cod. Here Entomologists talk only with Directors and Statisticians talk only with Astarte.

It is time, and high time, for our rescue fleet to arrive. If it comes within the week, possibly we shall not be at one another's throats.

Listen, ye travelers abroad who watch mail-steamer schedules to write letters home. Mail-day has arrived even at Espía. A most unlooked-for possibility has suddenly cropped up of writing to our weeping friends and relatives to assure them that we still live. The lure of the big city is a vital force in the tide of migration. Even here it exists. A hermit youth, fired by what he has seen and by all our wondrous equipment containing articles of the very existence of which he was unaware, has decided that his environment is too small for him. His soul feels cramped and is full of the urge to expand. He would like to make the long hike, on his own good mountain-bred legs, to the big city which he has seen in his dreams. But his sole possessions are the clothes he stands in and an old machete.

So brave a youth ought to be encouraged. So the Director has decided to make him our courier and to finance his journey. The cost will be pitifully small. A burro to carry food and blankets and a few bolivianos to subsist upon until he can find a job or marry a princess in the dream city. But to this plucky lad the chance is as though the fairy godmother had suddenly materialized out of nothing. His gratitude is pathetic to witness. Even the Director feels that he will be faithful to his trust.

So everybody is writing letters in frantic haste.

Young America growls that the Director keeps him so busy that he has no time to write to any of the girls to whom he became engaged before leaving.

I suspect that one of the reasons why the Director is so suddenly reckless about the conservation of the funds of the expedition is that his conscience has shrewdly advised him to prepare a voluminous defense against the furious attack upon his reputation that the Statistician has promised, and he feels that it will be good strategy to get in first.

I think that this rural-free-delivery carrier will get through all right. For he is a strong lad and has what the Gautama has called the "divine urge to get out of the rut made by the wheel of life." I am not envying him his trip over the icy top. For myself I would rather carry on down to the tropic Amazon, however trackless and torrid the jungles may be. Our ways and our ambitions part. We shall never meet again. For his own brave sake I hope that he may rise to become President of the Republic of Bolivia.

Our next main objective is Rurrenabaque on the Beni River. This much we know about it—that it is no mere myth upon a map. It exists; or, rather, it existed thirty years ago when the Director reached it via Sorata and the Mapiri River. Doubtless we shall reach it, too, via this Bopi River—if the Bopi flows into the Beni, which is for us to determine.

Illustration
A Foolish Monkey has Answered the Call from the River

Illustration
Spying Out the Rocks of the Next Rapid

Illustration
Days of Good Camping

Illustration
Rest After a Fast Run

It has suddenly become borne in on my consciousness with almost a thrill that we are just as much upon a river of doubt as was Roosevelt. We believe that our river must connect with the Beni, because it can't very well do anything else. But nobody can tell us that it is so for a fact. What matter? All these rivers must connect with some tributary of the Father of all the Waters. We shall eventually arrive somewhere, if our messenger to the missions has survived and if he returns with a fleet of balsas manned by super-rivermen. Long shots on "ifs."

It is interesting to note how our different temperaments react to the hazard. Remember that none of us knows anything at all about conditions. The Director, of course, is a confirmed alarmist. He loves to dissect piecemeal every possible danger and shake his head over it. The Statistician is savagely morose. He has

been lured into a very unpleasant position and it is somebody's business to get him out of it. The Botanist glooms heavily about and says that, well, he doesn't know about the Respectable Member, who has no scientific knowledge to pull him through, but he is sure he himself would make it, all right. The Entomologist shrugs and says our messenger is no fool; with reasonable luck he ought to get through. The Ichthyologist frankly doesn't know what the chances are. Young America has no doubt on the matter at all. Why, of course he'll make it! Why not? What's to prevent? Myself, I am inclined to share Young America's confidence, tempered with the Entomologist's condition of reasonable luck.

Seven men in the same position, and seven opinions about it. Surely men are the Most Interesting of the World's Fauna!

Chapter XV

WHITE WATER.

The fleet came. We embarked. We are six days down a terrifyingly exhilarating river, in the company of surely the most expert rapid runners in the world. How can one describe balsa travel down a fast river, which is like nothing else in the world? Except—yes, like a prolonged series of tremendous Coney Island shoot-the-chutes combined with the Dragon's Gorge. Only, the stupendous painted landscape isn't painted on canvas and papier-mâché, and one has no comfortable conviction that a safe and quiet pool awaits one at the end of the mile-long slide.

I had better tell it as it happened. Our Respectable—and heroic—Member arrived, bringing a rescue fleet of six balsas. These were much larger than the sample that we had seen. Each raft was capable of carrying a crew of three men, a passenger, and five or six hundred pounds of baggage.

These rafts are worthy of detailed description. Each was formed of seven trunks of balsa-trees, about seven inches in diameter, spiked together—at bow, stern, and two intervening points—with a flat batten of an extraordinarily tough palm called *chunto,* which is driven horizontally through all seven trunks and cotter-pinned with slivers of the same *chunto.* This is the raft or catamaran, solid and miraculously light. The stern end is cut off square; while the bow tapers from the central trunk, which is perhaps thirty feet long, to the outermost trunk on each side, forming an entering wedge. Some of these trunks have been selected with an upward curve in front, so that the raft has a raised prow. On this catamaran is built a platform about eighteen inches high. There are *chunto* uprights, of course, and *chunto* crosspieces and a floor of split cane—all most ingeniously lashed together with liana vines. The floor extends the full length, only leaving space for two men of the crew to stand on the logs at the bow and for one at the stern. This is a balsa complete. The whole thing is made with a single tool, the indispensable machete.

Well, here were six balsas at Espía with a crew of three muscular Indians apiece. Each Indian wore coat and trousers of home-made cotton cloth and a

scapular—for these were all good converts of the mission. Six balsas were not enough to carry all our baggage; though by careful elimination of unnecessary container weight we had reduced the six tons to about three. An auxiliary fleet was to be sent as soon as the good padres down below could call in from their outlying lodges such Indians as they had tamed. For the unconverted heathen of those parts were shy of white men and inordinately suspicious, and were seldom seen. Think what a solitary chance in a hundred it was that two converts should have come up to trade for a machete!

The obvious thing for us to do, of course, was to wait for the auxiliary fleet and then all go down together. But these Indians displayed that same anxiety that one finds among all primitive peoples to return to their home haunts. Here they were far away, in a strange land. They were nervous, insistent upon getting away, back, like foxes, to the runs they knew. So, since we were horribly dependent upon the whim of these semi-domesticated creatures, the Director decided that he and his amanuensis should await the second detachment, with the balance of the baggage, and that the rest of us should go and blaze the way. I can best describe how I went. I began by arguing with my crew about the intricate lashing down of every item of the baggage. I should need some of those things during the day's journey, I tried to make them understand—cameras most particularly. They understood Spanish well enough, all three of them. But they grinned and shrugged and went on lashing the gear. Typical mission Indians, these, never trained to the idea of obedience to the dominant white man. Lashing completed to their satisfaction, the leader—*capitán,* they called him—gathered them together on the bank, and they performed a startlingly ominous ceremony. They made the sign of the cross and very soberly said a short prayer. Then each man stripped himself of his clothing, put it into a rubber bag, and lashed that fast. Two with long poles as well as with paddles took up their position in the bow, the third, with a paddle only, in the rear; to me they said, "Hold on tight." Then they pushed off, and immediately the scenery became a long blur.

There was a stretch of fast water on the out curve of our arc of river that had marooned us for so long. No rocks, happily; but I don't think I exaggerate when I say the current must have been between twenty-five and thirty miles. The balsa took it with unexpected steadiness, riding light and dry. The men dipped their paddles only to keep the bow headed down. In less than a minute we were round the curve and shooting straight for our own hated cliff, where the river surged angrily against the sheer rock before being thrown off in spray.

"Destruction seemed inevitable," is a triteness that I have always hated, yet I don't know how else to describe the situation. We swooped down, bow on, to that wall of rock, till I, who have used a paddle, said to myself: "Finished! We can't draw clear of that now." As I said it and looked for deep water clear of rocks on the off side, for my jump, the *capitán* shouted, "*A hoep!"* just like a circus acrobat about to perform his stunt. Both bow-men dropped their paddles, snatched their long poles, and with uncanny quickness of eye lodged the points of these in crevices in the slippery rock. Their big shoulder muscles bunched and cracked; their bare toes clung, monkey-like, to the balsa logs; the poles bent into taut bows, poised a moment thus in creaking suspense, and then slowly straightened out again as the balsa nose responded to the tremendous pressure and sheered off

from the impending smash. The man behind paddled furiously to swing the stern into line, and in another moment we were clear, still tingling from the closeness of our contact with disaster, and were off on our new course. Another minute and we were at the opposite extreme of excitement, comfortably aground among the easy ripples of a wide shallow. The Indians jumped out and pulled, shoved, and wrestled their craft over the pebbles. Then, as the river zigzagged down the gorge, the whole performance was repeated.

Repetition and re-repetition with the same cool sureness brought no comforting feeling of security. At each furious turn I said to myself: "This time we have overdone it. This water is faster than the last. Here we smash." But each time those tough muscles and springy poles sheered us clear. Sometimes only just, with no more than a few inches to spare. Once the poles proved to be less tough than the muscles. They bent almost to a semicircle, and our nose bumped. But it was only a bump, not a smash. A wetting from the spray which spurted high up the cliff was our worst mishap. So we swooped and careened and bucketed down that mountain river. Fast and furious work enough to thrill the most blasé canoeist.

But this was only the preparatory course. In the early afternoon came the first of the rapids. A long half-mile of white water which swirled and spouted between jagged upstanding rocks, and out of the spray of which submerged boulders bobbed their smooth black heads every now and then. I wondered whether we should let down with ropes along the shore edge, or whether the Indians could hold back with their poles, hugging the bank, as our trappers and expert guides do with their canoes.

I had some thirty seconds for speculation before I knew. With a whoop and a yell those super-canoeists took it in full middle channel, standing up on their precarious raft that they might the better see to steer between the crowded protruding teeth of the channel and to fend off from those more dangerous semi-submerged ones.

I had been interested to theorize, as we descended, how a white man with a light civilized canoe—possibly of steel with air-chambers—might learn that trick with the pole and make the same journey in safety. And what a trip that would be! But here I gave up the thought. Nothing other than a balsa could have survived that water. A non-fillable craft was essential. Right at the head of the rapids a smooth declivity swooped between two jagged fangs of rock. A clear run; but lower down in the line lesser teeth barred the way. In a flash the hawk eyes of the *capitán* took in all the possibilities. He needed to give no order. The others saw and understood. With one accord they plunged their paddles and almost dragged their clumsy craft to the right, barely clear of the great fang, and nosed into an apparently impossibly narrow channel between it and the next. Here the rush of pent-up waters made a four-foot fall on the lower side. The balsa, like a fast automobile going over a broken culvert, leaped half its length clear and then dipped and plunged into the rising wave below. The nose buried itself deep, and then came up like a racing diver. In a second it was through; but the wave swept back in solid water, drenching everybody and everything on the platform.

Even as I gasped in the sudden chill I found time for an anguished thought about my cameras. But no more than a flash. More pressing matters were

occupying my attention. Something loomed hazily black directly ahead, through the foam. The *capitán* miraculously held a pole in his hands instead of a paddle. With it he stabbed at the blur, like a fisherman with a harpoon. The balsa nose swerved in its course. Something bumped and grated along under the side as the raft careened horribly over. Then we were level again, safe, and looking for the next. Somehow we survived that; and I found time to let my breath go in a gasp before I was tensing it again as we rushed at the next.

And then, just as at Coney Island, a quiet pool with a sandy beach waited invitingly—almost as though designed by a park engineer. With just the pull of the steering paddle our momentum was sufficient to carry us on and ground us softly upon the beach.

"Camera," was my first thought. Here was something to record on the film. For just such possibilities as this one, I had arranged that my balsa should go first. While the Indians whistled through their fingers like locomotives, to signal that we were through and the channel was clear, I tore at the lashings of my boxes and tripods.

It is a tribute to the camera designed by that master explorer, Carl Akely, that though I had to pour the water out of its carrying case, I was able to set it up and take a motion picture of the next balsa coming down. And I make the flat assertion here, which I stand ready to uphold against anybody's challenge, that no other camera designed is capable of approaching the same performance.

Six balsas, manned by three times six super-rivermen came through in safety and grounded gently on the beach. And a sorry-looking lot of explorers we were—wet and bedraggled and shaky from the experience. But let me give due credit: not a man of them gave a thought to his personal condition. Their gear was the unanimous wail; their precious, soaked scientific equipment.

The Statistician was splendid. His clothes hung upon his lank frame like washing on a drying-rack. His long, thin black hair, which was used to be brushed carefully forward to cover the sparseness of his high dome, was all the way down his neck. His spectacles clung crookedly to his forehead. But:

"Wonderful!" he kept repeating between gasps. "Wonderful! I'd like to do it over again—with my eyes open."

That sand beach was our camp for the day. We unpacked and spread out to dry as much as we could. We should have liked to stay a week and dry out everything. But those homing Indians raised a horrible outcry at the very suggestion. They wanted to press on, to get to their lodges and their women as soon as possible. What affair was it of theirs, that the white men wanted to dry out clothes and such stuff? Like children, they immediately became sulky. And we, as I have said, were dependent upon their whim.

We were up against the old trouble of dealing with savages who had been foolishly educated to the theory of brotherhood and the equal rights of man. We wanted to stay. They wanted to go. We were six. They were eighteen. Their vote carried the majority. Only armed force would have outweighed that simple reasoning. And we were not prepared to use armed force, because we desired the good-will of the padres down below. Besides, as the Indians cheerfully pointed out, what use to dry things there? They would get wet again next day.

Which they very thoroughly did. And they are still wet. Nor do we know when we shall be able to have a thorough overhauling and drying out. The scientificos moan in chorus about priceless specimens. I have my own troubles, for nothing deteriorates under the action of damp faster than photographic materials.

We understand now why the Indians so cannily stowed their little belongings in rubber bags before starting on that submarine race. We asked them why they had not told us what to expect, so that we might have made, with tarpaulins, some sort of provision for protection. Their answer was naïvely illuminating: How should they have imagined that white men, who knew so much more than they, did not know how to travel in white water?

Chapter XVI

SUPER-RIVERMEN.

So here we are, six days down. And I think I have had an adventure. At least, if snatching at one's breath and feeling the taste of one's heart in the back of one's throat some score of times during six days means adventure, I have undoubtedly had it.

"Here" is a wide playa, a sand-bank formed by the curve of the river. Very much like Espía, except that instead of a barren cliff behind us, there is a rich jungle crammed full of mysterious life of which we see a little and hear a hundred times more. Like Espía, this uninhabited sand-bank has a name. Never have I met such a passion for naming waste places of the wilderness. A lesser torrent joins the main river a little above and helps to form a short but nasty rapid. So this place is called Cachuela Tartaruga, *cachuela* meaning rapids, and *tartaruga* meaning tortoise. Though the Indians say they have never seen any tortoises here.

The reason that we are here, resting up and finding time to scribble field notes, is not because we want to stay. It is because the Indians want to stay and go monkey-hunting. We have stopped at other places on the way down because the Indians wanted to go fish-hunting or yam-hunting or something. They are very naïve about their decisions to stay or not to stay. When they reach a place which looks good to them, they come to us and say, "We have all decided that here is a good place to hunt." So that settles it, of course. Eighteen votes say, "Aye."

Not that we haven't been willing enough. We are only too ready to stop at every playa where the landing is good. We flash past flaming orchids, and the Botanist screams aloud to his men to put ashore that he may gather them. But they shake their heads and say, "No, this isn't a good place." We swoop past rotten trees that the Entomologist knows to be crawling with lovely vermin, and he, having knowledge of Indians from the past, tries to bribe them, with mirrors and empty bottles, to disembark upon a bug-hunt. But they accept the bribes as gifts of friendship and say, "Lower down is better."

I, though I am at last amongst Indians of fascinating habits and the queerest of language, want to stop for the principle of the thing. I ally myself strongly with the Botanist and the Entomologist. My creed is that we are here to collect orchids and

bugs, and that six white men out-vote eighteen Indians. I, also having an extensive knowledge of Indians from the past, become frantic with indignation and would resort to force to establish the dominance of the white man, explaining to the good padres of the mission later. But alas! in this matter five white men out-vote the sixth.

I heatedly demand of them who is paying these Indians for their labor, the expedition or the *capitán*. And in this I receive some measure of support from the other five. I enlarge insidiously upon the shame of an expedition having its scientific work hampered, first by the tyranny of overbearing arrieros and now by naked Indian balseros, and I almost stir the smoldering scientific resentment to open rebellion against our tyrants. But our hired men disarm us with the utmost simplicity.

As to who is paying them, there is no doubt at all, they say. The good padres have sent them to bring us down-river. The good padres will pay them so many knives or whatever it is that has been agreed upon. If we have any arrangement with the good padres, they know nothing at all about that.

One is forced to laugh at these care-free children. My own *capitán* mollifies me craftily. He has a child's keenness to perceive my weak points.

"Look," he says, "these are not good places where those others want to stop. One cannot eat orchids or insects. Lower down, where we shall stop presently, is a playa just full of tapir-tracks."

How can one quarrel with such Indians?

Only once have these wilful folk stopped at a place where they did not wish to stop. And that was because of a mightier force than mere white men. At the fifteenth rapid or the twentieth,—I had lost count and was becoming blasé,—Cachuela Estruenda, it was called, the Thunder Rapid, the evil spirit of the white water took a hand. Two balsas shot the whirling chute in safety. The third made a fractional error of judgment. Either the crew were not quite such supermen as the rest, or, as the Indians said, the malígnant spirits who lived in the deep back-wash under the jutting rocks were more powerful than their prayers to the Christian god. I am inclined to believe the latter; for my faith in the faultless canoemanship of the men persists. Anyway, what happened was near tragedy.

The balsa, in fending off one hungry rock, fended the veriest hair's breadth too much. Before it could swerve back into the only possible channel a swirling cross current caught it and hurled it full into the next rock. Square nose on, it struck, and just opened up in two down its entire length. The tough liana lashings and *chunto* strips of the platform remained intact and held the raft together more or less. But much of the precious baggage was torn loose and either floated down singly or sank, according to its nature.

It was fortunate that the intrepid explorers had paired off on other balsas for company's sake and had transferred their weight in baggage to "freighters." It was a cargo tramp that came to grief. Otherwise, who knows but that the gloom of tragedy might be enveloping us at this moment? I don't know that any of us white men could have survived that furious water. As for the crew, these sturdy fellows born on a mountain river swim as well as the great catfish that share the deep black waters with the evil spirits. They came down clinging to the wreck of their balsa and laughing shamefaced at the jeers of their fellows.

To them it was only a ducking, and the annoyance of a delay. For it was necessary to rebuild the balsa. A delightfully simple matter, and to us a poignant object-lesson in the beautiful freedom of uncivilized man and his independence of other people's labor. They went into the jungle with their machetes, cut three other balsa-trees, and replaced the smashed logs. Their sureness of hand, and the skill with which they adapted their single clumsy tool to all the requirements of shaping, boring, and hammering, were matters of admiration and envy to us.

To the Indians, then, the smash-up in the middle of a boiling rapid was no more than a mishap of the road. But to us it was tragedy enough. Our men went in like terriers and retrieved such of the baggage as floated down. But just how much has been lost, we don't know yet. We shall find out as time passes and we need certain things that are no longer there.

One very serious loss that we have no doubt about at all is ammunition. Only the fortunate precaution of not putting all the eggs into one basket is to be thanked that we are not left without either cartridges or the possibility of procuring any. As it is, we are reduced to about three hundred rounds of rifle ammunition, which is a slim allowance indeed for the crossing of the widest and wildest part of South America. It is fortunate that only three of us use rifles at all. The Botanist, as a matter of fact, almost rejoices.

"Huh! don't see what good all that stuff was!" he growls beneath his beard. "Nobody knows how to use it, anyway." There is no doubt in my mind any longer. He is afraid of guns.

The Respectable Member is no rifle-shot and frankly prefers a shot-gun. The Ichthyologist has never fired one and is not particularly anxious to learn; one does not catch fish with a rifle. The Statistician emphatically hopes that he will never be called upon to fire one. That leaves but three of us—the Entomologist and I down here, and Young America still to come with the relay fleet. The Director's eyesight precludes any shooting.

In order to put a curb on Young America's enthusiasm for burning high-velocity nitro-cellulose, the bug-hunter and I have formed a crafty coalition which the other's sporting instinct will force him to come into and faithfully uphold. We are agreed in the pride of our marksmanship, despite the botanical gibe that what we legitimately loose off at we ought to hit. Therefore, to put a check on wild shooting and long-chance shots, such as we have been too free with in the past, we have agreed to lay a dollar on the shot. If we hit what we have aimed at, the shot has been justified and we are square. But if we miss, we pay—or, rather, we owe—a dollar to the pot.

This sounds like millionaire sport, doesn't it? Drastic, I admit, but very seriously necessary. Lower down, when we get into touch with Amazon-River trade, cartridges for Winchester .405 will doubtless be available. But high-power Savage rifles are the last word in super-velocity, low-trajectory weapons and haven't spread into the farther jungles as yet. So we must conserve rigidly. We predict, with rude disrespect, the bulletin that the Eminent Director, when he comes down with the relay fleet, will issue about the ferocious Indians we must be prepared to meet in the unfathomable jungles of the Amazon. We even plan, like bad boys, to hide out some of our meager stock on him; for we imagine that he will want to take charge of it all and dole out a cartridge only when meat is necessary for the camp.

Illustration
We had thought that coming down-river was pretty strenuous; but here is one of the auxiliary fleet going up

Illustration
Hauled Out for Repairs to the Fleet

Illustration
Waiting for the Rest to Shoot the Chute

The Entomologist feels somewhat at a disadvantage in this dollar gamble, for too much study over microscopic bugs has taken toll on the keenness of his vision. But I reassure him with the certitude that Young America's enthusiasm for long-range slaughter will cost him a few centavos before he learns wisdom. For myself, I chuckle at the hope that I shall come out with the least scathe of any.

Not that I am one of those *Natty Bumpo* nailsplitters. But I long ago learned caution. I took a hasty shot, once, at a dusky object which I thought might be a buffalo moving through the tall tiger-grass—that was in upper Burma—and I hit somebody else's tame elephant right in the head. It didn't die, but it was an awfully sick elephant, and I had to pay the doctor's bills. For a man with a "Mac" in his name to pay the hospital bills of an elephant is a sair fashfu meesforrtune, ye'll understand. Since then I have learned to be very cautious about what I propose to slay, before I shoot at it.

Enough of writing for the mere maintenance of a record. The camp needs meat, and I go to risk a dollar. A drama has written itself in the moist sand at the edge of the jungle behind us, and as evening falls I must go and lie in wait to see what I may see in the hour when all beasts begin to bestir themselves.

Along that jungle fringe runs a semi-stagnant creek which is screened from the river by a wide belt of cane grass. This nasty stuff grows much like sugar-cane, except that it is more tangled, and reaches a height of twenty-eight or thirty feet. It has a broad, fine saw-edge blade and offers good cover for deer or tapir, or anything else, for that matter. In the sand by the edge of this hidden creek is a curious triple-toed trail, the fresh tracks of a big tapir which has sauntered along not later than last night. The tracks show where the beast has suddenly halted and stood looking at something in the shadows of the underbrush. It is written clearly how the tapir then wheeled and trotted back the way he had come; how the trot broke into a frenzied gallop.

And there in the underbrush, where the tapir had looked, are the marks of four great padded paws, the nail-tips showing where the fore paws had tensed and flexed in excitement. Then, overlaying the galloping triple toes, the wide-spread pads of the king of the South American jungles—a great jaguar, clearing twenty feet at a bound.

The tracks reach the farther cane belt and the rest of the writing is lost. The last act of that play remains one of the secrets of the jungle. Whether the tapir got away or the jaguar got a meal is hidden in the thick, sword-edge cane grass. But

there are other older marks of padded paws along that jungle fringe. Perhaps the king hunts there often. I go to lie up in the dusk-time and perhaps meet him. Not without a certain crawling sensation up and down my spine; for the urgent question comes to my mind: What is to prevent soft padded paws from creeping up behind me?

Chapter XVII

A LAND FLOWING WITH MILK AND HONEY.

We have progressed again and are once more at temporary rest, because the only force which the Indians acknowledge, the river, says we must be.

This river does not improve as it grows older. Most waters, like humans, as they meet with other waters and get the edges, so to speak, knocked off, tone down in the violence of their behavior. But this one—possibly due to its disreputable origin—grows worse. We thought that we had seen rapids and that we were inured to the worst navigable water in the world, but we came to a place where even the Indians felt the need for precaution. They turned into the bank and tied up.

"This one," they told us calmly, "is dangerous." And they scrambled along the shore-line to scout over the channels and decide upon how they had best approach them. It was not cheering to hear them argue about whether they should go to the right of this rock or to the left of that one. Particularly when opinion was so divided that they had to vote on the question. Having thoroughly aroused our suspense—almost by design, one would say—the *capitán* suggested blandly:

"Perhaps the white men would rather walk the jungle trail past this one, while we bring the balsas down."

The white men would—and did. Even those careless Indians took this rapid seriously. They said their good Christian prayer in good Spanish, and said something more which I am quite sure was an invocation of the evil spirits of the water; but that was in their own language, so God wouldn't understand and be angry. Then they doubled up on crews, taking an extra man at bow and stern, and very carefully pushed off and chose their channel.

The danger of this rapid lay in the fact that it took a curve in the river. From above, all that could be seen was a swooping rush of brown balsa through a smother of white foam, and then it was gone; and so no inkling of its fate could be guessed till the crew came back up the jungle trail, flushed and laughing about nothing at all in particular, as they always do, and prepared to help man the next submarine. From below, the sight of those craft suddenly shooting round the bend in the gorge was a thing almost as breath-snatching as it must have been to be on them. On their tails they came, rearing up like racing speedboats and apparently taking all the lesser obstructions in their stride.

Two of them I watched from above; and then I went down the trail and watched the other four shoot the curve. And there was not one of them over which I didn't gasp more than once and say to myself, "Good-by baggage!"

But they made it. All of them, in safety. The Indians, having done it a few times before, were quite oblivious of their former seriousness and laughed now as carelessly as though they must have enjoyed it as much as boys shooting the chutes. Almost did I wish that I had done it too, just once. But the Botanist, when it was all over, expressed his opinion:

"Huh! I don't see what there was to make a fuss about, there! If I'd known—"

But we jeered him down and wouldn't listen to his post-facto boast. So he has been in a huff for two days and has said that if we had any gentlemanly instincts at all we would apologize for our rudeness. We, the delinquents, being principally the innately courteous Respectable Member of Southern traditions.

We are now brought to a halt by the Cachuela Malpaso, the Rapid of the Evil Pass. To me it is a mystery how the thing can be considered a pass at all. Rocks jut out of the rearing waters as jaggedly and as irregularly spaced as sharks' teeth. But the Indians say that light balsas, relieved of all freight, can be controlled quickly enough to make the passage. So they are portaging all the freight and singing a song about *"Adiós, Carita. Me voy ás cachuelas,"* which has the cheerful meaning: "Good-by, Beloved. I'm going down the rapids."

Since the baggage is being portaged, and since Indians are undrownable, and since balsas can be easily repaired, we regard this Evil Pass with greater equanimity than any of the previous ones; and we cannot refrain from suggesting to the Botanist that here is a priceless opportunity for him to shoot a really thrilling rapid on a balsa. He snorts and says he would if it were not for the fact that he has spotted a more priceless orchid, a little way back, which he must go and collect.

It is, a matter of fact, a priceless opportunity to all of us. To the bug-hunter to snuffle about like a bear under stones and dead roots. To the fish-monger to let off dynamite charges in still pools, or to commandeer my assistant and with his help drag them with a small seine net. To the Statistician to hunt statistics. And to me to prowl in the jungle and discover whatever I may discover.

They fascinate me, these upland jungles. Vast and dim and cool; stretching unbroken and untrodden for miles beyond hundreds of miles, over mountain and gorge alike, in a thick roof of perennial green. What do they contain? What mysterious creatures live in them? We don't know. We see strange tracks and hear far-away calls, some of which we know, some of which even the Indians can't explain. I am enthralled by the lure of taking a well-balanced rifle and going in to prowl and climb and scramble and find out what may be found.

This is an altogether fascinating country that we are in. That freak desert of the Espía gorge ended as abruptly as it had begun. Within fifteen miles a great lateral valley cut square across our direction. Our gorge opened into it like a foul side alley into Main Street, and instantly we plunged into teeming life.

We don't attempt to explain Espía. We theorize that its evil was due, perhaps, to an outcrop of poor soil; perhaps to some strange action of the wind; or perhaps to the curses of some other traveler who cursed it as we have cursed it. We are content to let our curses rest upon it—and forget it.

Surrounded by teeming life we are. Yet this is just high enough in the hills to be free from that particular scourge of tropical travel which is worse than sickness, worse than snakes, worse than wild beasts or wild men, and which is as inevitable

as malaria—noxious insects. We shall come to them presently, and then our picnic will be over.

I am afraid of speaking too enthusiastically about these foot-hill valleys through which we travel, and so become a bore. For I know my friends are erudite folk who have read countless descriptions of travel through all sorts of country, and descriptions are all alike. So I shall adhere rigidly to my determination to record only the things which seem to me to be different from what all those people who write books have seen.

Orchids, perhaps, will interest you sybarites who pay—when the girl is very beautiful—five dollars for a single bloom. This is amazing orchid country. There are wondrous purple orchids in great masses; and pink orchids in trailing tendrils; and yellow orchids in Christmas-tree festoons eight feet long.

They hang from the tree-tops, two hundred feet above ground; or they nestle in the crotch of low limbs within easy reach; or they dangle from moist rocks over swirling whirlpools where a misstep would mean more than a wetting. There are orchids that scent up the air for a hundred feet or so before they are seen; one trails them actually by scent, to discover them. Orchids that smell vaguely of bananas—fragile pink-and-white things with blood-red veins. Gross ground orchids that lure one with their pale beauty to stoop swiftly over them, and they smell like decayed meat. Perhaps the most impressive feature is the sheer mass of some of them. On a sheltered limb one will come across a long-established plant which must weigh at least a hundred and fifty pounds; and the whole of it in full blazing bloom. One passes on with an ache in one's heart that one cannot carry it away and transplant the whole glorious mass to the parlor at home and become at one stroke the envy of the nation.

The Indians tell a story of a youth of long ago who was tall and strong and a mighty hunter, well beloved by the wood spirits, who always drove much game before his unerring bow. And of a maid, the daughter of a witch-doctor, who loved the youth because he was so tall and strong and splendid and made necklaces of jaguar's teeth which he bestowed upon this one and on the next with careless impartiality. But the youth loved only the wild woods and the white waters and the wide open places, and so laughed his way through life without a care in the world. So the maid cried out against the spirits of the woods and the waters and repined. But her cunning old father was wroth, because he wanted his daughter to wed the chief. So he went into the darkest woods to find a magic suitable to the occasion. And at the end of three days he came back and called the girl to him and told her:

"Little fool woman child, weep not. Am I not thy father? Listen, then; take this magic red flower to thy youth; and when he once smells of it he will never love anybody or anything else in the world."

So she took the flower and went first and washed herself in the river and said insulting things to the spirits of the water; and when she was all clean and beautiful she went and waited at the edge of the woods for the youth and made faces at the spirits of the trees. And anon came the youth, striding through the woods, with a buck over his shoulder and singing a song about the sunlight dancing on the leaves. And she leaped to meet him, crying:

"Look, O woods-runner, at the most beautiful thing in all the woods!" And the youth looked and laughed, and took the flower and inhaled deeply of its wondrous

perfume; and as he breathed it in, the buck slipped from his shoulder and his eyes closed in ecstasy and he slipped down limp on top of the buck, never to love anything else in the world.

Then did the maid shriek and rush wildly through the woods, calling piteously upon the spirits of the woods to give her back her youth, and apologizing for all the insults she had heaped upon them. And when she came at last to a very dark, still place she fell down there, exhausted; and then the wood spirits spoke to her and said:

"Little fool woman child, weep not. Are we not the father and the mother—aye, the whole life—of those who love us? Listen, then: if you give yourself to us unreservedly we will arrange that you may see our youth sometimes."

So she gave herself unreservedly; and the spirits made a great woods magic and turned her into a sweet-voiced bird. And she lives now in the trees, haunting the places where the magic red orchid flower grows and calling plaintively to her youth. And sometimes, if one listens carefully, one may hear him as he comes on the high breath of the breeze, laughing carelessly through the tree-tops.

The Botanist grunts and says:

"Huh! there isn't any such thing as a red orchid. Or, if there is, it isn't known to science."

And the Indians sigh and agree that, well, perhaps he is right; for it all happened very long ago and the good padres tell them now that it is all nonsense; there aren't any spirits of the woods or the waters. But as for me, I just put down those blunt statements with the long list of all the other things that the Botanist and the padres don't know. For I have heard the bird calling. A long, singularly sweet note it has, descending through three half-notes of the scale, pure and flute-like and true, with the faintest suggestion of a long-wave vibration in it. Quite the most miraculous bird-call I have heard. Far and away sweeter than that of the most expensive canary, and longer sustained than the Persian nightingale's.

Much have I wished to get a glimpse of this bird, or, better still, to catch it and bring it home. But it must be an unusually shy creature; for, though I have crept and scrambled and lain dead-still in the darkest woods, where it calls over the place of the magic flower, I have never seen a flutter of a wing. Nor, it must be admitted, have I found the flaming red orchid.

The Botanist makes scornful noises about my credulity, and says that I never shall. But he has no soul. His very occupation is destructive of beauty. He plows his way through God's good green woods and collects great sackfuls of flowering things and roots and seed-pods; and he brings these to camp and throws nearly all of them away. Only selected "specimens" does he keep, tying little tags to them and laying them between newspapers and big sheets of blotting-paper of a hideous blue with which he desecrates whole acres of the landscape, picking out the best and sunniest spots. And as the sun moves, he goes around and gathers up his Sunday-picnic mess and spreads it all out again in a new place.

When we move on, he must gather his sheets together and strap them all tight in presses. And when we stop anywhere, he must snatch them all forth again to take advantage of every minute of the precious sun. I do not envy a botanist in the field. But I must mete a measure of respect to ours, for he is an indefatigable enthusiast and his profession imposes upon him a vast amount of uninspiring

labor. More so, perhaps, than is entailed in the pursuits of any of the other savants.

A beautiful thing has happened concerning the Botanist. I have told you that he is big, and assertive of tone, and ruddy-haired. Well, the Indians have named him "Guariba". The guariba is the big rufous howler monkey, whose rolling roars wake the camp of a morning. To complete the joyous thing, I should add that the Botanist is a man with a highly developed sense of the dignity that is due to a Doctor of Harvard.

Particularly since he has discovered some new trees. Though I keep trying to make him admit that it was the cook who discovered them, since the latter saw them first. But the scientific complex is that no matter who may see a thing first, or even bring in a specimen with his own hands from the darkest woods, it is the scientist of that particular department who discovers it. Almost daily am I being robbed of credit for queer and curious things that I bring in from my wanderings. But it no longer hurts as much as it used to. I have acquired the trick of making a martyred face and saying, *"pro causa scientiae."*

Some of these trees are interesting enough to tell about. Particularly, perhaps, a red-topped giant that rears its flowering head a good two hundred feet from the ground and which, the Botanist says, is a sweet-pea relative. Let me try to make you a picture of the extraordinary and startlingly beautiful landscape.

A narrow valley hemmed in by thickly wooded hills between which rushes our turbulent river. A mile downstream, a turn in the river gives the impression that the outlet is barred by a high wall of dense green. Out of this many-toned greenery flares a sudden splotch of flaming scarlet, a whole giant tree-top covered solidly with flowers. A hundred yards away is another, perhaps golden yellow this time. A little below, a smear of brilliant purple, stark, unblended with any leaves at all. Off to the left, a whole ridge topped with snowy white. The whole green mountainside is splashed with these startling daubs of crude bright color, as though some colossal artist had squeezed his tubes out at random, just to note the color effect. Giant brothers of familiar garden plants, the Botanist says they are. Cassias and scelerobiums and clusias.

Closer to hand the eye takes in the lesser spots of individual exquisite colorings which blend less suddenly with the prevailing green. Pinks and pale blues and ambers and mauves. Orchids and bignonias and bougainvilleas and what not, in sunlight and shadow against the green of the underbrush and the golden brown and deep black of the overhanging rocks, the whole toned up every here and there with the hot blaze of passion-flower.

It gives one an ache in the heart for that there is no artist with the expedition, instead of, for instance, a statistician or an M.D.; or that color photography has not been developed to an extent which makes the preservation of the necessary emulsions practicable for long periods. But alas! so limited is the scope of science that all one can carry away of all this beauty is only a memory, and some dried, flattened, dead things in blotting-paper.

Chapter XVIII

CAMPS OF ALLURE.

Camps at night on the playas of this river of ours are a wonder and a delightful romance. Let me try to draw another picture. A long playa like a slice of watermelon, pink along the river's edge where iron in the sand has discolored the pebbles, spotted with black seeds of smooth round stones, green where it is hemmed in by the jungle fringe behind. Night; yet light enough almost to read under a black sky crammed with flaming stars among which are at least two contestants for the honor of Southern Cross. A soft, warm, up-river wind.

Along the very river's edge, where the balsa noses nuzzle the sand like basking alligators, a line of queer little pup-tent shelters which the Indians always insist upon putting up despite the fact that there is no rain at this season and very little dew. Most efficient little shelters, put up in a few minutes by lashing the balsa poles to form two tripods and a ridge, and stretching a homemade cotton rubber-coated sheet over them.

A little farther back, the camp cots of the white men, under no other shelter than the patent mosquito-nets as a protection against the bloodthirsty vampire bats. (The curse of the wall-tent has been, for the time being, eliminated.)

At a short distance from the cots, a little cooking-fire where the Chileno cook ruins a turkey or a curassow. A little farther off the camp-fire which, at the opposite extreme from those fuelless days of the high trail, is a blazing pyre consisting perhaps of a whole great tree that the last floods have left stranded on the sand-bank. It throws queer lights and shadows to dance against the jungle wall at our backs; and in its reflections from wet leaves we imagine we see eyes glaring at us out of the dark.

Never were such picnic suppers, despite our Chileno cook. And never were such after-supper pipes, despite the wet tobacco which has begun to go moldy. I had almost said, never were such camp-fire yarns; but the Respectable Member smiles blandly and reminds me that men of science don't spin yarns. That draws an immediate and indignant response from Science, resentful of the insinuation that it is so coldly different from other humans. Which is just the admission that the R. M. wanted and is valuable ammunition for the future when he wants to make envenomed remarks about the fallibility of scientific reports.

The fire begins to die down, and we grow sleepy. So we crawl in under our mosquito-bars and tell one another to shut up. And presently, as we become still, the million eerie voices of the jungle begin to wake. Rustlings and whisperings and faint squeaks and low calls. Sometimes the high snarl of one of the lesser cats; sometimes the throaty roar of the king; sometimes the thin whistle of a tapir to its mate; sometimes something strangely menacing which causes the Indians to sit up and ask one another, "Mother of saints! what was that?"

Sometimes I can sleep through it all; but sometimes the lure and the mystery of it get into my blood, and I take the warm rifle from under my blankets, and dab a touch of radium paint upon the fore sight, from the little bottle which lies ready to hand in my bed-roll pocket, and creep out to a far corner of the playa to wait and look and listen for what may come—perhaps the king himself.

Good nights, these. Soft, warm nights of tropic moon and tropic stars. Nights full of allurement and beauty and intoxication, even though the king never comes.

You who take an automobile and a tent and go to the Adirondacks for your annual tonic of the out-of-doors, be jealous of me. There is no camping like camping with a balsa on a playa of the Andean foot-hills.

But about the king. Pooh-poohs and derogatory tales to the contrary, I am beginning to absorb a respect for the cunning of King Jaguar. I see no cause to consider him at all inferior in craft to the Indian leopard. Which reminds me that I haven't recorded the finish of my vigil at the other place of the drama that was written in the sand.

I went forth to slay a king, and all I got was a big rat. I was a fool. As I lay in the cane fringe and waited for the dusk I was suddenly aware of eyes looking at me where no eyes had been before. With the uncanny silence of wild animals a large brown beast had appeared in the open by the creek edge where I had been looking but a second before; and with the unfathomable instinct of wild animals it suspected danger from the direction where I lay, making, as I fondly thought, no noise at all. As I say, I was a fool. Without stopping to think, I snapped up and fired before the beast should plunge away; and immediately on my shot I heard the plunge and crash of something beating a startled retreat from the jungle fringe on the other side of the creek.

Then I arose and kicked myself. If I had waited just a moment longer, maybe some worthier game might have stepped into the open. Maybe only a deer coming to drink. Maybe the king himself, waiting for supper. But after that racket nothing else would come near the creek for hours.

So I gathered up my game and went back to camp. It was a capibara—that blunt-nosed thing, the largest of the rodents; a semi-aquatic beast that leaves a three-toed, clover-leaf track which may easily be mistaken for the spoor of young tapir. Capibaras swim and dive like water-rats, and are quite as suspicious, so they are hard to get. This one was a big fellow; about forty-five pounds of good meat which tastes like beef mixed with rabbit.

What is some of our other provender? you will want to know. The food of princes and godlings is ours. Wild turkey largely, or curassow, a large white-meat bird with black plumage and a high Roman nose. I think its flesh is better even than turkey, and the Entomologist agrees with me. But his reason is that in the bird's plumage lives a certain parasitic fly which he is anxious to get. When a curassow falls he shouts a warning to all intruders to keep off, rushes upon it, and swiftly reaches over to snatch with monkey-like avidity at the flies as they escape. This is one of the best jokes known to our Indians. They have learned to let a curassow lie, and they gather round it to wait for the Entomologist. When he catches a fly they applaud and when one escapes they groan. Then they tell one another with mimic demonstration just how he snatched at each one, and laugh for ten minutes over the recital.

We get a surfeit of curassows and wild turkeys because they are so plentiful in the trees along the river edge that we shoot what we need, from our balsas as we pass by. But they seem to live in certain belts only and to avoid certain others; doubtless on account of food distribution. Sometimes a day or two will pass without sight of either. Then we are reduced to parrots or macaws, which are a

very great deal better than one might think. There have been days when turkeys and curassows were not, and parrots and macaws flew high and jeered at us. Then we have gone monkey-hunting with the Indians.

These Indians would rather eat monkey meat than any other; and all the time, as we travel down-stream, they imitate the calls of the red howler or of the black spider monkey, which two are most common in this district. Sometimes an answering call comes from the jungle, and then all other considerations go by the board. No matter how anxious we may be to progress or how hard the Indians have been straining to reach some playa where an incoming stream of clean water offers good fishing, they run the balsas ashore with the greatest eagerness, snatch up their weapons, and race off into the jungle.

A monkey-hunt is an affair of much whooping and wild dashing about on both sides. The Indians shriek like steam-sirens to frighten and bewilder the monkeys; and the monkeys whoop and curse back from the treetops. As the animals scamper and sweep off along their air-lanes the Indians race and scramble desperately to keep below them and, if possible, isolate them in some sparsely leafed tree where they can get a fair view for a shot. Some of the Indians possess old muzzle-loading percussion-cap guns, but most of them have to rely upon arrows—which, by the way, are much more efficient in their hands than the guns.

It is an evil day for a troop of monkeys when they have answered a call from the river; for the Indians will never give up a hunt as long as a monkey is visible. Invariably they bring back more meat than they can eat; and then follows the gruesome, cannibal-looking process of smoking the remainder. They build open platforms of green poles, upon which they lay out their corpses, and then one or two of them sit up all night to tend a smoky fire built beneath. The smoking process is crude and no more than partially cures the meat, though sufficiently to preserve it for a few days. It is reminiscent of New Guinea to see a sturdy balsero feel the need for a snack as he plies his pole or his paddle, reach under the platform into a cane-leaf basket, and proceed merrily downstream gnawing upon a black, charred hand.

Monkey-stew is not bad. It would, in fact, be very good, but that it is disconcerting to fish out of the pot an ulnar or a thighbone which might almost be that of a human child.

Illustration
Not Diamond-backed Terrapin, but Quite as Good

Illustration
A Thing of Beauty is Sometimes a Stench in the Jungle

Illustration
Nebuchadnezzar Himself—Before Taking...

Illustration
...And After

The Indians have a charmingly naïve sense of humor which is a delight to all of us, except to the Botanist. I have told you that they call him "Guariba." I should add that he is one of those weak-stomached individuals who will regurgitate a meal, should some chance reference be made to an unsavory subject. What more natural, then, for the pristine mind, unspoiled by any of the inhibitions of civilization, than to present a smoked arm of a red guariba monkey to the rufous professor, with a smacking of lips and a rubbing of stomachs, and to shriek for fifteen minutes thereafter, as they imitate, for one another's diversion, the outraged savant's reaction.

The savant, who lectured me with platitudinous unction in the beginning of our trip when I fussed and fumed over the Indians' disregard for our wishes and advocated the employment of force, now thinks that these same Indians, whom I like very much, should be disciplined.

In this same connection he is going to kill the cook. There came a fell day when no game presented itself and the only alternative was monkey. You must understand that balsas travel frequently half a mile apart, so there is no means for a man in the rear to know what one in the lead may or may not have shot. We, therefore,—that is, the R. M. and I—fearful of the Botanist's gibes at our marksmanship, too poor to provide suitable meat for the camp (an opportunity which he never misses), conspired with the cook to make a savory pottage of monkey and to say it was agouti.

Which he did, and all might have been well, for the Botanist is strictly a botanist and no anatomist. But those wretched Indians, who have no respect for their masters and sit about amongst us as we eat, had to stage a pantomime of climbing all over everything and falling into the pot.

With cold misunderstanding we conspirators looked on at their antics. But the Botanist became suspicious, investigated, and brought to light an unmistakable upper arm. Whereupon he swiftly disgorged his meal, by the river's brim. And when he had recovered from the spasms that racked his frame, he advanced, with evil intent, upon the cook, who waited not on the order of his going, but up and fled far down the playa. Happily it was a very large playa with plenty of room for running, and happily the cook is lean and stringy, while the professor is ponderous and short of breath. So our cook remains alive to us. But the wrath of the savant is unappeased.

He doesn't mind having been deluded into eating a filthy meat, he declaims to us, but he owes it to the dignity of his calling not to tolerate having been made a fool of before naked Indians; or, for that matter,—here he glares in the direction of the R. M. and me,—bef ore persons who have no doctor's degrees at all. As for the Entomologist, who conspired with us—well, he had thought hitherto that a colleague who had attained the honor of a Harvard doctorship would at least have had instilled into him the instincts of a gentleman! And finally, whether he consorts with gentlemen or no, he is going to have the life of that cook.

In this he has found a vengeful ally in the Statistician; and the common bond brings the two to speaking-terms who had not addressed each other for a week.

We guilty ones are very properly abashed, but we are much exercised as to how we shall lure our cook to camp in time for to-morrow's resumption of our journey and preserve him thereafter from assault.

We have progressed once more. To-morrow we reach the emptiness called Huachi, which marks the junction of that river up which is the mission. There are to report two minor disasters, out of the former of which came evil and out of the latter of which, good.

The former befell the Statistician. It must first be explained that this Bopi River of ours remains an unregenerate stream, too foul for decent fish to live in. But a species of huge catfish seems to enjoy its taste. We throw out night lines baited with offal, and frequently on the following morning haul in hundred-and-twenty-pounders which have to be despatched with an ax. These fish often lie up in the shallows near the shore, almost indistinguishable in the turbid water. Indistinguishable to us, that is, though the keen-eyed Indians often detect one of these sleeping monsters as the balsas float past, and then they softly put ashore and pin it to the ground with an arrow.

Well, it was just such an occasion and it was the Statistician's balsa. He, waking up from some abstruse reverie just as the balsa nose touched the bank, peered around in his surprised manner and asked what the excitement was about. Understanding nothing what the Indians said, and deducing even less from their actions, he decided that this would be a favorable opportunity to step ashore and stretch his legs. He proceeded to do so. The balsa swung away from the shore just a trifle, as boats will. He stepped short, right upon the back of the catfish.

Followed what must have been like having stepped on a whale. There was a swirl, a splash, a mountain of foam, which when it subsided had performed the magic trick of obliterating the Statistician. He emerged twenty feet lower down, having in some miraculous manner dived completely under the balsa.

Perhaps the only thing madder than a wet hen is a wet statistician. Perhaps the only possible thing madder than that is a statistician who, in addition to being wet, has gulped a large quantity of foul Bopi River water without any halozone in it and has furthermore suffered the misfortune of losing his false front teeth.

I am afraid there is no excuse for us who laughed as loud as did the Indians. Probably the Statistician was entirely right when he mumbled forcefully at us that it was a disgusting thing for a gentleman to be forced to travel with men, and scientists at that, whose sense of humor was of so low a grade as to make them laugh at the misfortunes of others. But alas for us! we were human and fallible, and laugh we did. All of us. Even the Botanist; who thereby immediately forfeited the alliance that he had made over the cook. I, too, have fallen from grace. It is no benefit that I, along with the others, am genuinely sorry for his loss, which must be, to say the least of it, a lasting annoyance. We laughed at his misfortune. It is enough. The Statistician is now speaking to nobody at all.

The second near-disaster befell the cook. In this case I must explain that there grows along the river edge a species of cane-like palm which the Indians call *yacitara*. It is particularly dreaded by them on account of its peculiar elongate leaf-stems, the terminal pinnae of which are abbreviated to sharp arrow-head spines, and which, overhanging the river, can horribly lacerate a naked body as it is restlessly borne past on a balsa.

Well, there was a particularly robust specimen of *yacitara* lying in wait just where the current swept the cook's balsa. The Indians shouted a warning and

threw themselves flat. The cook, perched on top of the baggage, wasn't quick enough. Full into the enveloping tangle the balsa drove. It passed—and the cook remained suspended among the arrow-heads. A moment only, shrieking for help. And then his weight caused his clothing to give way; and he fell with a mighty splash. Happily it was neither a whirlpool nor a rapid, and happily the cook could swim. So the limit of the evil chance were a few nasty scratches.

But the good that has come out of that evil is that the Statistician has laughed whole-heartedly for the first time in many weeks. At intervals he still throws his head back and croaks for minutes at a stretch. He is, in fact, in the best humor I have seen him in since the discovery of Espía. It is lamentable that a man of science should have a sense of humor so debased as to make him laugh at a fellow-man's misfortune. But I feel that he will forgive some of us, at least, our recent trespass against him. Which will be good; for it is uncomfortable to continue at odds with a fellow-traveler; and I have a certain measure of liking for this ferocious old gentleman.

Chapter XIX

HUACHI AND THE MISSION.

We have arrived. And the town of Huachi, duly marked as such on the government map, is not an emptiness in the wilderness. There are three commodious huts built of cane-stalks and thatched with their leaves. There are resident in one of them a man and his several women. There are a pineapple grove and a cocoa grove and an orange grove and a banana grove. These are overgrown with weed and rank underbrush and have received no human attention for twenty-seven years. Yet the soil is so rich and the climate so fine that the pines and the oranges leave those of Hawaii and California and Florida in the distant background.

There are also the first of the noxious insects. Piume flies; tiny creatures of demoniac thirst, which can get through any ordinary mosquito-netting and which leave a little purple blood blister where they have fed. Head-nets, other than of muslin, are useless against them. One cannot blind oneself with a muslin veil during all one's walks abroad; so one places reliance upon oil of pennyroyal or upon citronella, neither of which is any sort of deterrent to these pests for more than a very few minutes. We have passed through a period of soaking ourselves in volatile oils, and have arrived now at a stage of swearful resignation. The residents tell us that nothing is known locally which is of any help and that we must just get used to them. I suppose we shall, though the irritation is constant, from earliest daylight till dusk; and the hands and faces of all of us are so spotted with tiny blisters that at a little distance we look like men of dark complexion.

At night we have mosquitos, of course. Our patent nets are proof against these, but one cannot sit under a mosquito-net from sunset onward. Science says that the malaria-carrying anopheles flies only during the first hour or so of dusk. Cheering news. Yet one cannot go to bed at dusk. So the régime of quinine has

begun. There seems to be some controversy about the old idea of five grains a day; for the latest investigations seem to point to the probability that the malarial germ is an adaptable beast and that a steady diet of quinine develops a new breed which possesses a certain degree of immunity. So we take ten grains, rest a day, and then jolt the wavering germs with another ten, and so on. And the quinine supply of the best-equipped expedition that ever left New York is the dispensary kind; plain un-sugar-coated.

Needless to say there is dissatisfaction; and the ears of the Director must surely burn. The Statistician has noted the matter in his doomsday book as one of the greatest of the many outrages which have been imposed upon him. For myself, I have a sweet tooth and cannot abide the terrible bitterness of quinine in my mouth throughout all my waking and sleeping hours. So I take no quinine at all, preferring to take my chance at malaria—which my experience tells me we shall all get anyway—and relying, when I do get it, upon Warburg's tincture.

There is a third pest which is surely a new discovery in tropical travel—bees. Minute fiends no larger than house flies, which are perhaps a greater annoyance than either plumes or mosquitoes. They appear to have a predilection for the salty exudation from the skin-glands and get into one's ears and nose and hair, where they become helplessly entangled; and if there is anything more terrifyingly uncomfortable than an insect lodged in one's ear, it is not known to science. They hover for minutes at a stretch within an inch of one's eyes as one walks, and so damnably persistent are they that waving them away is of no avail. They return to their attack, and, if not caught and killed, presently find their opportunity to dart into the eye. They don't sting, but the exasperation of them is maddening. No, there is no doubt in my mind; I prefer the blood-sucking plume flies.

Nor is there any doubt that insect pests are quite the most formidable trial of jungle travel. Wild beasts are nothing to worry about. Wild Indians are largely mythical, and even when met with can either be placated or guarded against. Snakes are few and far between. Insects are the only creatures known that will consistently attack without provocation and all the time. The effect of their unrelenting irritation upon the tempers of all of us is immediately noticeable.

The inevitable question which arises in the rebellious unchristian mind is, why were such pests created? To which there is no answer, though possibly the good padres at the mission will have found an answer in their theology. To the fretful question of why these pests must suddenly congregate just where men live, the Entomologist supplies a logical answer. It is unfortunate, but the reason for their prevalence is undoubtedly the result of man's own labor, the groves of ripening and rotting fruit.

The extensive groves themselves, where no more than half a dozen people live, were something of a mystery until we learned the tragedy of the mission. A tragedy that is *bound* to repeat itself every so often.

Years ago the mission was located at this spot, where the site seemed so favorable. The good padres came—and were duly murdered by the Indians. But murder has never held back the progress of missions. Other padres came—and some of them survived. With infinite patience and kindness and unwavering courage they persisted in doing good to those that did despitefully entreat them; and presently they won over a few of the savages and gathered a little flock round

themselves. They taught these jungle wanderers a few of the arts of civilization. They instilled the germs of industry into a people naturally indolent. In the course of years they cleared ground and planted fruits and vegetables and established a mission settlement, *ad majorem Dei gloriam.*

Then did the inscrutable law of their God thrust a stark tragedy upon them which obliterated all that they had so toilsomely accomplished for his glorification. Not murder and sudden death this time. That would not obliterate a mission: heroic padres were always available. Slowly did this tragedy come, and inevitably. The padres saw it coming, but they were helpless to stave it off. The irony of it! The time came when there was no more game in the jungle!

The hundred or so Indians of their flock, in the course of the years during which the settlement had been building, had hunted the jungle out for the surrounding space of a day's march.

Desperately the padres tried to import goats, cattle, any live stock for meat. But this was not a folk who had evolved to the point of cattle-raising. They were jungle hunters pure and simple; and as their meat thinned out, they began to move farther and farther away, to fresh fields. Farther than a day's march. Too far to come in for daily, or even weekly, religious exercises.

The swift retrogression of savages is heartrending to those good souls who devote their lives to missions. What was there to be done? Nothing. Except, since the Indians would not come to the mission, to remove the mission to the Indians.

So the padres selected another spot, two days' march up this Cochabamba River; and they abandoned all the labor of the years and rebuilt their settlement at a place which they named Cobendo. Then the hungry jungle crept forward to claim its own again; and it has long since covered every trace of the mission that was, except the fruit groves, which have become a part of the jungle.

That was twenty-seven years ago. For twenty-seven years the settlement has been at Cobendo. And the same tragedy is already creeping up to wipe out that settlement. Already the game is becoming scarce. Already the Indians are beginning to build for themselves outlying lodges—*chakras*, they call them—a day's march from the settlement. Already the padres recognize the inevitable and have started a new settlement—farther down the Bopi River this time, at a place which they call Santa Ana.

It is possible that their steadfast minds never ask the rebellious question of their God: Why? But here at Huachi is an intelligence that cannot cope with problems more abstruse than simple cause and effect; in the old days he used to be a stanch convert, and they named him, ironically enough, after San Pedro—the rock upon which the church should be built and the gates of hell would not prevail against it. Pedro, though he is but a wild-woods savage, propounds to us the conundrum which has vexed those of fundamental minds for two thousand years.

"Señores," he asks, "if all that is true that those padres told us, if their God is so strong and so good, why does he destroy their *chakras* over which they have spent so much labor in his honor? And if he is not so strong but that the spirits of the jungle can drive him away, why should I live, as those padres say I must, with only one woman to work for me?"

We who have heatedly questioned the inscrutable reason for piume flies and bees, feel in no position to reset the feet of Pedro in the strait and narrow way that leads to salvation. So Pedro the apostate remains an outcast, midway between the sacrosanct havens of Cobendo and Santa Ana. But he is singularly content. For he lives with five women to work for him, where the jungle spirits still permit the fruit groves to flourish, and the manioc yams which the good padres planted propagate themselves, and hunting is sufficient to support one family—and is in fact, getting better every year. For those other insatiate hunters, at those new mission sites, are driving the game back to their old haunts.

Pedro, therefore, seems to be a singularly bright example of how the wicked continue to flourish. He will, in fact, profit hugely by his very wickedness which makes him resident at Huachi without the pale. One of the cane huts is a commodious barn. He rents it to us for our residence, at a rate of about twenty cents' worth of assorted trifles a day and all our empty tomato-cans. His women draw water and hew wood for us, and he himself earns princely emoluments by guiding us out hunting.

Our residence, which is about twenty-five feet long by twenty broad, is interesting. It is built entirely of cane-grass stems. These stems are just planted in the ground and laced together with a tough vine. Since the poles are not very regular, there remain interstices between them through which one may put one's hand; and one may look clear through both walls and see what is passing on the other side of the house—cause for uneasiness to the Respectable Member, who is innately modest. But the walls are strong enough to hold up the roof, which is the really important item. It is ingeniously supported by a well-balanced king-post structure which shows a practical knowledge of strains and pressures; and it affords a splendid refuge to bats, snakes, and tarantulas.

Here we await the arrival of the Director and Young America, with the secondary fleet. A rest welcome for many reasons, chief of which is that it affords time for the various scientists to root about for specimens. Though chiefest is the too-long-delayed opportunity to unpack everything and give it a thorough overhauling and drying. As we get down to the bottoms of duffle-bags and boxes, sounds of grief and wrath arise, for there is hardly a thing that hasn't been smoldering in its dampness for the last three weeks. Not a garment that isn't irretrievably spotted with mold. In camp gear that is of no very great moment. But all of us carry perforce a certain amount of light clothing for use when we begin to meet civilization coming in from the other end, and these have suffered full sore. My two palm-beach suits, the pride of my summer days and my hope for social eminence in Manáos city, six months' journey hence, are covered with great lemon-colored blotches which are there to stay. The shirts that accompany them have acquired futuristic wall-paper patterns upon their fair bosoms.

Much more serious is the fact that many packages of photographic materials so fatuously marked, "Keep in a cool dry place," have not done well in the warm wetness of balsa travel. I am going to have to be very skimpy with my stuff, and the prints that I shall send home to my anxious friends—Heaven knows when—will be no deckle-edged art photography.

We have made a pilgrimage to the mission at Cobendo, and I am full of great sadness for it. It is a garden spot wrested from the heart of the jungle with infinite patience and it is doomed to become empty jungle again within a very few years. Two kindly, hospitable old padres labor there unceasingly amongst the remnant of their little flock, and they are doomed to die in the jungle. They have set their hand to the plow and they will not turn back.

Illustration
Fishing has been Good

Illustration
The Ant-bear Enjoys a Red-hot Supper of Ants

Illustration
The sloth is the slowest and probably the stupidest animal on earth. It tastes like mutton

Illustration
The tapir that charged
A scientific note is that the trunk is retracted to its very roots while swimming

Picture to yourselves a great clearing two hundred yards square. Bordering one side of the square is a long, low building of cane wattle daubed over with clay, the living-quarters and the storehouse of the padres and a chapel with a little square tower containing an ancient and mellow Spanish bell. Inclosing two other sides are two lines of cane huts like ours at Huachi. The fourth side is open to the river. Within the square are rows upon rows of neatly planted orange- and lemon- and tamarind-trees, all carefully tended and all bearing the largest, sweetest fruit of their kind that I have ever tasted.

The square lies empty. The huts lie empty. The Indians have all withdrawn to their private *chakras* which are scattered through the farther jungle where the game is still plentiful. Only on Sundays do they come in from their outlying hunting-grounds. Or, rather, on Saturdays, to spend the night in the houses which they still claim as theirs and to dress up in clean cotton trousers and jackets to attend Sunday-morning mass. That much hold do the padres still exercise over their converts. But they smile wistfully and say that these are bad children and that delinquents are many. Which is not to be wondered at. Even our stark Puritan forefathers would have thought twice about coming in a whole day's march just to attend church.

I, who had seen the well-equipped missions of the far East, had thought that the mission at Lake Titicaca was surely the poorest in the world. But that was a luxurious country residence, situated within a paltry sixty miles of the metropolis, in comparison with the stark poverty of this one, isolated three months' journey from anywhere at all.

One advantage it has over the other: it is located in a country where the fruits of the earth are plentiful. But it has nothing else at all. The padres live in mud-walled rooms with mud floors. Their little furniture of tables and chairs are machete-hewn crudities spiked together with *chunto-palm* pegs. Their robes have been mended and re-mended a hundred times. They are thankful to have the shoes which we were about to throw away as being worn too completely out for use even in the jungle. In this condition they have spent their lives; and in this condition they will die. And all to what end? In order that they may once a week on Sundays exhort their faithful few and say a mass for them. *Ay de mi!* Laborers who are worthy of their hire indeed—but who don't get it.

I turn to the more cheerful subject of the Indians who through this association have gained a few of the benefits of civilization and yet have remained far enough away from it not to have suffered any of its ills.

Sunday is to them like coming into town over the week end. So we were only too glad to accept the pathetically eager hospitality of the padres and stay over a Sunday to meet the whole flock and to bear witness to their devotion.

I, of course, was particularly interested to observe these people and the different phases of their life. And they apparently were equally interested to observe us, a new kind of white man, and the different phases of our life. So the whole flock stayed out the week and made a fiesta of the occasion.

I have recorded a good deal about them as we journeyed down-river together. What more can I tell that won't sound like ethnologic data? I haven't said who they are, yet.

They belong to the Mosetena tribe. Those whom we have met have grown old in the mission and many of them were born in it. They are nowadays almost a community apart from their wild relations who have refused to be tamed by the white man and have withdrawn into the farther jungles. It is difficult to tell, therefore, whether their high order of intelligence and general well-being is due to their association with the mission or is native to their people.

These Indians are peculiarly secretive about their tribal manners and customs, and become shyly dumb when questioned about them. They convey the impression that they are ashamed of their "uncivilized" brethren—so much so that I have been able to learn nothing about the latter. Themselves, they are good Indians, friendly, hospitable, and good-tempered. They show no resentment at our rude prying into their houses and examining of their little treasures. They even respond laughingly to the Statistician's intimate inquiries into their ages and their ailments and their fathers' names and the causes of their grandfathers' deaths. A very likeable people.

Chapter XX

JUNGLECRAFT.

The Indians have taken me hunting with them and I stand amazed at their woodcraft. Even as a boy I read the Leatherstocking series with a smile of

skepticism. But these people make me believe that some of the lesser miracles of tracking and trail-reading performed by the youth of the story might almost be true. It is no exaggeration to say that they have asked me, "What do you wish to hunt to-day?" and I having answered, "Tapir," or "Jaguar," or "Deer," they have said, "Good!" and have forthwith led me to it.

Tapirs, of course, are so stupid and blind that one doesn't shoot them except for meat. But these uncanny woodsmen picked up a jaguar-track for me and followed it for two hours and finally led me right up to the beast, crouched on a thick limb. I am willing to revoke some of my tribute to King Jaguar. He will take to a tree, it seems, when he is being followed, as foolishly as our own mountain lion, and, like the latter, will there imagine himself safely hidden—a folly which Cousin Leopard would never be guilty of. So stupidly did this beast sit on the limb and do nothing but snarl and show his teeth that I was able to pick time and place and make a head shot and so preserve the skin intact, which is an unusual piece of luck.

The lesser cats, the ocelots, are much more wary; and I have so far been able to get only two snap-shots at them as they dashed off through the bush. One of them I missed clean—which was *not* the fault of the rifle.

The Indians occasionally kill a jaguar. Not often, because the taste of the meat is very rank and they don't particularly value the skin. I have dallied with the thought that I might buy a few such skins wherewith to redeem my hasty promises to my friends. But these Indians, like most warm-country natives, haven't the slightest conception how to cure a skin. They just peg a hide out in the sun to dry, without even tanning it or applying any preservative. The inevitable result is that the skin "burns." It dries out like a board, and as long as it is left in that condition it remains a handsome floor covering; but as soon as it is wetted, to be worked for curing, the hair drops out in great patches. A native skin, therefore, is hopeless and not worth the trouble of carrying.

Perhaps the supreme example of the skill and quickness of eye of these jungle men is shown in their fishing. For this sport they use their regular *chunto-wood* bow and five-foot arrows made of thin cane, unfeathered and unnotched, and tipped with serrated *chunto* barbs; and their eyesight in this connection is astounding. No fishing at random for them! They walk along a stream, *looking* for fish just as they would for any other game. Time and again they have pointed to the depths of a pool where I could see nothing and have counted up the possibilities. Having located their game, they post themselves at a point farther up where the riffles run over shallows, while one of their number wades in below and with rocks and clods of earth drives the game up to the hunters. One of the requirements of this sport is that the shooters make no move, since, as every angler knows, fish are keenly suspicious of moving shadows on the shore. It is a picture of suspended animation, then—three or four of these sturdy bowmen poised, with arrows drawn, like muscular bronze statues with the sunlight glinting from their clean-cut limbs.

"Eh-eh, here they come!" some hawk-eyed youth will suddenly whisper; and in the next instant, as the fish race up the shallows, the long arrows are loosed. No string or line is attached to them to retrieve them in case of a miss. These sharp-shooters don't figure on misses. The arrow plunges into the water where a mere white man can see nothing at all and immediately its wabbly action shows that

something has become attached to the lower end. When the whole school has run the gantlet there will be some half-dozen arrows wavering feebly in the current. The men wade or swim after them, heave the catch out on the bank, and race off to intercept their quarry at the next shallow. As in the case of monkeys, there is no mercy as long as a fish remains in sight.

Another method the Indians employ for fishing is poisoning. For this they use the juice of a large thorny-boled tree they call *solyman* or that of a bush they call *barbasco.* The effect of the juice liberally sprinkled over the water seems to be restricted to the breathing apparatus of the fish, which rise to the surface after half an hour or so, gasping for air, when they may easily be caught, of course. But this method is tedious, for the juice takes time to prepare and is efficacious only in isolated pools where there is very little current. It is not nearly so sporting as shooting wild fish on the wing.

But, after all, I think their newest method of fishing is their favorite. This is to inveigle the Ichthyologist into the belief that there are wonderful and rare fish in certain deep pools, and to persuade him to let off a small dynamite charge in it. The mystery of the gunpowder that burns under water is an inexhaustible source of wonder and delight, and the sport then, as the deep-water monsters flounder about, half stunned, near the surface, provides ten minutes of furious excitement. The Indians plunge in like otters, yelling and grabbing at the slithery creatures, ducking one another or pulling one another from some coveted prize.

The game is an aquatic adaptation of John Chinaman's greased pig and is a huge improvement on water-polo. These overgrown children could play it all the time. But the Ichthyologist is so seriously scientific in his attitude that he will shoot a dynamite charge only when he can be genuinely persuaded that some uneatable thing like a gymnote eel or a plated nematognath lurks in a pool.

Since I am discoursing about hunting, I have a story about a tapir which tends to refute the current libel that this beast is the only species of heavy game which is entirely without means of offense. We were strolling, the Entomologist, the R. M., and I, along the river bank in the early morning, hideously early, before the sun was over the tree-tops,—looking for something to take in to breakfast,—just after sunrise and just before sundown being the most favorable time for game to be up and about. Suddenly, with no other warning than a preliminary crunch of heavy feet, a big bull tapir walked out of the cane belt not twenty yards in front of us.

The Entomologist was immediately filled with the scientific urge.

"Jeez don't shoot, Mac! I want to snap it," he whispered with academic clarity.

So there we stood while he went through all the motions of getting his kodak unlimbered and into action; and the silly beast never even suspected that he was being placed on file. (My story has nothing in it to refute the assertion that the tapir is of all big game quite the most stupid.) It strolled across the open sand-bank, a distance of thirty or forty feet, and stepped into the river to take its morning bath. We waited our opportunity as it went under, and stepped right up to the water's edge to watch it. It rolled and dived and snorted and enjoyed itself thoroughly, still fatuously unaware of our presence not a dozen feet from where it disported itself.

The opportunity of scientific observation was unique. But the question of meat for a camp of a score of men remains an urgent one all the time, and we three futile Nimrods had come out with a brace of shot-guns and Number Four shells and a .22 rifle, looking for turkeys. So the other two very complimentarily suggested that maybe I could perform some miracle with a sixteen-gage gun and Number Six. I, trusting to luck, waited for the great beast to come up, and then aimed quickly behind the ear.

My trust was ill placed. A charge of small shot at close range makes an awful hole. But a splash made by the beast at that precise moment rose just in time to scatter the shot. The big fellow was no more than badly lacerated. According to all the rules, that tapir ought to have dived and not shown himself again till he was fifty yards down-river and on the farther side. Instead, he reared up out of the water on his hind legs, squealed his rage once, and turned and charged us.

I have no means of knowing just what a tapir's method of offense is. White hunters insist that they have none. But the Indians say that they use their weight to knock down and trample. The Entomologist has since lamented the fact that I didn't afford him the opportunity to record a scientific truth. As for me, being the aggressor, I was the one singled out for attack. With half a ton of pachyderm charging at me, I was not interested in scientific facts. I jumped, and fired the second barrel at the beast's neck without putting gun to shoulder. Though it didn't stop him, the shock caused him to swerve and must have jarred a good deal of the fight out of him. Then, seeing his own cane-brake before his eyes, he continued going, right on for home. *Bang, bang!* went both barrels of the R.M.'s gun, almost at my ear. *Pop-pop-pop-pop!* went the Entomologist's repeating .22. Then *wham!*—the R.M.'s big army Colt; and *wham!* again. Then I got my luger out. (This I hold against the luger, while I extol it above all other automatics; it is not a quick-drawing pistol.)

I don't know how often we hit that tapir with our close-range fusillade. But it is a tribute to its extraordinary vitality that it raced a good fifty yards along the front of the cane-brake, looking for an opening, and tried gamely to scramble up a sandy bank, before it fell back dead.

So we have proof, I think enough to convince even a scientific investigator, that a tapir *will* sometimes attack.

The Botanist, by the way, has not overlooked the opportunity to make acid comment upon the amount of ammunition that was expended upon a single beast and to inquire solicitously about our dollar-a-shot pool. Comment which the Entomologist resents hotly; for it is rifle ammunition which must be conserved. Perhaps what irritates the Entomologist most—and me too—is the phenomenal luck which the Botanist has in coming upon wild creatures. The Entomologist, in addition to his specialty, is a keen zoölogist; and it nearly kills him to hear the Botanist, who affects to be uninterested in animals, come in from a ramble in the very near woods and recount how he has witnessed an interesting episode in the intimate home life of some wild creature.

The Botanist's latest good fortune is observation of a pair of capibaras playing in a run of fast water in a little creek not a mile from camp. Like otters, he tells, they shot the rapids and then scrambled out and trotted up the bank to plunge in and

shoot them again. A sight of extraordinary interest, which the Entomologist would have given anything to witness, and I as much, if not more, to photograph.

The Botanist jeers at us and tells us blandly that we hunters, riflemen, and so forth, and would-be woodsmen, are too clumsy and noisy in our approach ever to surprise the creatures of the woods and see them at their unsuspicious best in their own home environment. Quite clearly Mr. Botanist is getting some of his own back for the many nasty things that we have perpetrated upon his dignity.

Incidentally, I have lost a disgraceful dollar to the pool. My first, and a matter of great shame. In this wise it happened. A turkey came and sat on a high limb away on the other side of the river—tiny in the distance, but clear against the sky. The shot was a long one, maybe a hundred and fifty yards, at which distance the bird was so small that the front sight bead of the rifle covered it completely. But I, feeling rash, and having a vast confidence in the accuracy of that Savage .25-3000, announced that I was about to risk a dollar. I was very properly derided and side bets were offered, which I instantly refused on so long a chance. But a dollar on that clear sky shot was not easily to be resisted. I took a careful aim and fired. The assembled company of hardened explorers gasped. So did I, for the bird fell.

So far, good. I might have rested on my reputation for a long while. But pride goeth before destruction and an haughty spirit before a fall. I had to show off again. A harpy eagle came and sat on a blasted tree not seventy yards away. The Director had been particularly anxious for a specimen, so I felt that a precious cartridge would be justified. I snapped up to a medium sight and fired. The eagle rose with majestic leisure and sailed away. I watched till it was out of sight, waiting for it to drop; for I just couldn't have missed. But I lost that dollar; and I am properly reminded of the fact, by other people besides the Botanist, whenever I talk too big.

In connection with shooting, I've had an adventure. I've eaten ant-bear. You have seen the woolly beast with a feebly elongated snout and a bushy tail under which it hides. It lives exclusively upon ants; so it is the stringiest, toughest, vinegariest meat in all the jungle. Better, almost I should say, would be plain ant without bear.

Chapter XXI

GOOD-BY TO THE HILLS.

The expedition has been abandoned by its most important member and left to its fate, in the hands of one whom the Statistician described in that lurid language of which he seemed to possess so large a supply.

To break away from what was to him an intolerable position had become an obsession with that angry gentleman. So when the good padres told him that they could supply him with a balsa and a crew of Indians, the most trustworthy of all their flock, who could be relied upon to take care of him and stand faithfully by him till they should deliver him at last into the Beni River, where he could

connect, two days or so beyond Rurrenabaque, with a steam-launch, he jumped at the opportunity with fierce joy.

To me his alacrity in accepting the proposal was a revelation of how much he hated what he denounced as the disgusting fiasco into which he had been inveigled. For he is a nervous old gentleman, acutely distrustful of what he calls savages, and, knowing no Spanish, utterly unable to communicate with them. Yet he has without hesitation accepted the condition and entrusted himself to such a crew for a long voyage which is not without a certain measure of hardship and danger.

Before he went he called the Entomologist—to whom he had not spoken for weeks—and me into conference, to state his case and to justify himself in our eyes. With terrible thoroughness' he produced documentary evidence: every letter written to him by the Director; his memorandum of every telephone message, with notations, on the margin, of witnesses who were present at the time; and his notes of personal conversations. With these to back him up, he laid before us in damning detail every hasty promise, every boast about the best-equipped expedition, etc., which had not been fulfilled. And it all stacked up to so appalling a list that I wonder whether, according to his own lights, he has not justified himself.

It had to be admitted that all of us had been led by the enthusiastic Director to expect a good deal in which we had been woefully disappointed. As for me, I had long ago given up my rosy dream of a luxurious and comfortable expedition and was none the less enjoying every day of new experience. But the fiery Statistician could not forgive the many little discomforts which might have been avoided by a better selection of equipment. Particularly could he not forgive having been misled; even though such misleading might well have been no deliberate falsification on the Director's part, but rather the over-enthusiastic description by an imaginative professor of all the things he hoped to get. There is no doubt, too, that a powerful factor in keeping his resentment up to boiling-point was that he found the actual hardships of jungle travel—the recurrent alarms, the constant wettings, the sometimes hungerings, and lastly the stinging insects—a greater trial than he could put up with.

So he has mumbled his final toothless denunciation of the Director; has promised grimly to expose him for an incompetent nincompoop, before all the colleges of the United States, has added as a corollary—frankly, to the Entomologist's face—the threat to denounce *him* before *his* institution; has thrown in the Ichthyologist for good measure; has complimented me—frankly, to my face—as the only member of the whole expedition who can do anything of any use at all (such is the reward of skill with typewriter ribbons), and has shaken the dust of this expedition from off his feet. He has taken with him the sundry gifts that he made me from time to time in reward for my usefulness—my saddle, my Corona typewriter, my pound of tobacco, my pigskin leggings, and my Boston pencil-sharpener. Nevertheless I feel sorry for the Statistician. I can understand his point of view. I hope he gets through all right. I mark him off as Number Two, the second to leave the expedition.

Scarcely was the Statistician well away on his long and lonesome journey when the Director arrived at Huachi with the auxiliary fleet, bringing with him Young America, the balance of the baggage, a new cook, and an ulcerated tooth.

During the voyage Prexy had ruminated much; the direct result of which had been the issuance of official Bulletin Number Four, and his first act was to cause copies to be formally distributed to us. The subject of it was insubordination. It told us that we were a wilful, headstrong bunch of boys, and that we had, all of us, from the very beginning of the expedition evinced an unruly tendency to go our own way and to use our own judgment. That an expedition must have a head, and that head was himself; and that the reins should henceforth be in his hands.

He gave us a half-day to digest this tactful little notice and made no further reference to it till after our evening meal, over which he presided with urbane dignity. Then he summoned us all before him and sat in impartial judgment to hear our reports upon our various doings. Having heard them, he withdrew with his secretary and issued Official Bulletin Number Five.

The subject of it was carelessness, conservation, treachery, and desertion. The first two items refer to the loss of ammunition. The charge of carelessness in the matter of smashing that balsa was impartially distributed over all of us. The last two items dealt sternly with the Statistician, regretting his precipitate action in attempting, alone, so hazardous a journey through wild country, and concluding with the solemn prophecy of his certain death.

Having been thus properly disciplined, we were free to continue with the affairs of the expedition. The new cook, of course, was our most vital interest and more than a little of a mystery. For he was the last thing to be expected in this center of nowhere—a whole white man. A Checho-Slovak. How had he ever got there and why, was the question. Himself, he chose to remain vague about his history. He had been in the United States. That much was certain, because he spoke fairly good English and he knew names and places. He made his way over the high trails some little time ago, he said; but as to why he had chosen to bury himself in the inaccessible hinterland, he was not so clear. A silent, morose sort of fellow, he was impossible to draw out. Whom had he killed? We wondered. And why?

The explanation of his presence here was that the Director had met him one day—the day of that long march to the delightful village on the ridge. The man had appeared, it seemed, out of nowhere from down the hillside, had explained that he had a hut and a corn patch somewhere down the far valley, and had expressed the desire to accompany the expedition to a less inhospitable region.

Illustration

For the hats of the gentler sex these parent egret must be shot while the young are still in the nest; for only then are the plumes saleable

Illustration

Expedition Headquarters at Huachi

Rent, Twenty-cents a Day and all the Empty Tomato Cans

Illustration
Our commodious dining-room
The mournful figure is not the cook;
but a scientist contemplating the wonders of nature

At the time the Director had looked upon him with suspicion, as being possibly one of the banditti with whom his imagination filled the mountains. But later, while he was left to ruminate at Espía and sort and resort the precious equipment to decide what further weight might be discarded before the arrival of the auxiliary fleet, the constant reminder of those empty cans, once filled with tongue or peaches, had so inflamed his hate against our Chileno cook that he had quietly sent off a letter, by the hand of the brave hermit youth who felt the urge of expansion, to this hidden white man, offering him the opportunity to get out of his barren existence by taking on the job of expedition cook. The mysterious man had replied personally, on the jump, with bells on.

So here he was, a mystery half explained. The Chileno cook, very much surprised and disgusted, was given the choice of coming on with us as far as Rurrenabaque or staying at the mission until such time as the padres would be communicating with the outside world. Rather a Scylla-Charybdis choice, I thought, to thrust upon a man suddenly in the middle of the jungle. But the funds of the expedition had to be conserved.

The next most pressing matter that demanded attention was the Director's ulcerated tooth. An unpleasant problem. The more so since it was the first of the real trials of the trail to descend upon any of our party and was an ominous reminder to us all that no one of us could expect to get through the whole expedition without his share of the penalty for being an intrepid explorer. Consider, you comfortable ones who can run to a dentist upon the first twinge of pain in a tooth, the unenviable plight of a man of fifty or so in the middle of the jungle with an exposed nerve and without a single toothache remedy of any kind.

Right there I forgave that unhappy man for every omission of equipment which he might have or ought to have brought. For he surely suffered the penalty himself. He bore the agony for a couple of awful days and then decided that somehow one of us inexperts would have to pull the thing out. His decision fell first upon me, my qualifications for the job being, forsooth, that I had displayed a certain handiness with carpenter's tools—I could pull nails most excellently. But I shifted the responsibility to the Entomologist, on the legitimate ground that in La Paz I had had an extraction performed upon myself and had begged the dentist to let the Entomologist witness the operation in view of just such an eventuality as this.

On that meager experience, then, the Entomologist had to take the job in hand. Fortunately there was a half-set of dental forceps which, ironically enough, the Statistician had procured. But not a dental anaesthetic of any kind. As a matter of fact the only anaesthetic in the whole expedition was a four-ounce can of chloroform which the Entomologist had brought along for some mysterious purpose of his own. As also the only disinfectant was some iodine which he had purchased in La Paz at the last moment.

These omissions in the equipment of an expedition which planned to explore the Amazon jungles would be unbelievable enough if some rough-neck prospector had done the purchasing. When one considers that the supplies were laid in by the Director himself, an M.D., the story verges on fiction.

But he paid. Gods of torture, how that wretched man paid! I have already given him credit for all the courage in the world. He surely showed it again here. He selected the forceps, handed them to the Entomologist, sat down in a camp-chair, and said: "Go ahead. I'll tell you if I can't stand it."

The Entomologist set his teeth, applied the tool as best he knew how, and for something like a minute wrestled with that tooth—till the tortured Director had to signal a halt.

After a horrid period of recuperation the Director opened his mouth again and the struggle was renewed; to terminate this time by the tooth's breaking off short at the neck, leaving the frayed nerve terminals hanging in full view.

Ponder on that, fellow-citizens, and be thankful that you know dentists who charge a paltry five dollars—or ten, or fifteen—per hour for their blessed ministrations. No sort of dental remedy in camp and no knowledge of how to apply it if there had been any. The Director thought—he didn't know, mind you, he *thought*—that strong iodine might kill the nerve, in time. Have you ever applied strong iodine to a tiny cut? Well, that frenzied man applied strong iodine to his exposed nerve. That was four days ago. He *thinks* now that it is accomplishing its purpose.

A horrible thing to report; and I shudder as I write it. There is very little more to tell about Espía. I, the rebel against raw quinine, have been the first to get a jolt of fever; which gives everybody an opportunity to say, "I told you so." Happily I know the symptoms from the time they give their earliest warning. So I killed it quickly with a stiff dose of Warburg's priceless tincture followed by thirty-, fifteen-, and ten-grain doses of the quinine; and in three days I was on my feet. The Entomologist is making capital out of it to pretend to a vast store of secret information about my dissolute past which he says I babbled in my delirium. To him I quote, "They that are pure within walk abroad without shame," and so confound him utterly.

Young America walks about with neck stiff and arms and legs held painfully away from all contact, on account of a mysterious swelling of every gland in his body; and the Entomologist tears his hair for that he was not able to capture and classify—or better still, discover—the insect that did it. Y.A., nude to the waist, was bending over a basin, when a thing that looked like a tarantula dropped from the thatch upon his bare back, bit once, jumped clear, and so escaped. The bite apparently was no more painful than an ordinary tarantula bite; but this curious effect upon the surface glands has been the result.

And out of the three chests of medicines there seems to be nothing applicable to such a case. The Director suggests lancing as a possible treatment. But he himself is too shaken with his terrible tooth-root to attempt it. The mysterious cook, who is much in his confidence, has persuaded him that he, the cook, is competent to perform so minor a piece of surgery. So Young America, under the Director's advice, has submitted to the operation and the cook has lanced one of the glands

under his arm with a safety-razor blade as an experiment. The Director is now satisfied that lancing is not the proper remedy.

Sometimes I believe that dictum of somebody or other's who says that every man has his periods of insanity.

Here at Huachi we have been introduced to our first tropical chiggers. *Anigua,* they are called here. You've read of them, surely. Sand-flea beasts that deposit eggs in tender portions of the foot, such as the soft skin between the toes, where they develop in a little sac about as large as a pea and have to be cut out. Here, also, we have acquired our first pet and mascot. The Respectable Member went a-hunting and captured a baby tapir. It is a pretty little beast, marked with lateral stripes of yellowish white against gray-black, as are the young of this species for the first five and six months of their lives.

Our pet looks for all the world like *Ignatz Mouse* of those delightful "Krazy Kat" drawings; and like *Ignatz,* it has no fear of anything; so it is already tame to the point of impertinent familiarity. Its name is Nebuchadnezzar Ben Ibrahim, Benny for short, and it lives on bananas and rice and blotting-paper and botanical specimens and socks. Its innocent life has been threatened, up to date, by every member of the party at least once, and by the Botanist and the cook a dozen times each. So it waxes fat and thrives amazingly.

To-morrow we leave Huachi, by balsa again, for the run to Rurrenabaque. At Rurrenabaque, the Director tells us, we shall be met by his agent, Miguel Bang, whom he knew thirty years ago, and with whom he has been in correspondence. Bang will have come up from the other side and will have made all arrangements for our journey into the interior to discover—or, rather, to report upon—the mysterious lake which is said to exist somewhere in the back of beyond and which has been marked on the government map: "Lake Roguagua; location uncertain." I have suggested to the Director that if the government map, which has so boldly marked the towns of Espía and Huachi, admits anything to be uncertain, one might as well not look for it at all; and I have been duly reproved for my levity.

Chapter XXII

RURRENABAQUE.

To Rurrenabaque by balsa is no different from the way to Huachi by balsa, except that the worst of the rapids had been left behind. But to me, at least, it was jammed full of interest. We traveled and we ran rapids and we hunted and we camped. Description would be but repetition. Nothing of unusual interest happened, unless the rapidity with which the human mind adjusts itself to excitement is of interest. There we were, traveling fast down an unknown river on rafts, not knowing what might turn up round the next corner; and yet, so accustomed had we become to sudden surprises, that some of the men complained of monotony and wished they could travel four on a balsa and play cards.

And as a matter of fact, as the river widened lower down, the Indians were actually persuaded to lash three balsas together, making a very solid and roomy floating platform upon which those blasé ones gathered and played bridge.

We have traveled the "unknown route" and have come through alive and well, though the Director is not so comfortable as might be wished. We have mapped our Bopi River of doubt and have established the fact that it meets with the Mapiri River, the old established route, just above Rurrenabaque, and that together they form the Beni River. We have collected some hitherto unknown bugs and plants, and a lot of information about the Mosetena Indians. So it is possible that our effort has not been wasted.


Illustration
The Metropolis of Rurrenabaque


Illustration
The Ultimate Glory of All Good Balsas, who Grow up to be *Batelãos*

The hills ended abruptly. Up to the very last minute our balsas traveled in a deep valley shut in by high hills. Then through a narrow gorge with precipitous sides, as through a giant door. And there in front of us lay the endless plains which stretch away eastward into Brazil and southward into Argentina. Behind us a cliff wall, like our own Hudson River Palisades, at the very feet of which nestled the fifty or so wattle-and-daub houses of the town of Rurrenabaque.

The existence of this town is more inexplicable than that of the first inaccessible village on the great ridge. There is just nothing to account for it. It is the last step beyond the farthest possible point that can be reached by boat coming up from the other side of the mountains. As though the first settlers struggled on as far as they could, and when they were stopped by the cliff wall they just sank down and stayed there. Why there, rather than two days lower down, where a little flat-bottomed wood-burning launch touches and they would be within reach of supplies? There just isn't any answer.

As there is no answer to some of its inhabitants. Here we find a brace of Jewish merchants from what they pronounce "Heirosalem." An anomaly is a Japanese eating-house where rice is cooked to perfection. These merchants have been the cause of the Entomologist's winning a bet. He made the statement on the way down that if Rurrenabaque had a population of as much as two hundred we should be able to buy there Standard Oil kerosene and Worcestershire Sauce. The Respectable Member bet him his tapir that we shouldn't. Well, the Jewish merchants had both commodities.

A German commercial representative of an importing house in the Argentine dismays me with his keen grasp of business conditions all over South America and with his shrewd lookout to develop every centavo's worth of business that it is possible to develop in the back country and then to grab it for his firm. Here in this remote back-wash of the jungle is his permanent headquarters, from which he sallies forth to scour the country and foster every thin dribble of trade, while we at home prattle airily about the South-American market for our manufactures.

A genial Irishman who just lives here and does nothing is another of those curious expatriates who are content to spend their days in this most remote place where they have the ultimate minimum of the conveniences of civilization. Though this excellent gentleman has some reason for his stay, in that he has wonderfully solved the problem of existence. He lives with a placid Indian woman. Of course not married. Marriage with an Indian would be demeaning to his pride of race; living with one is quite another matter. You grasp the distinction, don't you? Only the lower classes, this gentleman tells us, marry in Rurrenabaque.

The Indian woman has sundry relatives, male and female, who furnish the best kind of labor for clearing and working an extensive *chakra* under the white man's direction. A regular farm is this *chakra,* producing bananas, yams, eggs, cane sugar, and molasses. So that the white man has become a person of substance, furnishing the town with much of its commissariat. His house is the biggest and best in town, where he dispenses cordial hospitality. A clap of the hands brings an intelligent swift-footed boy who serves coffee as it might be served in a pleasant club.

Where does he manage to get such excellent service, we ask this genius.

"Oh," he says absently, "that lad? I don't know. I think he's a son of mine. They make excellent servants if you bring them up right."

Another mystery is an American. He is willing to be known as Howard. He is getting on in years now, is perhaps sixty-five; but he is tall and strong and his blue eyes are full of fire. He talks of cattle and ranching conditions as they existed forty years ago and he carries an old-fashioned Colt with which he can do miracles of fast and accurate shooting. He is sorry to hear that his old partner, Buffalo Bill, is dead. Who is this kindly old man? I wonder. Why did such a man come to the innermost back of Bolivia where there are no ranches? What stirring story lies behind his silence of the days when the West was wild and justice was dispensed with a six-gun or a rope over a limb?

Still another resident alien in this remote town of two hundred souls is the Director's old *compadre* and agent, Miguel Bang, who we had fondly hoped was making all arrangements for our discovery of the lake. He has done nothing; and he continues to do nothing but maunder about the cruel way the Statistician treated him.

It seems that, despite the Director's prophecy anent his death, that gentleman reached Rurrenabaque physically sound, though mentally in a condition verging on dementia. Just how this man Bang contrived to irritate him, we don't know. Bang tearfully insists he did nothing. But the assembled populace bears witness that the Statistician first drank with him and then pursued him through the village, shooting at him with a Colt .38.

We are, incidentally, reaping the first fruits of that implacable gentleman's enmity. I can't help laughing at it, myself. But the savants are very much upset. For the Statistician broadcast the information that the expedition that followed on his heels consisted of a frightful gang of bums; that the Director was a crook, not to be trusted in any circumstances, and the seientificos were fools. Such a scaly outfit were we that he refused to be associated with us any longer, and that was why he came away in advance. One result of this thoughtful libel is that we must pay for everything, even a dozen eggs or a pair of fowls, in advance.

A queer back-wash is this Rurrenabaque, into which some queer flotsam has floated. I find a possible explanation of its existence, in the fact that for some reason no piume flies nor mosquitos are here; though their absence is easily overbalanced by the presence of a species of blow-fly, an insidious pest that lays its eggs in moist clothing. Its larva, known as the screw-worm, when hatched out by the heat of the body, immediately bores in. Under the skin it develops into a grub one inch in length, and as it digs to enlarge its living-quarters the sensation is exactly that of being drilled into with an auger. Hence the beast's name. Dogs and cattle suffer terribly, and show great blotches of open ulcer where screw-worms, having waxed fat and strong in their host, have emerged to pupate.

Humans apply the drastic treatment to themselves of chewing tobacco and rubbing the strong juice over the spot, then squeezing the worm out; and the process, the natives say, is much more painful than squeezing a boil. They promise cheerfully that we shall all have screw-worms.

In Rurrenabaque we have acquired a wattle-anddaub mansion with a charming river frontage and here we stow our gear while preparing to go into the back country to find the lake. As usual, no information is available. A thick jungle belt, twenty miles wide, hems in the single street of the town against the river. On the other side of this jungle belt is another mud town called Reyes; and beyond that the pampas, the grassy plains which stretch unbroken into the southern end of the continent. Somewhere on those plains is our lake.

We know that for a certainty, because the Director has issued Officia Bulletin Number Six, telling us that it is so and exhorting us to prepare for the most serious and desperate undertaking which we have yet tackled. Our dangers this time will come not so much from brigands as from wild animals and wilder men. Nobody knows what strange beasts may exist in these vast plains.

We gain an impression, from the wording of this bulletin, that the Director entertains a wistful hope that possibly antediluvian monsters may be lurking there for us to capture, thereby bringing immortal fame upon ourselves. There is no longer any doubt that these documents are intended for evidence of the activities of the expedition and for proof of how wisely Prexy guided its destinies.

In this connection we have discovered a shameful thing about the Botanist which is a source of great joy to us. He, too, entertains the secret ambition of publishing a book. His method of securing interesting data is more crafty than the Director's. We have suspected him for a long time; and now we have proof. I have told how he was continually spying wild creatures, as they went about their intimate affairs, and making us jealous of his good fortune. Well, it began to seem strange to us that no sooner did we talk of some rare beast and wish we might meet with one, than he came along with a circumstantial account of having seen just such a beast in its own home, which account he forthwith transcribed into his voluminous notes.

So we hatched a diabolical plot against him, the Entomologist and I. We talked at elaborate length in his presence of a beast that just didn't exist in tropical country, giving details of its appearance and habits, and citing Wallace as authority for its occurrence in this region. Well, I'll be hanged if the Botanist didn't turn up the very next day with a casual story of having met this identical beast in his ramble, and corroborating our description of its habits!

Our first impulse was to expose the nature-faker to the derision of the rest. But sober second judgment—aided, without any manner of doubt, by the little Satan who finds mischief still—provided us with a much more hilarious plan.

We have said no word about his perfidy. Instead, we have busied ourselves inventing animals for him to discover. The devilish plot is working perfectly. Already he is peopling the Amazonian jungles with the rarer forms of Asiatic and Australian fauna. We have even devised a couple of purely hypothetical monkeys and are at present much exercised about finding suitable Greek names for them. That book is going to be a regular *Swiss Family Robinson* of natural history.

We have discovered, also, a disquieting secret about our cook. It was noticed that he never bathed or swam with us; and that he contrived, under some excuse or other, always to be the last in the camp to turn in; and even then always to put the light out first. We ascribed the peculiarity to some strange Checho-Slovakian form of modesty. Here in Rurrenabaque he expressed his preference for sleeping apart, along with his pots and pans, in the cook-hut; which he thereafter savagely upheld as a sanctum inviolate to himself. He was surprised there the other day by Young America, the only one who had the courage to invade the sanctuary. He was nude to the waist, applying some native medicament to a series of horrible open ulcers on his arms and shoulders.

Well, *"que hay que hacer?"* as we have learned to shrug and say. What does one do in civilized America in such a circumstance? I don't exactly know. What we do here in Rurrenabaque is to suggest to our M.D. Director to give him whatever the three trunks may contain that is suitable to his disease, and we continue callously to eat what he cooks. Are we not intrepid explorers of the perilous corners of the earth?

Illustration

The prettiest girl in Rurrenabaque—of course—
takes Young America to see a *trapiche*, a sugar-cane press

Illustration

Rurrenabaque is not without its advantages
In this all-wood contraption the cane-juice from the *trapiche*
is distilled into excoriating alcohol

In this townlet hemmed in by the jungles, the menagerie increases. Benny the tapir is supplemented by several monkeys, notably a marmoset and a very beautiful golden squirrel monkey which looks exactly like the proprietor of the eating-shop—so much so that the residents call him "Japones." Benny has grown big enough to be a nuisance. He is developing the nocturnal habits of his kind, and so he sleeps all day and prowls restlessly about all night. If he can find a sock he will spend a comfortable hour tearing it to shreds. He has eaten up the only undershirt I had left. Another evil trick of his is to get under our camp cots for the purpose of scratching his back against the rough canvas. His life has accordingly been attempted by more than one savant who has been deposited suddenly upon the mud floor in the middle of the night, with his cot on top of him.

Benny, however, in spite of his delinquencies, has firmly entrenched himself in our affections by going swimming with us and playing in the water just like any foolish pup. But his prehensile nose has been put quite out of joint by the acquisition of two young ostriches—the three-toed rhea of the pampas. Great gawky creatures they are, all knobbly legs and moth-eaten body and bulging eyes. They are just tall enough to peek over the edge of the camp table and snatch a chicken bone off some unwary person's plate, or a knife or a teaspoon. Their names are Apollyon and Beelzebub and they live on anything that is small enough to go down their throats—which does not have to be very small, at that.

In connection with ostriches there is a very beautiful story. We have taken unto ourselves here a hewer of wood and a drawer of water, a half-breed boy of eight or twelve misspent summers. His name, given him by his own mother, a stern, hard-working woman who has taken in our accumulated washing of weeks, is Diablecito, and he lives well up to it. He has all the attributes of boy. He plays marbles and teases the monkeys and spends patient hours teaching the parrots to utter obscenities. He hews less than the minimum requirement of wood, and the cook finds it easier to fetch water himself than to hunt for the Devilling and send him for it. He is seldom to be found when wanted and is always at hand when a meal is being served.

Such is the hero of my pretty little story. The accessory material is a clutch of ostrich eggs. I brought them in one day, intending to blow them for specimens. Other matters intervened, and the eggs had to stand over for some time. I was warned of their pent-up potentialities by the explosion of a five-pound can full of cream cheese which had been quietly festering in the heat. It must be understood that we are now out of the mountains. We are in the Amazonian plain and our elevation, even though we are about three thousand miles from the great river's mouth, is less than a thousand feet. So the temperature ranges round a comfortable hundred.

Diablecito had been particularly truant all that morning. It so happened that when he did show up, my great basket of eggs was being very much in the way. The association of ideas was instant. I caught our impling.

"Little Devil," I said to him, "here is a small labor for you which any boy will enjoy. Take these eggs and blow them. Take them away to that other house where you spend so much time playing marbles with your friend Juan. Let him help you blow them; and you may keep the insides for your supper."

So the implet staggered off with the basket of bombs and sat him down in the mud veranda of friend Juan. Then I gathered the savants and called them to watch from the safe distance of our own veranda. The success of the plot was immediate and beyond perfection. First the two boys quarreled as to who should have the fun of blowing the first egg; and the names that they called each other with cold-blooded abandon were appalling. Eventually it was settled that our bratling was to drill the first hole because he had a sharp-pointed knife. The two bent their absorbed heads over the shell and scuffled so that each might hold it while Diablecito's elbow worked busily as he twisted the knife point.

The shell was hard. Their heads bent closer. At last the knife point penetrated. "There came a burst of thunder sound." It was as though they had monkeyed with

the fuse of a trench bomb to find out whether or not it was alive. Never was shrapnel more thoroughly distributed.

We fell weakly upon one another's necks and had cramps in our diaphragms. From which we were aroused with sudden dismay. The Diablecito, dripping antique egg-juice, came toward us, holding out fragments of shell and weeping. "It broke, señor. It was not my fault. I was being so careful."

We howled to him to keep far away and with clods of earth chased him from human association. It was not till late that evening that we saw him again as we strolled by the river's edge. His mother with harsh words and a long stick was thrusting him into the water and insisting that he duck his head. Peace and contentment descended upon our souls.

This has been quite the most satisfactory episode of the whole expedition. There is even a sequel to the beautiful story. Diablecito, being clean once more, and being complete boy in every respect, came to me and begged for five centavos. I demanded of him sternly, "For what dissolute purpose do you require five centavos, worthless brat?" He grinned with angelic diabolism and told me, "Señor, with five centavos I will hire another boy to blow those eggs for me." So I gave him the five; and he, being truly imp spawn, expended three of the five at the Jerusalem trader's store for six gaudily painted chalk marbles, with the half of which he bribed an innocent youth of eight tender years to open up one of those ostrich bombs.

Juan, the tattle-tale, says that he charged admission to that show, but our Diablecito stoutly denies this. Yet he has asked if he may have the rest of those potent eggs. They are his. He now possesses seven eggs, three chalk marbles, and two centavos—material sufficient to encompass his own murder. I have warned him that the *intendente* of the village gets rid of undesirable characters by putting them into a canoe, pushing them off, and, with a Winchester rifle in his hands, telling them to keep going.

There is another story of Rurrenabaque which I am unable to relate without taking a certain measure of unction to my soul. I have told about the little unpleasantness which occurred in La Paz in connection with my arrangement with the mule-contractor; about the letters which the Director wrote home to the sponsors of the expedition, decrying my "ill-advised contract," as soon as he met with the offer of the big mining company to do all that they could to help the expedition along. I have reported—I hope impartially—how the contractor had to be content with half of the baggage because "the funds of the expedition must be conserved." How he duly delivered his load in Espía in good order and condition; for which he was paid twelve hundred bolivianos—three hundred dollars.

Well, at Rurrenabaque mail met us; fat bundles of it which had been brought down over the Mapiri route. In that mail was a bill—from the mining company for its services in conveying the other half of the expedition to Espía. A bill for *one thousand four hundred dollars,* American! I take credit to myself that I have not rubbed it in on that very weary and sick old man who is our Director.

There is nothing more to report about Rurrenabaque, except that here two lieutenants of the Bolivian Army have presented themselves—it was they who brought the mail via the Mapiri route—and have produced their credentials as having been appointed by the Bolivian Government to accompany the expedition

in its further explorations as far as the Brazilian border. Very pleasant fellows they seem to be. We shall probably get on well together.

Yes, there is something more to report. The Bolivian lieutenants told us what they thought must be the time and the date. So we wound up our watches and set them going just for fun. In fact, the whole town of Rurrenabaque set its time by those lieutenants' watches. It filled us with pride to see that one of them was a good old reliable American Elgin. So we felt secure enough about the time; but the date was another matter. Those lieutenants knew what date it had been when they left La Paz; but exactly how many weeks and days they had been on the Mapiri trail they couldn't remember. So we fixed an arbitrary day for Christmas and celebrated it in ye good olde style. It was too hot for a yule log, and we had no boar's head. But we got the Japanese restaurateur to roast us a whole suckling pig and we opened one of the sacred bottles of whisky out of the medicine-chest.

Maybe we chanced upon the right date. But what matter? It was good pig. In a few days we move on to Reyes and then in a general northeastern direction, lake-hunting.

Chapter XXIII

PAMPA AND SWAMP.

Once more we have arrived; and, like Alexander, we mourn that nowadays there is nothing left to discover. The mysterious lake, like the River of Doubt is unknown only to cartographers.

Reyes we found to be another enigmatic mud town which defied elucidation even more inscrutably than Rurrenabaque. The mystery of the latter's existence was thirteen times multiplied by Reyes. For Rurrenabaque has been an inhabited center for only thirty years; while people have lived in Reyes for an inexplicable three hundred and eighty years. And nobody there has yet found out why. Rurrenabaque at least has its river and is within two days' reach of a little flat-bottomed wood-burning launch. But Reyes has nothing at all. It is plumped down in the middle of an endless plain where even the friendly shade of the jungle is wanting and where the wells of drinking-water are tepid and stale.

Conjecture is often heard as to how some of the fouler towns of the earth, such as Calcutta, Aden, and Mombassa, come to be chosen as sites for human habitation. But their riddles are kindergarten questions compared with those of Rurrenabaque and Reyes. Maybe the same instinct of aloofness which urges a certain type of good citizen to go out and build him a home as far away from his fellows as the transit system will let him commute, manifests itself in a more expanded form among these more primitive brothers.

Upon reflection, that seems to be a rule which works all the way down the scale. A few white men move into a district, and the jungle Indians move out. They feel crowded, hampered; they must find wider scope. They move into a new jungle, and the monkeys move out; they must find a wider range. Proof of which is glaringly evident in this very district. The Indians who must once have lived on these wide

grass prairies have gone. Only a few remain, sparsely scattered and sunken to a menial position; surely because they were unable to cope with the keener intelligences of the white—or rather, half-white—settlers. Which is easy to understand; for they are a dull, bovine people, heavy alike of body and feature and much darker-skinned than the bronze Mosetena; as they are also not nearly so alert and intelligent. Their tribe is known as the Chamm.

I propound, therefore, my thesis for some commuter to tear to pieces. It is the old inferiority complex. A certain type of mentality feels that it just must get away, somewhere where there is less competition with keener wits. But the commuter will probably say that it is the stalwart pioneer instinct.

Reyes is chiefly notable for the fact that there the Botanist was unable to go to bed throughout all one long night because of his wrath against the Respectable Member and Young America; and he made his formal ultimatum to the Director that either he or they must leave the expedition then and there. It seems that the mantle of the fiery Statistician has fallen upon the Botanist. Nor would he be appeased till the Director very shrewdly settled his tantrum by telling him that, very well, he might go back to Rurrenabaque as soon as he pleased.

Reyes is notable, too, because we found there a man who had definite knowledge of the mysterious lake. He was a *garcero,* a hunter of egret plumes, and he told us that he had met in his wanderings a man who had the commuter complex so badly that he had removed himself beyond all contact with his fellow-man. He had gone and made him a farm beyond the other side of an immense swamp which was he didn't know how long and fifteen miles wide. The plume-hunter had traversed this swamp and had spoken with this misanthrope—or stalwart pioneer—who had told him of the lake where many *garças* were to be found.

So with the *garcero* to guide us we organized a fleet of ox-wagon teams and started off across the plains like Brigham Young or some such hardy person of pre-railroad days. Only, our wagons were built on the very pattern of the first crudest conveyance that was designed after the discovery of the wheel—simple, springless platforms upon disks made from a solid section of a tree trunk which revolved upon wooden axles in holes punched through their more or less center. Riding upon one of these prairie schooners of the pampa was just like riding upon a super-slow-motion riveter's hammer. So the order of our going was "foot, foot, foot, foot-slogging over" Bolivia.

Illustration
The Mansion Cool and Green that Replaced the Tents of Evil Memory

Illustration
"Ma" Cayman Resents Intrusion upon her Nest

Illustration
Watchful Waiting

The pampa plain through which we traveled was rich grass country. It was splendid deer country. But there is no creeping upon somnolent game with such a

wagon-train; for the screaming of the wheels can be heard for a good mile. So those of us whom the Botanist termed "would-be Nimrods" hiked well in advance, and found the meat supply an easy problem. Some say that when communications open up, the Bolivian pampa will be a rich cattle country. But that day is very far in the future; for the engineering problems involved are enormous.

The chief difficulties we had to contend with were heat and drinking-water. It was surely hot on that plain. Within fifteen degrees of the equator, and shade-trees scattered like far oases in the desert. The burning glare from the sand-patches where the grass would not grow was so intense that we made long detours to avoid them. Water was a quiet gibe of Nature at us fastidious products of super-civilization who had insisted upon using up all our halozone on pure mountain streams. In those oases were lukewarm pools left over from last season's rain, plentifully befouled by the game which drank of them, and rich brown in color. To call a halt and build a fire and boil a bucketful of it and then wait till it cooled was an unthinkable torment. So we strained the stuff as well as we could through our grimy handkerchiefs and drank it with gusto—and we live and enjoy health.

All except the Director. This has been a hard trek for him. He had to ride in one of those awful carts most of the way. He doesn't know, himself, just what is the matter with him, but it is easy to see that he is no well man; though he bears up with his customary gameness.

For the rest, this was slow, easy travel, though monotonous. No prehistoric monsters met us on the way, as Bulletin Number Six had fondly hinted at. Only deer, which would rise suddenly at our very feet, from their beds in the long grass, with a rattle and crash so startling to the nerves—expecting monsters—that snap-shooting after them credited our cartridge pool with a good many dollars. Ostriches, too, were a continuous source of start and admiration. Racing off across the plain with legs out of sight and wings aflutter just above the grass-tops, they looked for all the world as though they swam with amazing speed over the waving sea of the prairie. Ostrich meat is like tough old turkey gobbler, so we risked no dollars on them.

Concerning ostriches the *garcero* tells us of an interesting example of animal foresight. He maintains that a hen ostrich, when the time for the hatching of her eggs is nearly due, will deliberately break one of them, in order that the insects which will swarm to her feast may supply food for her fifteen or so chicks.

The crossing of the swamp turned out to be the only notable episode of the journey; and the barrier which it provides, five days out from Reyes, is without doubt the reason for the lack of knowledge about the lake. It is really no more than a considerable and sluggish river which has spread all over the dead level of that plain. The bull-carts, thanks to a cunning provision of our *garcero's,* were wonderfully adapted for negotiating this puddle.

You must remember that they were just flat platforms on wheels, with stakes fitted upright along the sides to hold the baggage in place. Between these stakes our crafty guide had thrust a single great bull-hide, which with its upturned edges formed a regular deep bath-tub in which baggage could ride secure and dry.

Into the swamp the carts plunged, four spans of bulls to each, urged by much yelling and unmerciful beating by their Indian drivers. Wallowing, splashing, sometimes stoically swimming, they progressed. We, sometimes riding, sometimes

wading alongside the carts. The *garcero* had an uncanny eye for picking out the shallows. This water travel was a part of his business, necessary to his egret-hunting; to him it was all in a day's work, and he was surprisingly cheerful about it. He tried to cheer us too, by telling us tales of the giant snakes, as thick as a fat man's body, and the twenty-foot caymans that lived in the swamp.

We—I particularly—were anxious to prove this recurrent story about sixty-foot anacondas, but we wanted to pick the circumstances in which we were to see our snake; and being hampered in a swamp didn't fit in with our ideas, by any means. We might have rested secure in the knowledge that we made much too much noise to come upon any sort of snake. Nor did we, of course. The only live things we saw throughout those fifteen soggy miles were millions of water-birds, notably egrets and great gaunt adjutants, and a singularly beautiful red-winged blackbird.

The traverse of fifteen miles of unbroken swamp, without mishap, was of course impossible. It duly befell us. About two thirds of the way across, the carts wallowed one after another into sticky clay bottom and bogged fast in the muck. All the yelling and beating of the Indians concentrated upon a single team of wretched bulls failed to move them another foot. Swearful and sweating hours passed, and the sun began to hang low in the sky.

Think of our position. A horizon of swamp around the complete circle; darkness approaching; and the uncomfortable knowledge that anacondas and caymans are nocturnal hunters. Aside from which, the Director, for one, was in no condition to attempt to spend a night perched atop of a pile of baggage in a semi-submerged bullock-cart, in the middle of a mosquito-infested swamp. After much palaver, this way and that, it was decided that the Director must be got out, at any cost. So we saddled up one of the bulls for him,—I forgot to tell you that several of our draft beasts had been selected for their adaptability to doubling on the job,—and he with the guide and the rest of them went on to seek the shelter of the farm on the farther side.

To me fell the cheerless part of staying behind to see what I could do with the baggage and then to follow the trail left by the others—in the water. At the last moment a splendid thing came to pass. The Botanist, though he looked hungrily after the retreating pioneers, elected to stay with me; and one of the Bolivian lieutenants who had attached himself to him as a pupil stayed too.

I have laughed much at the Botanist's heavy-minded dignity complex and have derived much joy from the contemplation of the ridiculous positions into which it has so inevitably plunged him. But I find absolution for myself in that I always have given him credit for sturdy reliability, though that excellent quality didn't make the man any the less difficult. He confided in me, as we toiled together, that I was the only one of the whole outfit who was just of his own temperament. We saw things in the same light and that was why we hadn't quarreled very seriously up to date. Oo-ooh! Then he was good enough to compare me very flatteringly with my—to him—unspeakable assistant, the R. M. What does one do with such a man in the center of an endless swamp at sunset, except say: "It is even so. In all things your observation is correct. Come, let's get those Injuns to heave on this rope."

We could do nothing with the baggage that day, of course. The only possible thing to do was to unhitch all the bulls, get them out to firmer bottom with a long

rope, and all haul together on one cart at a time. Which is what we did the next day. For that evening, after wasting precious hours of waning daylight, all that I could do was slosh around, waist-deep in muck, amongst the leeches. Heavens! what leeches! Great striped gray things that swam almost like eels and with devilish instinct found the lace-holes of one's breeches through which to suck, and hung there then, bloated like ripe veined gooseberries. Honestly, the lace-hole pattern is tattooed down both my legs in a neat double row, by their bites.

But there was nothing for it but to wade about among the carts and burrow through the piled baggage for the company's bed-rolls—which, of course, were distributed over all five of the carts and each at the very bottom—and to load them all into the canoe. I have omitted to tell you that on one of the carts was piled a twenty-foot dugout canoe with which to go exploring the lake; for the wondrous folding canvas canoe, which we had lugged all the way across Bolivia, had been eaten full of tiny holes by something or other as it lay for two weeks on the sand beach at Huachi after its first try-out. I had mended it and patched it, but it remained what it always had been, a useless hulk.

So I piled all the sleeping-gear into the dugout, harnessed a team of six bulls to it, and in this we set forth with all the éclat of Cleopatra's royal barge, to follow the water trail left by the forerunners. A stunt not so impossible as it sounds; for the trampled reeds and, where there were no reeds the displaced scum and floating algae on the water's surface left a discernible track—as long as the light lasted.

When the last dim glow had finally gone and we were still lost at sea, we three mariners entered into dispute whether we had better turn and try to navigate back to the islands made by our carts or hunt for a shallow where we might set up our camp cots and at least cower under our mosquito-nets and dream of anacondas till daylight. One of those zero choices.

The lieutenant, of Latin temperament, has confessed to me that in this dilemma he seriously contemplated suicide. Another example of what I theorized about once before. That lad had an adventure. The Botanist is more stolid—Heavens! perhaps *I am* like him! We got no adventure out of it; only a very unpleasant happening.

We solved our dilemma by leaving it up to the bulls. Our Indian boy who twisted their tails insisted stoutly that they would smell out the trail where the other bulls had passed. I was skeptical about so much intelligence in a bovine, but I felt that I would rather keep going somewhere in Cleopatra's barge than camp out for the night in a precarious shallow. So I decided in favor of bull sense, and told the boy to give the animals their heads and to keep prodding them in the rear.

And those wondrous beasts took up the trail and plowed patiently ahead, dragging us over the shallows and swimming us through the pools. And after perhaps four more hours of very wretched and mosquito-ridden floundering in the dark, they emerged on dryish land and sniffled the night breeze with heavy rumination and bellowed. And, by their sacred forebear of Osiris, they had performed their miracle. From away to the left, not more than half a mile, came a chorus of answering bellows. The farm of the blessed pioneer!

I believe I could have demanded anything from those scientificos—yea, to the half of their kingdoms and their daughters' hands in marriage—and would have got it, for, weary and wet and full of malarial chills as they were, the best they had

to sleep on was a cold mud floor. And in those bed-rolls that I brought were camp cots and blankets and a change of dry clothes.

That is to say, I could have got all those things that night. But at noon the next day, when we finally by degrees crawled from our beds, stiff and haggard and critical of God and man, the first words of these captious savants were:

"But, good Lord! Our scientific equipment! Our specimens! Our note-books! Did you leave all out there with those Indians?"

Give them credit. They were ready to a man to come out again with me to rescue the precious tools of their trade. Even the sick Director would have staggered forth. But with bulls as wise as my six mud-caked, beautiful beasts, what need of scientists to go and fetch some carts out of a swamp? The pioneer ranchero laid his whole household at my disposal. Of it all, I took a strong mule (whose name is Maude because she can kick through any corral) and I gathered my bulls and their Indian boy and rode out in comfort to haul those carts out of the mud.

My object was duly accomplished, though not till nightfall. But what terrors could that swamp hold now, I said to myself as I rode high and fairly dry on Maude's back along a water lane that I knew, I thought, as well as the bulls themselves. Till Maude floundered into a pool in which there were electric eels.

That, I believe, was one of the worst experiences that I have ever known. One devilish great thing must have got under the mule and shocked her fore and aft, and it must have been a monster, for I could feel the jolt of the shock clear through saddle and riding-breeches. The poor mule staggered and trembled all through her legs as though struck a heavy blow; and for an awful period of seconds her knees sagged and she began to settle in the swamp till the water came well over the saddle-horn. My major sins were already racing before my mind's eye when the good beast recovered and floundered on through the pool and out to shallower water; I, instead of leaping off and helping her, clinging cravenly to the saddle, with my feet drawn up as high out of the stirrups as human anatomy would permit.

Since then I have made amends to Maude. I have hired her from the pioneer, to lead a life of ease carrying my cameras about during our stay at the lake.

Chapter XXIV

THE UNKNOWN LAKE.

The pioneer, of course, turned out to be a most hospitable and helpful recluse. He had settled himself in this seclusion with a few hard-working Indian women as a nucleus for his establishment, in the easy manner of this lost hinterland, and had raised around himself a happy family of the most complicated interrelational ramifications, and an equally thriving ranch with some fifty head of cattle; and all of these, with all the relations of his wives, he set at our disposal.

He himself, bringing an adequate supply of his "respectful servants," guided us out to the lake and established us there; and he likes us so much that he has set up a camp, himself, to be near us as long as we stay.

In him the long arm of coincidence manifested itself with pleasant surprise. The Director, yarning as we sat around the camp-fire, told of an incident which befell during his former visit to Rurrenabaque, thirty years ago. He was out with a man whose name he couldn't recall, in a dugout canoe. With the man was his little son, aged about seven. The boy was trailing his hand in the water, when there was a sudden rush and a swirl. The canoe heeled over as a monstrous horny body rasped under it and the head of a huge cayman surged out of the water and the great teeth came together with a clang, it seemed right over the boy's hand and arm. As the Director described it, it was a miraculous escape. The boy's arm seemed to pass between the teeth as he snatched it away and fell back into the canoe, screaming with terror, while the Director grabbed up his shot-gun and fired point-blank into the cayman's head, which sank without a sound.

A dramatic story, such as the Director knew well how to relate, and such as we had fallen into the habit of listening to with polite skepticism; for, we argued, "How come so many wonderful adventures happened thirty years ago in this district where nothing ever happens now?"

Then the pioneer leaped from his seat and embraced the Director with Latin effusiveness. He called all the saints and the soul of his dead father to witness and said:

"Señor, friend of my father, look upon me. Behold me, Antinor, the boy of whom you speak the very truth."

A wonderful vindication, which left us very properly abashed. But it must be admitted that the Director, after that, told some amazing stories about the hectic days of thirty years ago.

Of the lake there is little to report, except that it exists and that we are exploring and mapping it, and that it has no outlet connecting it with the Beni River at a place called Santa Rosa, as the maps say. Since our tentative program had been to follow this reputed river down to its mouth, our plans must be changed and we must retrace our steps to Rurrenabaque. The Director would have to do that, anyhow; for he is a sick man and in no condition to face a hard overland trip through utterly unknown country. Some of the rest of us, too, will perhaps be better for keeping in touch with the river and steam communication with Porto Velho in Brazil, where there is a British-controlled hospital. That swamp wasn't any too good for any of us, and the thought of crossing it again is not our most cheerful outlook.

Since the lake has no outlet—except during the rainy season, when it must cover half the surrounding landscape—and since nothing flows into it, we are glad to know what causes this twenty miles by fifteen of water. The Indians have told us. It used to be a hill on the top of which was a vast and ancient temple devoted to the rain god, to whom all the Indians, who were a powerful nation in those days, made offerings, till the temple's many store-rooms groaned with treasure. But presently came a time when Indians were fewer and offerings were less. So the rain god became angry and put his thumbs on the hill and his fingers on the edges and just squeezed it inside out and then rained copiously into the depression.

So there the temple stands to-day, with all its vast treasure submerged in the middle of the lake; and in extra dry seasons, when the water sinks very low, one

can see the top of it. It is another reflection upon the equipment of this expedition that there is no diving-suit.

This lake is the best bathing-water I know—or was, rather, until we knew more about it. The pioneer's Indians said there were no caymans in it, so we joyfully inaugurated a hot-bath hour to tide over the hot afternoon sun. One hundred and four degrees was its constant temperature; and we soaked away our afternoons in it; slept in it, even, with logs under our heads, fifty yards or more out from shore; for the prettiest tree-fringed shelving beach was right in front of our tents. Till one day, after about a week, Young America's voice impinged upon our drowsiness, asking:

"Say, fellows, what is it?"

We rolled over lazily and opened one eye each and said, "Nothing," for we didn't wish to be disturbed.

But Young America was insistent.

"Yes, but what is it?" he demanded with a touch of anxiety this time. So we looked to where he pointed, *between* us and the shore.

"It's a log," we told one another hopefully. "Just a great, big, green waterlogged log."

"Hm, so it is," said the Entomologist, "but all the same, if we make an awful lot of noise, splashing all together, maybe it will go away without coming any nearer to us."

So we did; and it did go away, quietly and without any fuss, pushing a little ripple before it. Then we went ashore swiftly and raced for guns. But the log silently sank out of sight. So that put an end to our pleasant afternoon siestas. We bathed, but not without keeping a wary look out for floating logs. And in a few days even bathing became less attractive.

The Ichthyologist decided to set out his gill-nets overnight to see what this unknown lake might contain besides treasure. Right across our bathing-beach he set them, and he found it to contain just two kinds of fish. One, a single specimen, was an armor-plated kind of thing, the only kind that could survive. The rest, about a hundred specimens, were *piranha*, the man-eating fish that Roosevelt described.

Illustration
The Palms of Porto Velho

Illustration
Porto Velho, a fair city that sprang up in the tropic night—
and died with rubber

Illustration
Just as we strive to grow exotic tropic plants in hot houses,
so do enthusiasts in the tropics struggle to grow exotic
temperate plants in cool houses

Why we hadn't been eaten alive, the Ichthyologist could never explain. We asked the Indians about it, and they said, yes, they were bitten occasionally, and they showed us round white scars on their limbs. The fish attacked men only now and then, they said with the callousness of people who live amongst such things and regard them as no more than the hazards of ordinary every-day life. When one did so, it would take a piece of flesh as big as a dime clean out with a single snap; but if a man could get out of the water quickly, before the blood began to spread, there was no danger.

It is a tribute to the heat of those afternoons that we still bathed; though even yet more warily than after our discovery of the logs. The R. M. was the only one who got bitten. And that was by a netted fish, gasping its last outside of its own element. He was removing the fierce beast from the net when he got careless and let his hand come too close in front of the terrible teeth. In an instant the fish flipped itself, or wriggled forward or something, and snapped a round piece clear out of the knuckle of his middle finger. And this is no traveler's tale.

Anent logs, there is a very charming little story. (By the way, I got that first one that disturbed our siesta bath; or, at any rate, one very much like it. Off-shore it was floating warily, with just the eye and nose prominences showing. Difficult shooting over glary water; but the ancient impulse to kill a noxious reptile was urgent enough to make me risk a cartridge and a dollar. I rested my trusty Savage over the crotch of a tree and allowed for the glare, with a fine sight. The hard-nose bullet struck just before the cold eye. Absurdly inadequate thing though it seemed—twenty-five millimeters in diameter and only eighty-five grains in weight—the shattering effect of its three thousand feet per second was terrific. It just tore the whole front of the cayman's head off. Fourteen feet and three inches long was that brute; no playmate for nice little scientificos in their bath. Later, Young America got one just under sixteen feet long—something approaching, in size, a prehistoric saurian.)

There is an interesting side-light on the extraordinary vitality of these caymans. The Ichthyologist, after the nasty manner of scientists, wanted to examine the stomach contents of one of them. He suspected them of eating his fish out of his gill-nets at night and of tearing great pieces of the net out with them. So I shot him one. No such monster as those I have just mentioned, but plenty big enough. It duly churned up the water with its great tail and then floated, still, on its side. The dead cayman, for all that one may have read, doesn't float belly up, the very simple reason being that the tail is jointed only for lateral movement, and hangs, therefore, limp on one side or the other, turning the body accordingly.

Well, I took a rawhide lariat and swam out and towed the beast in. There was no danger in this, because the rest of the cunning brutes are so suspicious that after a disturbance like that they will lie doggo on the bottom for a long time. Together we hauled the creature high and dry and then went back to camp to bring photographic materials. And when we came back ten minutes later the dead cayman had turned round and gone home again. It was then that I had a qualm.

But that isn't the charming story. The story is about eggs again. An Indian told us that he knew where there was a cayman nest, some distance round the shore. So the R. M., Young America, and I hitched up a bull-cart and went off to

photograph it. It was a mound of dead leaves and rotting vegetation about three feet high, in the steaming center of which lay the eggs, incubating in neat rows. I had cut a few sapling poles out of the way so as to get a good set-up for my motion-picture camera, when there was a grunting bellow and a rush and Ma Cayman came charging out of the reeds to see who was rifling her nest. Young America snatched up a pole and shoved it all the way down the beast's gaping throat, which fetched a hoarse croak from it, and the cayman backed off and scuttered away into the water.

I was busy shooting my picture when the brute charged again. Young America nervily kept fending her off with the pole, yelling to me the while to crank some "good action stuff." Unfortunately Ma was no trained performer. Wherever she fought, there were always twigs and leaves intervening before the lens.

However, even that isn't the story. I mention the incident as an example of how bold that otherwise wariest of reptiles may sometimes be. The story is about the eggs. Ma became discouraged after a particularly deep taste of stick, and retired into the water for good. Then we decided to take home the eggs and see if we could incubate them out in a garbage-pile somewhere nearer home. The question was, in what were we to carry them?

There were forty-nine of them, elongated things about three inches in length and one and a half wide, with a peculiarly fragile white-porcelain looking shell. The only possible receptacle were the R. M.'s high rubber boots. That Southern gentleman is very neat and particular about his appearance and loathes to go sloshing about in lakeside muck if he doesn't have to. Hence the tall felt-lined rubber waders. He hated to give them up. But "for the sake of science" we overruled him, tenderly filled up his footgear with cayman eggs, and started home in our bull-cart, Young America and I carefully nursing a boot each to protect it from the bumps incidental to such travel.

So anxiously did the R.M. keep adjuring us to be careful with his precious boots that we were within sight of camp before the catastrophe occurred. The bulls spied a snake of some sort in the path. Immediately they snorted with affright and went careering off at a tangent, quite out of control. Even so all might have been well; but one bull, unable to sheer his yoke companion off, had to leap an ant-hill. Slam! went the wheel against it, and heaved itself over the top of the unyielding mound. The cart careened over, teetered along on one wheel for a moment, and then turned. We were thrown clear without any damage other than a shaking and a few scratches as we rolled in the spiky grass. But wae's me for the twin felt-lined rubber boots full of cayman eggs! In one fell swoop our scientific experiment was reduced to shambled eggs.

I should add, in order that the charm of this little story may be appreciated to the full, that cayman eggs are not as other honest eggs, of healthy yoke and white, but contain a curious mélange of the primal slime which smells sickishly of fish and musk and which just won't wash out. The R. M. is very angry with us, the more so since the Botanist hasn't stopped laughing about it yet. Neither have we, for that matter. But as a handsome compensation, I have spent hours by the lake shore composing for the R. M. a lament of singularly plaintive beauty, on the bagpipe, entitled "The Coronach of the Cayman Egg."

There is another story which is not without merit. About wall-tents. At this lake the first rain of the season has struck us. It had threatened for days in advance, of course, with black clouds banking up and deep rolls of thunder. So I suggested stretching tarpaulins over the tents as an additional protection against the tropical deluge that was coming. But the Director took offense and reprimanded me for always carping about those excellent tents which he insisted were the very best of their kind.

I accepted my reprimand with proper meekness, for the old gentleman is not well and his temper has suffered accordingly. But I stretched a tarpaulin over our own canvas roof; for I know those mail-order tents; and I dug a trench all round our tent, in which labor the R. M. manfully helped me while Young America loafed and sneered, exactly as did those wicked people who were not of Noah's direct family.

Then the rain came with the lowering of the temperature at nightfall. And only those who have seen the first breaking of a monsoon after six months of dry weather can understand what solid water that was. We lay, in the thick dark of the storm, only fairly dry under our shelter; and none of us dared to risk the touchiness of the Director by asking how he fared. Till we heard the voice of penitent Young America singing that camp-meeting hymn about "Mister Noah, may I come into the Ark of the Lord?" So we sang the second verse in unctuous chorus: "No you can't, sir," etc. And Young America sang the third verse back at us, all about where we could go. But the Director stuck it out in grim silence; and he hates Young America for his levity, with an awful hatred.

The next day he agreed to sanction the necessary expenditure involved in the building, by the Indians, of a palm-thatch hut. Which was what should have been done at the very outset; for those canvas tents, unprotected from the heat of the sun, had been veritable baking-ovens.

But that rain was the beginning of the long-drawn-out end. The Director was in no condition to survive a rainy season. A temperature of one hundred and six degrees is no atmosphere for a white man to try to live in; much less a sick man. And one hundred and six was the reading after that first downpour over that heated plain. The effect on the Director's health was immediate and alarming. Plucky as he was and desperately as he tried to totter around and say he was all right, he was reduced to an agonized hobble, with bent back and swelling limbs. All that he could diagnose of his own case was that his limbs ached excruciatingly. He fought the inevitable for a week; and then—after a long and serious consultation with the rest of us, the first consultation since the beginning of our travels—he decided that, though it broke his heart to abandon the expedition, he would have to do so, and that, immediately.

There was still work for the rest of us to do at the lake, so the pioneer most helpfully offered to send his own two sons to convey the Director back to Rurrenabaque with all speed. There was just time, if the journey could be made without delays, to connect with the wood-burning launch that came as far as Altamarani every two months. From there he was to hurry on to the hospital at Porto Velho.

So he has gone. And alone, without even his secretary. The egregious Young America has been a growing trial to the directorial complex from the very beginning. The pent-up exasperation has been accumulating for nearly a year; and with relief in sight, it flooded over. The nerve-shattered old gentleman confided in me that he wouldn't stand "that young ruffian" alone with himself in any circumstances, and that he wished me joy of him.

Exit, accordingly, the Eminent Director. He has made his mistakes, during the course of the expedition and before its start, due entirely to just two things—lack of knowledge about equipment and lack of understanding of grown-up human nature. And he has suffered most of the penalty himself. I wish him luck on his way out; and I mark him off as Number Three, the third to leave the expedition.

Chapter XXV

FROM WHITE WATER TO BLACK.

We are left in the throes of disintegration. We have been out for the best part of a year. Some of it has been fun; some of it has been hard. For some of us less fun and more hardship than for others. The fever has hit some of us harder than the others; and the blood condition of all of us is poor. Little wounds and even scratches, don't heal so easily as they should. Trifles that could be neglected at home must be very carefully kept antiseptic here; to which is added the permanent danger from the frightfully infectious condition of the cook.

Upon weighing all these less pleasant aspects of expedition work in the balance, we find that some of us have had enough and are more than ready to cry quits and go home. Some, again, could stand a little more, but their work at home calls for them. Only three of us feel that we can continue with the original object of the expedition—to reach Manáos, the capital of the Brazilian State of Amazonas, situated just above the junction of the Rio Negro with the Father of All the Waters; and from there to work up the black waters, northwestward, and to try to find a new way out over the mountains to Bogotá.

So it has been decided that I shall take the R. M. and Young America and get down to Manáos as soon as we can conclude our work here, and there outfit for the long pull up the great northern tributary. Fate has descended upon my head, and I am to be that much criticized and little to be envied thing, the director of the last remnant of the expedition. Gods of Travel grant that I may have profited by my own critical observation of my predecessor!

Now that the decision has been made and I have accepted the unpleasant job, I am anxious to get out of this district as fast as I can. The rainy season on the northern side of the Amazon begins, for some mysterious reason, six months after it does here on the southern side; and my one hope of getting through is to be well into the foot-hills up there before the floods make the lower country impassable.

Another cogent reason that I have for getting down-river is to find some physician who knows something about tropical parasites. Something has burrowed into the calf of my leg and has set up house-keeping there. Not a screw-

worm. We have all had screw-worms and have found them well up to standard description. We have found a hypodermic injection of quinine to be an improvement on the native method of doping them with tobacco-juice. I don't know that the squeezing process hurts any the less; but it is certainly more antiseptic and at least it kills two bugs with one stone.

This thing that I have doesn't respond to quinine, and I don't know what else I dare to try. I have tried to cut it out, but it seems to have a burrow which runs all the way behind the shin-bone, into which it retires; and all I have succeeded in doing is to leave my leg in a swollen and puffy condition. I imagine that this queer beast is something out of the swamp, and that possibly a medico with tropical experience will be able to tell me what is good for it.

So we are back in Rurrenabaque once more, all of us. The process of disintegration has become acute. The Director's plan, arranged before he left, had been that the rest of the expedition—other than my little remnant—was to work some of the smaller rivers and so travel slowly to Manáos under the leadership of the Entomologist. But a ridiculous vanity has brought that plan to naught. The Botanist's dignity complex, forsooth, recoils from working under the leadership of the Entomologist, a man no older than himself. He has submitted to all the dominance from a director that he intends to; and if anybody is to direct the party from now on, it must be himself.

The Entomologist has no foolish inhibitions. To him it would make no difference who led the party, provided only that that person were competent. But the Botanist has made himself so consistently ridiculous, with his humors and his tantrums, that no one of the party can feel that he is competent. On the other hand is the late Director's exasperated charge that the Botanist had done nearly as much as the Statistician to try to wreck the expedition, so the Entomologist shrinks from accepting the responsibilities of leadership with the obstreperous Botanist in his party.

There the matter rests and the resultant bickering has but accentuated the dead-lock and so riveted it that the whole plan has gone by the board. Since it is difficult for the professors to come to an agreement, the party will now wind up its affairs here. It will abandon the project of working the tributary rivers and will proceed to Manáos and so home. We have a suspicion that the Botanist, the man who prided himself on never having taken any physical exercise, has found the going harder than he ever imagined it would be. He has lost great pounds of weight, of course, like all of us; and he is more scared than he will admit about the general rundown condition of our health. He is anxious to get out and home. But his ponderous vanity forces him to find some excuse for his nervousness. So with consistent deliberation he is making things difficult. Almost do we believe that the Director's accusation was right.

Whether or no, they go home. They must be content with their achievement of having explored, and collected over, an unknown lake and unknown river. I believe that none of them needs be ashamed of his work; for all have discovered sundry new species. Which, as I have said before, is the ultimate ambition of a field scientist.

Illustration
The Bold Steam-launch that Journeys Farther toward Nowhere than any Other

Illustration
River Boats, Large and Small

Illustration
Cooking the poison out of the mandioca yam to make eatable farinha out of it

Illustration
Just a Jungle of Wild Bananas

It is a pity that some god of learning cannot endow with cast-iron health and steel nerves, men who will venture as much as they have ventured, so that physical condition and resultant mental upsets could not break up an expedition which has achieved so much and which started out with the ambition of doing so much more.

I wish them a safe run home with all their specimens, and many honorary degrees apiece as the result of their findings. I mark them off as Numbers Four, Five, and Six to leave the expedition.

News comes that the little wood-burning launch has arrived at Altamarani, which is the farthest point upriver that it can make. The news is brought by a lieutenant of the army, who is accompanied by a young surgeon on a recruiting mission, the lieutenant to catch the conscripts and the surgeon to see that they are physically fit. As a result of their visit, all the youths of serviceable age in Rurrenabaque have taken to the deep woods, there to remain until the menace is past.

The surgeon's arrival has been one of those miracles to which so many good people point as indisputable evidence of a personal God. For at the last moment a horrible thing has happened.

The man Howard, the old-time Westerner, has been pathetically inseparable from our party. He took the Ichthyologist and two others out to his *chakra*—his lair, one might say—twenty miles out in the jungle, to show them some real sport. Ranging the woods ten miles on the hither side, the Ichthyologist wanted to shoot a pool with a half-charge of dynamite, and expressed his usual distaste for handling the stuff. Whereupon the old-timer chimed in:

"Give me a hold uv it, son. I've fired more o' that stuff off 'n yuh c'n shake a stick at."

He took the charge with experienced despatch, bit off a piece of fuse, inserted it, lit the end—and then the inconceivable horror followed. How it was possible nobody can yet understand. Perhaps the fuse was faster than the fuses the old man had been accustomed to. Anyhow, instead of throwing it immediately into the pool, he held it just one terrible instant too long. The blast went off in his hands!

It was a hideous thing to happen—a horror, even if it had happened to a careless working-man on a building excavation within a few seconds' reach of an ambulance call. Think of the awfulness of it in the jungle, twenty miles away from the nearest hope of help in a wattleand-daub village. Twenty miles they marched that man. The other three bound up his mangled stump with their handkerchiefs and shirts. One hand was torn off, a mass of shattered bones and nerve fibers, close below the wrist, and the other was an indistinguishable pulp of quivering flesh. And in that condition the old man had to walk twenty miles!

Why didn't they improvise a first-aid stretcher with poles run through their coat sleeves? Because they were no fiction heroes. Three men cannot carry another in a stretcher over twenty miles of jungle trails without many and long halts for rest. It would have been a labor of two full days. To send one of the number back to the *chakra* to collect the whole force of Indians to act as relay bearers, meant ten miles there and ten miles back, another full day. And time had to be counted by minutes. So they walked the wretched man the whole way, starting immediately, before exhaustion should set in, and keeping him going with injections of heart stimulants out of their snake-bite outfits.

It is an everlasting credit to that hard old frontiersman's sheer pluck and stamina that he arrived in Rurrenabaque at all. And the mercy of Providence that the army recruiting surgeon happened to be there just on that day; for his last visit had been two years before. And then—God forgive that "best-equipped expedition that ever left New York"!—the only possible surgical instruments available were a taxidermist's scalpel which Young America had brought along for skinning birds, a hack-saw out of my tool-kit, and the Entomologist's can of chloroform.

With these, and with the inexpert assistance of our party, the surgeon operated. One hand had to come off at the wrist; and of the other, two fingers only could be saved.

The catastrophe has put the final seal on the determination of some of our party to get out and home as fast as possible. Particularly since the surgeon shrugs with the callousness of a man accustomed to jungle tragedies and says:

"Señores, these things are but the hazards of life in the wilderness. It might just as well have been one of you."

Which is awesomely true. Many a time have I shot a pool for the Ichthyologist with a half-stick of dynamite and six inches of fuse.

The next day, I with my faithful remnant left by balsa to catch the launch at Altamarani. The Entomologist almost wept that he couldn't come with me on a quick fifteen-hundred-mile jump through the known territory covered by steam launches and get into the unknown country of the black water on the northern side, but time forbids. To arrive so far has taken much longer than was estimated, and his work at home demands his presence. I, too, wished that he might have been able to accompany me, as also the Ichthyologist; for they have both proved themselves to be good men, easy-tempered and stanch *compañeros* of the trail. Which are the most necessary assets for long and arduous jungle travel. It doesn't matter whether a man can shoot or whether he can cook or whether he is an expert woodsman or whether he knows anything at all. But it does most vitally matter—as the past records of this expedition, and many another that I might cite,

have shown—whether a man can travel in enforced close association with others through uncomfortable circumstances and still keep the peace and stand by when necessary.

My record is of men and their doings in the unknown corners of the earth. I propose to say nothing, therefore, about civilized travel by launch and later by river steamer. Except, most briefly, that the journey is made in stages, in launches plying the stretches between the many mighty rapids and transshipping to other launches below them. At each such stage is the remains of a decadent settlement. Villages, whole towns, which sprang to mushroom growth in the days when rubber was booming as the only product of these jungles and which have sunk into a moldering desuetude.

At Villa Bella the Beni River meets the Madeira, as noble a river, even that far up, as the Hudson at New York. On the opposite shore of the junction is Villa Martin, Brazil, where one suddenly finds all one's carefully acquired Spanish lost in a confusion of sounds which are just familiar enough to be exasperating and yet quite unintelligible until the ear accustoms itself to recognize the Portuguese nasals and aspirates. After which it is refreshingly easy to get along with the new language, for Portuguese—so says the rest of South America—is only Spanish badly spoken.

At Villa Martin one meets the relic of one of the greatest tragedies of rubber, the Madeira-Mamoré Railroad, the costliest track in the world. Built by British capital during the boom days, to carry from Porto Velho past the long strings of the Madeira-Mamoré Rapids. Two hundred and sixty-three miles of track at a cost of thirty-seven million dollars and, as the saying goes, "a life for every tie." Those were the days when the Panama Canal was building and frantic physicians were only beginning to learn how to keep people alive in the tropics. Eventually, at Porto Velho, as at Panama, a great series of copper-screened hospitals was put up and a huge staff of doctors and nurses was imported from England. And finally man conquered the wilderness. Then the rubber bubble burst. And now a train runs over that track once every two weeks.

At Porto Velho is stationed a very pleasant young Irish doctor in charge of the empty hospitals. He looked with interest at my leg, but admitted frankly that his tropical experience was small and that he couldn't begin to diagnose my bug. However, he offered to try to cut it out if I would overlook the fact that he happened unfortunately to be entirely out of local anaesthetics just then. By this time the thing had opened up a blow-hole through the skin and could be seen at intervals. I was worried enough to overlook any medical faux pas; I had horrible visions of some new form of guinea-worm or something. So the nice doctor-man whose experience was small carved a hot-cross-bun well into my calf and probed around for as long as I could hold out.

The net result was to add a little experience to his meager store. My leg has puffed up worse than after my own crude attempt, and my hope centers itself now on Manáos as a last chance. If nothing can be done there, I begin to be afraid that I shall have to mark myself off as Number Seven, the seventh to abandon the expedition.

Porto Velho is the last of the transshipment stages. One gains some conception of the enormous bulk of the Amazon when one considers that the Madeira, which

is only the fifth largest of its tributaries, is navigable by ocean steamers as far as Porto Velho, over fifteen hundred miles from the sea.

This, like all the other up-river settlements, is a mournful relic of a hoped-for prosperity that never materialized. A great railway roundhouse and shops stand silent, full of rusting equipment. Elaborate administration buildings and a pair of fine hotels, all surrounded by wide verandas and inclosed with miles of copper screening, look out over emptiness. A few British officials draw fat salaries and curse their exile with the yearning consistency of the race when it is far from home. A few Americans, stranded there since the old construction days, still talk hopefully of "God's country." A few stores, a few broken poor white trash, a mixed population of Brazilians and West-Indian Negroes. And that's all.

It is possible that, as time passes, some other form of trade may be developed in these far-away reaches. But on the high tide of rubber, they sprang up and on the swiftly falling tide of rubber they fell. And there they are. Dank graveyards of towns, apathetically hoping against hope that rubber may come back. And rubber will never come back. Its doom was sealed on the day that that wise Englishman, whoever he was—and he is cursed under many names—smuggled rubber seed out of the country with the far-sighted hope that it might grow in the similar climate of the Straits Settlements. It grew and throve amazingly; and as soon as the plantations began to bear, it became immediately evident that plantation rubber produced under conditions of cheap Asiatic labor could easily undersell jungle rubber.

A little business is still carried on in the best-grade "fine Para." But the plantations have virtually signed the death-warrant of the whole of the upper Amazon basin, a district nearly as large as the United States. It may recover some day, if something else be found which is valuable enough to induce men to face its jungles. But that something will not be rubber.

The only other item of interest to record about these dead rubber settlements is that at each stage we heard news of the sick Director, who had passed two months before; still alive and bearing grimly up in his race to reach competent medical attention at Manáos. And of the relentless Statistician, who had passed four months before that; also still very much alive, notwithstanding the Director's prophecy about his certain death; and still very ferociously vindictive, leaving, as he passed, a withering trail of vituperation about the frightful gang of crooks and spurious scientists who followed in his footsteps.

The story has its humorous aspect in that the Director, following up this trail of black libel, tried desperately to rehabilitate the reputation of his expedition by telling everybody what a crank and a conscienceless liar was the Statistician, whom he had been very glad to get rid of. The result of the charges and counter-charges was that we harmless American explorers had to win our way through an ever-increasing barrage of cold hostility.

The suspicion of us reached its highest peak at Porto Velho. For nobody can be so aloofly suspicious of a stranger as an Englishman entrenched in his own little select circle upon alien soil. The officials of the railroad and the subsidiary steamboat company were courteous, as always, and even more helpful than their duty demanded. But there was no glad hand stretched out to an English-speaking

cousin who had arrived after a year's travel through the farther jungles. Their general attitude is perfectly explained by a typically English remark which was let fall in the Gringo Club—for it is an axiom, of course, that wherever two or three Englishmen are gathered together there must be a club. The speaker, with arched eyebrows and aloof boredom, voiced the general opinion.

"Of course, don't you know, they may be quite all right; but on the other hand they may be bally outsiders. You can't ever tell about those Yankees. Queer people, what?"

I trust that our conduct in Porto Velho was such as somewhat to dispel that opinion.

Chapter XXVI

MANÁOS, THE MUSHROOM THAT DIED.

Manáos must go down in the record as the City of Deliverance. For at Manáos a benevolent Providence moved a certain British scientific foundation to establish a research station for the particular purpose of studying equatorial diseases. In charge of this station is an unlooked-for good man; one of his lesser feats has been to abolish yellow fever from the district and he is a wizard with a microscope. With him is a young assistant whose especial study is tropical parasites of every genus known and unknown in their relation to genus homo. He could recite untold horrors about parasites who choose their hosts with fine discrimination, and he was full of enthusiasm to wage battle against the saurian that had taken up residence in my leg and had by this time waxed so fat and strong that I was only a stage ahead of a crutch, and limped along with a stick.

But this was no common affair to be disposed of with undue haste. It had to be approached with circumspection. For rare creatures imported out of the unknown jungles were not to be slain offhand. The ardent scientist wanted that bug alive, to breed it out and see just what kind of monster it might develop into.

So his first day's work on the case was only "preparatory." He merely opened up the entrance to the beast's tunnel—this one did have local anaesthetics—and dressed the gash and sent me home. The next day he was all ready for war, armed with probes and tweezers and sundry lotions obnoxious to bugs. The cunning reptile had retreated, of course, to the end of his lair behind the shin-bone. But this medico knew all about that. He applied one of his lotions to the hole, which brought the brute to the door gasping for breath. The scientist was waiting with ready tweezers; and in an instant he plunged them in and grasped the thing by the neck.

"Ha! success at the first attempt!" I groaned.

But, though well and truly collared, there the beast stayed; and pulling at it as much as was comfortable for me moved it not an inch.

"Ha!" exclaimed the scientist, in turn. "A *dermatobium!"* and added with delight, "A new one."

He knew all about *dermatobia*, this erudite young man. They were the larvae of a rare and vicious genus of fly. Pollywog-shaped creatures with a mouth at the thin end and a row of curved retractile spines round the thick end which they could dig in and hold on with like grim Death supplied with fish-hooks. So he gave me the tweezers to hold while he prepared a weak solution of chloroform in a hypodermic syringe with which to relax Mr. Dermatobium's stout muscles. Science, of course, must win over brute force; so in a few seconds the beast came meekly forth, and Science, with a hasty apology, left me to stanch my wound while he tenderly put the captive into some soothing solution to revive it, that it might live out its life cycle and be duly added to the rôle of honor as the first of its species to be known.

But alas! the poor thing never recovered from that cruel hypodermic stab. It died on the scientist's hands. Had it lived, he told me, he might have named it after me as its discoverer and importer. It was a pity. For it was a beautiful thing—so said the scientist. An inch and three quarters long it was, of a slimy white consistency, of slender pear shape, and armed with no less than three rows of wicked black, curved hooks. Personally, I didn't admire it as much as did the scientist; and when he said that all he wanted for his fee was the corpse, I was glad enough to give it to him.

And he bandaged up my leg very nicely, too, and gave me warning that these cunning creatures lined their tunnels with some composition which, when cut into, had a highly septic effect upon human tissue. So I would suffer considerably with a swollen leg. Which I knew about already; and which duly happened again. So I spent my first week in Manáos confined to bed in the best hotel in town. A dollar a day, including meals.

The splendid Manáos hotel system cannot pass without comment. All hotels are graded, first, second, and third class, according to their service and accommodations, and are compelled by law to display a sign proclaiming their social standing. If a first-class hotel is not up to specification when jumped by the inspector, it is promptly reduced to second class, and so remains until it has mended its ways. A system much to be recommended, which might be introduced with benefit into our own U.S.A.

The Central, the only hotel in Manáos worthy of the proud first-class sign, is a curious anomaly of good food and appalling hygiene. No color distinction is drawn; and a pleasing diversion in the dining-room is a brace of stark-naked brats who quarrel with the cats for scraps that careless patrons let fall on the floor.

I have never gone into a third-class hotel; but I understand that in them guests provide their own bedding and sleep wherever space may be available on the floor.

Manáos city is another mournful monument of the grandeur that once was. It was the very center of the rubber bubble. It has known wild days, the equal of any mushroom mining-town, when hard men and bejeweled women drank and gambled in its cafés, when the reckless new-rich lit their cigars with hundred-milreis notes and naked Indians drank champagne.

In enthusiastic response to the wealth that poured in from the jungles, it built a forty-million-dollar system of floating docks to accommodate ocean freighters along its waterfront, which rises fifty feet every rainy season. Electric trolley lines.

A huge modern brewery. A five-million-dollar opera-house, for which it imported eighteen Italian artists—of whom ten immediately died of yellow fever, and the rest fled; and there has never been an opera since.

The mushroom that sprang up out of the jungle with tropic luxuriance and color died as swiftly as many things die in the tropic jungles. Those were the days when rubber was black gold; and now that the price of rubber is very little more than that of black mud, the shell of all that magnificence remains and the city of rosy dreams has sunk back to a drab desuetude. Necessity has produced other industries out of the jungle; notably Brazil-nuts and palm-oils and chicle gum and a little hardwood. But these are sober businesses conducted by hard-working men who have no time to indulge in dreams.

As an American I wonder why all these businesses are in the hands of the British and the Germans. I ask the American keeper of a small American store why he deals with German export houses rather than with his own. To which he replies doggedly that a German house will deliver his goods to him on time, packed and labeled in Portuguese according to his specifications, and, above all, up to sample. None of which, he avers, he can expect from an American house. It is the same heartrending old story of American business: Anything will do for the South-American trade. But South America has reached the point of insisting that anything won't do; and it is our shrewd foreign competitors who are wide awake to that fact.

We reach this town of magnificent dead hopes just as it eagerly throbs anew to a recrudescence of the dream of wealth. Balata has been discovered on the upper Rio Negro; and the city seethes with the same excitement that attended the Klondike gold-rush—and has attended every other.

Balata is a white latex something like rubber which exudes from the cortex of a hardwood tree. *(Mimusops globosa.)* It has a peculiar non-slip quality which renders it invaluable for preparations to apply to machine beltings, so it commands a good price in the market—better, even, than the black gold. And the story of this balata-strike is the old story, repeated over again, of any gold-strike.

Three men, Colombian jungle prospectors, came down out of the back of beyond with three boats full of a high-grade white balata. They found a market for it immediately, at the high price of eleven milreis per kilo—better, much, than rubber at its best. Immediately the whole town is agog with excitement and curiosity. The prospectors, true to breed, keep a tight mouth, hoping to go back for another load. Their only protection is secrecy, for there is no law under which a man may "stake out" a balata claim, covering so and so many square miles of forest.

But what chance have they? Every adventurous youth and every hard-bitten old rubber man is preparing to follow those three when they return up-river. As it was in the Klondike days, so it is here now. Somewhere up the great Black Water, anywhere between six hundred and one thousand miles away, in that lawless border territory claimed by both Brazil and Colombia and administrated by neither, is balata; and men who will face the risks of the journey and the tremendous rapids of the river are plenty.

Experienced jungle men make their preparations and lay in their supplies with quiet efficiency. Tenderfeet rush wildly about, begging for information about jungle conditions. What food must they buy? What clothes? What boats? How much? The few who know anything about the upper rivers—and they are very few indeed—remain craftily silent and try to keep their own preparations secret. Here is a race for wealth pending, in which only the best men will win and the mediocre will fall by the way and the devil will surely get the hindmost. For balata grows few and far between and there won't be enough for even the few who do reach the far border where it grows. A thousand miles of up-river jungle travel is no comfortable jaunt to be undertaken without careful preparation and complete equipment and some knowledge about jungles.

Yet the craziest outfits are getting ready for the plunge. The wise ones have been forehanded in grabbing all the available craft of "monteria" type—stout twenty-five- and thirty-foot craft with a palm-thatch cubbyhole cabin built over the after end and propelled by half a dozen paddle-men or rowers—and they, knowing the accidents and delays that may befall at the many rapids, have set off in advance to lie in wait near the far border. The not-so-wise ones are left to run about wildly, buying up the wrecks of old monterias that have not been used since the rubber days; patching, calking, outfitting some inexpert how or other. Oars are made by lashing paddles to poles. Hasty tarpaulins are painted over with palm-oil and resin as substitute for linseed, and they stick to everything they cover. The waterfront reeks with half-dried fish. More than anything else do these makeshifts bring it home to one that Manáos has long outgrown the days when jungle prospecting was its sole industry.

My own inquiries about a possible route over the mountains meet with the usual *"Quem sabe?"* Who knows? A river steamer runs up the Rio Negro for a distance perhaps of six hundred miles; and as far as that is known country. Beyond that is the "upper river," and information about the upper-river country is as varied and as wild as information used to be about Espía and the lake. I have talked with the three balata men, but they are naturally suspicious. They have been pestered by so many eager fortune-hunters that they won't believe a party of gringos can be so stupid as to want no more than to make a journey and take photographs of Indians. All that I can get out of them is that the Rio Negro itself is not possible as a route for ascent of the mountains. It can be descended only with difficulty, on account of the bad rapids up in the foot-hills. But ascent would be a labor of many bodily portages of canoe as well as gear.

Such other information as I can glean leads me to consider either one of the tributaries, the Issana or the Uaupés. Doctors Koch and Stradelli have both explored part of the lower Uaupés and Dr. Hamilton Rice, the American, has made a map with his usual meticulous care.

I am met with dismal stories about each. The balata men laugh at me.

"Senhor, it is a journey of six months to get into the upper foot-hills," they tell me, "and in six months the rains will catch you. And the senhor doesn't know how those foot-hills of the Cordillera are."

Don't I though? think I to myself; but I feel all the more doleful on account of that knowledge.

I can find out nothing about the upper Issana at all; except *"Quem sabe?"* About the Uaupés they tell me of thirty-one bad rapids necessitating portage,—caxoeira is the Portuguese for what on the Bolivian side was called *cachuela*—and they promise me bad Indians on both rivers.

None of which is very reassuring for the very new director of the Dauntless Three. I hold council of war with the R.M. and Young America. For my first and most important rule of directorship, evolved out of my observation during the past year, is to eschew rigidly everything that the other director ever did. So we have no didactic decisions handed down from the aloof pedestal of leadership; we get together and talk it over. Such and such information is available. Such are the possibilities on this side; such are they on that side. What shall we do? Similarly, such and such preparations have to be made. Do you, therefore, attend to this item, and do you, other one, attend to that item while I attend to some other item.

Thus, surely, dissatisfaction is avoided and later criticism eliminated. We have shared the decisions and the responsibilities, and upon our own heads be the results. And the best tribute I can give to my helpers twain, is that the late director would never recognize them—especially his loathed secretary—through their present disguise of keen coöperation. It is beginning to be borne in upon me that the easiest way to lead an expedition is not to lead it but to go side by side with it.

Yet in this case of choosing a river a decision was not arrived at without taking a majority vote of two against Young America's one. He spoke his mind with his customary directness.

"Aw, blah!" said he. "What 'n hell do we care about hunting some back-alley trail into Bogotá! Let's load up a boat full of trade goods and a boiling-down outfit and go balata-hunting."

But we—alas for the lost romance and irresponsibility of youth!—we refused to second the splendid motion. The R.M. because he is too respectable, and I because I am too cannily cautious. We told him, "Get thee behind us, Young Satan," and in the same breath we both of us mouthed that unpleasant word "Duty." A temptation it was—and still is—to throw care to the winds and go joyously a-balata-ing. But my uncomfortable memory called up old stories that I had heard about men who knew nothing about gold, and yet had the misguided temerity to go a-Klondik-ing. All of which I properly and severely retailed to Young America. But he, with his usual disrespect toward directors, said only: "Bull! Aren't we aiming at something much worse?"

I was forced to admit that I feared me, 'twas so, good youth. But all the same, we decided that we would discount all local information about the upper rivers and would outfit for a stiff journey, and, when we arrived at those far places, would choose our route in accordance with such *"quem sabe"* as we could gather on the spot.

Outfitting is a distinct joy and a sinful pride. We draw up elaborate lists, including every convenience of which we had felt the need on the down trip. This luxury shall we have and that necessity shall we surely not overlook, we tell one another with explosions of derogatory reminiscence about the outfit of the "best-equipped expedition that ever left New York."

And then I take a blue pencil and edit without mercy. No useless tonnage is going to be portaged over thirty-one rapids and packed over unknown mountain trails. Four tons of stuff waited for us in Manáos under the orders of that other unfortunate director. More of those expensive American canned goods packed in those forty-five pound wooden cases. I sent it all back. If we wish to make a journey that experienced rivermen call hard, we can't burden ourselves with things that their experience has shown them they cannot carry. As they live, so must we live. Rice and beans and *baccalhau* and *farinha,* with possibly just the least little minimum of tinned butter and potted-meat pastes to help down the sawdust bread that is made out of the *mandioca* or manioc yam and called cassava.

The irreducible minimum of personal baggage and equipment for our work is a sore problem. We argue bitterly about cots and carpenters' tools. The R. M. votes for hammocks, according to the custom of the country, and is firmly set against tools. I am willing to concede the former, but the latter I cannot relinquish. And yet their weight is a terrible consideration.

With all this talk about weight it must be understood that we must sacrifice the mere conveniences of travel in order to carry the ordinary means for paying our way. For we are going into country where money is just something queer to look at and every naked Indian who does a day's paddling for us must be paid in trade goods—knives and machetes and ax-heads and fish-hooks and so on. So that we must carry about double the weight to pay for things which we *must* carry.

I went, not very hopefully, to consult our United States consular agent about up-river travel and what trade goods to select. The gentleman was not very helpful. He knew nothing about river travel; and he was by nature a doleful alarmist.

Up-river was bad country for strangers to venture, he insisted darkly. The people there were a wild and lawless gang and things happened which those men didn't want to have blazed abroad. White folks were, therefore, particularly unwelcome, because all Amazonas remembered the trouble that had been made by Sir Roger Casement about the ill-treatment of the Putumayo Indians. So the wicked men who traded the upper rivers didn't want witnesses, who might have consciences, to come snooping around; and that was why nobody knew anything about the upper rivers; and why the few who knew anything at all kept their mouths carefully shut.

There was one man in Manáos who knew all about the upper rivers, and that was Jotte Jae. That was the cognomen known throughout the million and a half square miles of the State of Amazonas, derived from the Portuguese pronunciation of the initials of Y. J. Araujo, a great trader who had established a trade-supply house in Manáos and who held all Amazonas in the hollow of his hand. The Emperor of Amazonas, he was called. But this Jotte Jae was a ruthless man,—and the official distinctly lowered his voice as he retailed the scandal—a robber baron who desired no strangers butting in on the fell secrets of his doings; and rumor had it that his hired bravos had recently quietly done away with two or three parties of strangers who had ventured in upon his forbidden territory. The official warning, then, issued solemnly by the consul in his rôle of adviser to American citizens, was by all means not to go up-river, and to steer very carefully clear of this mediaeval despot.

So I, having in mind certain other official alarmists whom I have met, went around to glean more scandal about this sinister figure. The replies that I received were illuminatingly national in character. Brazilians who ought to have known, shrugged their shoulders and said, *"Quem sabe?"* English business men said: "We-el, we don't exactly know. We have no evidence at all, don't cher know. But we don't seem to be able to get any foothold up there." Germans said: "It is maybe so; but what matter? He interferes not with us."

I seemed to be up against a condition exactly like the old Hudson's Bay fur stories, when competition was discouraged with a rifle. The only course, in the circumstances, seemed to be to go and get a passport from this formidable monarch of a million and a half square miles of territory. So I went.

Audience was granted with a gratifying lack of ceremony. Away at the end of a great square block of trade store was a little glass office, and in it sat the monarch. An old man now, but keen and alert and hard-eyed. The face, it was true, of a merciless man of business. I received the impression at once that he resented foreigners—resented their business competition in his country, I should say. But, with Brazilian politeness, he rose and with his own hands placed a chair for me, dismissed three secretaries to whom he seemed to be giving orders all at one time, and asked me what he might have the honor of doing for me.

I felt that he had known all about me and my plans a full week ago. But I tried to paraphrase into my best Portuguese that I had come to talk about shoes and ships and sealing-wax and cabbages and, most particularly, kings.

"Hm!" he said when he at last understood. "Trade goods, of course. But why do you come to me, senhor? My salesmen are well accustomed to making out lists of outfit."

Since I was no business rival, I was bold.

"Because, senhor," I said, "they tell me that you are the greatest as well as the wickedest man in all Amazonas."

For a moment he seemed to swell up. But then he seemed to be pleased with both compliments.

"Who are *they?*" he demanded suddenly.

"*They*," I said, "is a composite person of many nationalities, including Brazilians with many long tongues."

"Hm!" he said again. And then, "Are you not afraid, senhor, to go into those bad upper rivers?"

"Yes," I said quickly. "That's why I come to you for a passport."

This time the hard mouth relaxed and presently almost smiled. He kept half smiling thus into the distance for some time, while I wondered which of his henchmen up-river he was thinking of telling off to do the dirty deed. Then he rang a bell and sent for his son.

To me he said gravely, "Senhor, I have not met other gringos like you." And to his son, "Have João make out a list of all the trade goods that the senhor will need; and do you dictate letters to our up-river agents and bring them to me to sign, myself."

So that was the treatment I met with at the hands of the wicked Emperor of Amazonas. Later he sent his son to the hotel with the letters and with a long list of the trade goods that his man João had selected as being best suited for my needs;

all carefully tabulated and numbered, according to case, contents, price, and equivalent value of each article in terms of labor and trade as established by custom among the up-river Indians.

"What about these goods?" I asked the young man. "How do I arrange to take delivery?"

"They are being soldered in tin containers, against getting wet in the rapids," he said, "and they will be delivered direct to the steamer in care of our agent." And he added with naïve lack of self-consciousness: "My father is charging you the regular traders' price, not the gringos' price... Many people are very great liars."

A very prince of wicked brigands was this son of the Emperor. He gave me a lot of most useful information, too. He couldn't tell me about the foot-hills; nobody knew them, he said. But he gave me all sorts of those "tips" which are so useful to have: How to negotiate with rivermen and Indians; how not to get cheated; how to approach an Indian village; what pitfalls of etiquette to avoid; and so on.

Particularly must I provide myself with a carved stick to use as a calling-card when visiting a chief. At São Gabriel, the farthest point of civilization, was an old Indian witch-doctor who would make me a stick.

Most particularly must I avoid the Chima Indians of the Upper Issana if I went that way. And if I went up the Uaupés, even more particularly yet must I avoid the Tiquié Tucana, who had killed two traders a month ago by shooting them full of poisoned darts out of blow-guns. But, he assured me, all the other Indians would be perfectly safe and pleasant to deal with; for they had been well tamed by the river traders—as far as the traders went.

Another of those Scylla-Charybdis choices. However, I feel very comfortably relieved of a vast burden of selecting trade goods for a river journey about which I know nothing, and reassuringly forewarned against certain specific dangers which can accordingly easily be avoided. At a single fortunate stroke the bulk of the labor of preparation has been disposed of. The little stern-wheel steamer of the Companha do Navigazione, which goes up the Rio Negro once a month as far as Santa Isabel, will leave in a few days and we shall be ready.

Above Santa Isabel begins the lawless country of the upper rivers, where *expedicionistas* will be on a par with balateros, every man on his own merits, all struggling to get on up-river, and nobody knowing much more about it than his neighbor. One comforting thought is that we have a letter from the wicked Emperor to his hired assassin at Santa Isabel and we can sit at our ease in the hotel to which our present host cordially recommends us, while the local bravo scurries at his master's command to find boats or canoes, or whatever it may be, for our further transportation.

Chapter XXVII

THE BLACK WATER.

One of the first observable things about this Rio Negro is that it is really "black water," a clear thin ink when dipped up in the hand, and black night at a

depth of ten feet. This last is a scientific observation made by myself, when I went over after the frying-pan. A certain gentleman of great wisdom who knew all about trees and plants and things said that the color came from submerged roots higher up; and another gentleman of much learning who knew all about rocks and mud and things said that the ink was alluvial. Myself, I agree with my Indian paddle-men who say that in the lake in the far foot-hills where the river takes its rise, the all-black spirit of evil, Daipurui, bathes once a year in order to remove the great ticks that come to him from the tapirs which he rides through the jungles at dusk.

I have never met Daipurui, though I have trailed many tapirs at dusk, but I am filled with admiration for that gentleman's hardihood in being able to nurture *Margaropus Annulatus* for a year without washing him off. In one hour I have experienced acute distress from *a* single infant of the species. Margaropus senior—or rather, señora, for the great truth about the surpassing viciousness of the female of the species is indeed a truth—grows to the size of a twenty-five-cent piece and hangs on with eight barbed legs and a pair of mandibles and a proboscis. In view of which fact I never took much stock in the efficacy of "black water." I invariably used kerosene-oil.

Margaropus's method of securing a host—euphemistic term used by Entomologists—is an extraordinary example of faith in a beneficent Creator. It hatches out as a tiny bugling in the ground; forthwith it climbs up the nearest blade of grass and waits in prayer and fasting, with all legs outstretched, for an explorer to pass that way. Entomologists, with the amazing patience of their kind, have proved that such a one can live for four years with nothing to eat—and still remain hopeful.

But this is anticipation. We haven't arrived at the canoe-men yet. We are still on the river steamer, laboring up the Rio Negro. The lower Rio Negro has been well described by the aforementioned wise men. I give a précis of their voluminous writings. This great tributary is four miles wide at Manáos, eighty miles above its junction with the Amazon. Dense jungle not only overhangs it but extends far into the water. Between the tree trunks swift black water reaches back into the sub-gloom for unknown distances, sometimes for miles.

Belts of thorn-leafed palms fringe the river for miles at a stretch; to be followed by belts of huge trees indistinguishable through their masses of strangling liana vines. Only at long intervals sporadic outcrops of granite formation offer a landing-place, each of which harbors the remains of a pathetic rubber settlement.

Thousands of emerald islands dot the great stream and make one weep that they cannot be transplanted to Long Island Sound, where each would be the envied residence of a millionaire. Here the Government will concede any one of them to anybody for four and one half cents an acre.

A startling peculiarity of the region is the almost total absence of animal life. Till one asks oneself where, after all, are animals to live in this vast area which is flooded fifty feet deep every rainy season? A reflection which extends into a not too hopeful review of the industrial future of the territory. For this Amazon plain is so flat even at Manáos, nearly a thousand miles from the sea, that the general elevation is less than one thousand feet. What can ever be done with a country

that is flooded six months of every year? Even jungle produce—rubber, palm-oil, Brazil-nuts, etc.—can be worked only during the dry season.

Such is the Rio Negro for six hundred miles. I can add nothing to the elaborate descriptions given by meticulous cartographers. What nobody seems to have written about is the altogether delightful method of conducting business on this river.

The little stern-wheeler is a trading-steamer pure and simple. It has two decks, the upper one of which contains six little cabins and is theoretically reserved for passenger accommodation. But since the passengers are all traders and carry their little stock of goods right with them; and since the Jotte Jae agent occupies three of the cabins and uses the corresponding deck frontage for his stock, the difference between the upper and the lower deck is not in kind but only in very small degree.

The steamer snorts and wheezes against the four-mile current for the seven or eight days it takes to reach Santa Isabel; of which period a full forty-eight hours are expended in tying up at the habitable granite outcrops or in merely slowing down to do business on the run.

Slim dugout canoes shoot out from hiding-places under the low-hanging trees, to meet the trader and take on unbelievable loads of luxuries from Manáos. The luxuries consist of *farinha* in baskets lined with banana leaves, and tobacco in six-foot-long torpedo-shaped rolls lapped with rattan cane. A dugout canoe of extreme total capacity of six hundred pounds comes alongside with a crew of three men and takes on a thousand pounds of *farinha*—and the Jotte Jae man writes down the account in a book.

A monteria pulls out from a dim creek and ties on to the running steamer. Men hand down torpedos of tobacco and baskets of *farinha* and bales of *baccalhau* or great slabs of *pirarucu* fish, which smell even worse. The Jotte Jae man shouts down, "So and so many." The men in the monteria shout back, "Right." And they cast off—and the Jotte Jae man writes it down in his book.

The steamer ties up at a sitio, a disintegrating corpse of what has once been the country estate of a rubber baron, and a seedy gentleman climbs out of his hammock on the veranda and checks off his little allowance of tobacco and *farinha* and dried fish—and the Jotte Jae man writes it down in his book.

A truly delightful form of business. These people never pay for anything, for they have no money and they have nothing to give in exchange, and they never will have anything. They are *seringueros* or rubber-gatherers. Years and years and years ago, before the rubber market went blah, they used to explore the vast jungles and milk the wild rubber-trees, *Hevea Braziliensis* mostly, though any old thing that would give white latex would do; and they used to make great balls of the stuff, and put a rock in the middle to make good weight, and ship it all down; and Jotte Jae used to send vast steamer-loads of goods to them in exchange—*pâté de foie gras*, and Cross & Blackwell's jams and imported wines, and dear old tinkle-tinkle music boxes. But that was all in the glorious old days when naked Indians drank champagne; the lost-forever days of "Black Gold."

Thus it was that Jotte Jae built up a huge business and two thirds of Manáos and a fortune. And by sending always just a little bit more than the *seringueros* could pay for with their rubber he saw to it that nobody else horned in on this

lucrative field. In other words, by keeping them in debt to him, under which condition the Brazilian law protected him by giving him their produce as long as they remained in debt to him. And they always remained in debt. Then those nasty people in the Straits Settlements began to collect rubber latex from trees which they had planted nice and easy to reach; and the automobile people began to put wood-pulp in their tires instead of "Para first grade"; and there gaped a vast gulf in Amazonas, and rubber fell through it.

This is but a repetition of something I have recorded before. But the condition repeats itself so forcibly at every turn that it is impossible to say anything about the country without repeating.

The tide receded as suddenly as it had risen; and the well-fed populace sat down to wait comfortably for its return *amanha,* which is the same as the Spanish *mañana Amanha* didn't come as quickly as they had hoped; and the longer they waited, the less money was left with which to get out and start life again in some new business.

So nowadays the rivers are all dotted with rubber settlements waiting hopefully and helplessly for rubber to come back. They have waited many years and they have eaten up all the potted meats and worn out all their clothes; and rubber was such easy money that they never learned how to plant a potato or weave a gee-string. They paid for every single thing they ate or used, with black gold; and every single article of them all was sent up to them by Jotte Jae; and his factor had a permanent cabin on the trading-boat, and the boat had special accommodation for carrying rubber.

The American temperament looks upon all this decay and demands impatiently:

"Good Lord! why don't they shake a little pep into themselves and hunt around to develop something else?"

But neither the tropical climate nor the Latin temperament is fruitful of that very American commodity, pep. So the old settlements remain, half tenanted, half falling to pieces; and the river-front verandas are lined with listless people lying in hammocks and still waiting. Eight years have passed since rubber fell down dead; and still they ask eagerly of every monthly boat, "What is the market quotation on rubber?" *"Quem sabe?"* they are told. "One and three quarters; or possibly two." And they shrug and sink back into their hammocks. At three milreis per kilo, or even two and one half—that is fifteen cents per pound, present exchange—they could work it at a small profit; and they don't understand. The best jungle rubber is admittedly the best, they claim with pathetic insistence. Why, then, is so very little of it used? How are they to know that modern manufacturers are few who will use the best when they can get a cheaper? Somebody has told them that an automobile tire in the United States costs eighty dollars. For eighty dollars they could produce five hundred and thirty-three pounds of pure rubber; and they stand aghast at the sinfulness of the difference. So do I, for that matter.

Illustration

This Giant Excrescence of Granite is "Discovered" by Each New Explorer

So I, too, Include it

Illustration
The Hotel, Left Background, and Annex, Foreground
at Santa Isabel, with a Mournful Remnant of Balata Boats

So there they are, those epicures of the good old days who now have nothing. Not a single thing of any sort.

They are hopeful, hollow-eyed, helpless hammock addicts, waiting for the *amanha* of rubber. And that is the reason for the delightful method of doing business on the Rio Negro.

These people, fallen from the affluence of *pâté de foie gras* and champagne, live now on the *farinha* and dried fish and tobacco which Jotte Jae sends them and which they never pay for. And Jotte Jae keeps on sending them their dole because they all owe him frightful sums of money; and if he doesn't feed them they will grow angry and never pay him anything at all; and Jotte Jae, too, lives in hope that perhaps in some miraculous way rubber may come back; and so the Jotte Jae man still maintains a permanent cabin on the trading-boat and feeds all Amazonas and writes it down in his book.

There is a Brazilian paraphrase of our proverb, "All things come to him who waits." It says, "If one has but the patience to wait till *amanha,* even the price of rubber will come." But I fear me for my good friend Jotte Jae that there is no *amanha* for rubber.

There is a pleasing little story about that national word. A hard-working but not very erudite American electrical person, who came to do something for the trolley company, saw an elaborate funeral pass, with priest and acolyte and incense. "Who is it?" he asked of an observer, in English. The man shrugged and, "Quem sabe?" he said.

"Oho!" said the American, "I knew he was an important guy, 'cause I kept hearing his name all the time. Now, if this other bird, Amanha, would just up and die, the country might get on a bit."

I have spoken much of certain comestibles. Since with rice and beans they constitute the diet of up-river, and since we must accustom ourselves to them from the moment we leave this luxurious steamboat, they find a place in the record.

Farinha is a national relish as well as a staple. It is, apparently, made exclusively by Indian women, from the mandioca yam (Manihot utilissima), which is, of course, deadly poisonous, containing hydrocyanic acid. Happily this principle is extremely volatile and responds quickly to heat. So the women grate the tubers down on a most ingenious grater consisting of a long trough-shaped board covered with tiny sharp flints or quartz splinters set in a hard resinous gum. Some of these graters are very elaborately ornamented and constitute a regular article of commerce amongst the Indians. About such a one there is a very thrilling romance which I shall tell later.

The grated mandioca pulp is washed and the excess liquid is squeezed out in a press even more ingenious than the grater. It is woven of palm-leaf strips and acts on exactly the same principle as those little straw tubes which come in the dollar box of magic-the thing you put your fingers into, and then the harder you pull, the

harder it squeezes. The Indians make just such a tube, six feet long, which they call tipyti, and the pull is exerted by the simple leverage of a pole upon which they sit and rest while squeezing. The damp residue is then roasted in a flat earthen plate; or, nearer civilization, in a tin pan; or, as I have seen, in the bottom of an old parrot cage. And this final product is a crisp golden-yellow granular substance. This is *farinha.* It may be eaten plain, as the Indians eat it; or it may be sprinkled over any other food, such as beafsteak or soup or boiled rice, as the passengers on this steamer eat it. Despite its deadly genesis it is apparently nutritious enough to keep *a* man in hard-working condition for a couple of weeks at a stretch. *Baccalhau* is dried salted codfish. It is not so common up-river as *pirarucu,* which is the more or less dried unsalted flesh of a fresh-water monster peculiar to the Rio Negro. *Pirarucu* in Amazonas takes the place of *charque* in Bolivia. It is baled up in great slabs without any protective covering and is the stench that pervades any grocery store and trade-goods supply-house and this steamboat. It lies, usually, in the corner on the floor, where flies by the million settle upon it and men tread on it and dogs defile it. It can be eaten. It is, in fact, served on this boat; and my stores for up-river contain a bale of it wrapped up in a gunny-sack.

The true story of the *mandioca* grater is this: A very beautifully made and elaborately carved grater came down out of the jungles of British Guiana, on the northern boundary of Brazil, into Georgetown. So well made was it that it was bought by a West-Indian negro storekeeper to sell to some English curio-hunter. Such a hunter duly came and admired its workmanship and the cunning with which the little quartz crystals had been set in neat design. Then he looked again, with a sudden new interest at the sharp crystal points. Then he bought the grater swiftly and demanded whence it had come.

"Lawd knows, Boss," said the storekeeper—or words to that effect.

But the curio-hunter was crazily insistent upon finding out more about that grater; and eventually, after inquiring from this person to the next, he learned that an Indian from the Mazaruni River had brought it. So he made swift preparations to go up this Mazaruni River, nobody knew how far. But every one said he was crazy, to go chasing like that after any special kind of mandioca grater; and then they forgot him, as men do forget crazy travelers. A year passed; and then there came down the Mazaruni River a travel-worn and gaunt Englishman. He had no clothes, no shoes, and no money, and he looked famished. But he had a great whisky bottle full of diamonds! And that was the beginning of the diamond supply that is now coming from Georgetown, British Guiana.

Now, who will say that romance is dead? There is another, grimmer story about diamonds which has led to avid questioning by everybody. The steamer has just passed the Rio Branco, which comes in from the north, taking its rise somewhere up there in the vague Brazil-Guiana borderland; and the story immediately passes round.

Two men, a Swede and a half-breed Italian, came down from the Rio Branco into Manáos. They wanted outfit enough to go back and stay an indefinite time; and they were foolish enough to offer in payment a match-box full of small diamonds. The transaction was kept a strict secret. But a strict secret like that in a desperate town like Manáos can be kept no more than it could be kept in New York. Something of it leaked out to the ears of certain hard patrons of the waterfront

drinking-shops. So when the two men went back with their new outfit, a monteria-load of eight tough citizens followed on their heels.

That much of the story became common property; and all the loungers in the *botequims* wished that they had heard of it in time to hurry up and follow the followers. The rest of the story is now trickling down the Branco in drips and drabs, supplemented by each next trader with what he has heard from the Indians.

It seems that the two men went far up-river and into a long side creek where they had contrived to establish some sort of neutrality, if not friendliness, with the jungle Indians. They hired a few of the Indians to dig for them and went to work. Then came the eight who followed. This gang cautiously surveyed the ground first and then ambushed the camp and wiped it clean out. And they settled down to grow rich on the jumped claim, in all the security of the knowledge that nobody had been quick enough to follow them up.

But Nemesis overtook them from another direction. The story of white men and their killings, all over a lot of funny little stones, filtered farther up-river by the mouths of river Indians, till it came over the Guiana border, where bold and reckless men were now scouring the foot-hills and ravines, spurred to fierce hope by the Mazaruni find. Two white men on the Guiana side heard it, and they lost no time in organizing a little band of Guiana Indians and descending, like wolves upon the fold, on the eight claim-robbers.

A battle ensued in which the two white raiders and some of their Indians and all but three of the Manáos ruffians, as well as some of the hired diggers, were killed. The deadly knowledge of the diamond-digging was now in the hands of only three men.

Observe, now, the exceeding small grinding of the mills of the gods. The jungle Indians, tired of the repeated killings of their men by warring factions of white men, rose in their wrath and wiped out the remaining three.

Nobody knows just where that diamond-digging is, except a hidden tribe of angry and hostile Indians. So everybody is agog to hear what further details may dribble down-river as time passes. And when a rumor comes of somebody having found something, there are hungry men in every decaying rubber settlement who will go racing up the Rio Branco.

Possibly I have too scornfully underrated the warnings of the alarmists in Manáos. It is stories like these that keep up the illusion of the wild and wooliness of upriver.

The etiquette of the Companha Navigazione is a wonder and a delight. You affluent ones who travel to Europe every now and then know the conventions which burden one in a first-class cabin of a passenger liner—dressing for deck, dressing for dinner, smoking-room rules, bar rules, and so forth Think then, of the conventions of this upper deck or first-class cabin of the Rio Negro stern-wheeler.

As I have told you, there are six cabins, three of which are pre-empted by the Jotte Jae man. Owing, however, to the balata rush, there are nineteen first-class passengers. But that imposes no burden upon anybody. For each passenger finds for himself a convenient pair of vantage-points,—as, for instance, a roof stanchion and the deck rail or two roof I-beams,—and between them he slings his hammock.

That is all the accommodation he asks for. His baggage is piled along the deck rail or the cabin bulkhead below his hammock, and in it he spends the night and all the day except at meal-time. Nobody needs any privacy, for nobody seems to dress or undress for any function, from bedtime to meals. The hammock does duty for bed by night and deck-chair by day; and it is a source of unending amazement to me that any one can spend so much time bent like a bow in a hammock without contracting permanent curvature of the spine.

Since everybody does it, nobody objects to the fact that the deck promenade is obstructed by hammocks stretching from bulkhead to rail. But then, who ever wants to promenade, except a crazy gringo? Yet, however much one may be desirous of conforming to the customs of the country, there must be a certain amount of coming and going. So one passes beneath the sagging bulks, sometimes under a snoring head at the one end or under a set of wiggling naked brown toes at the other.

This river travel has all the charm of the free and easy. But there are conventions, and strict ones. One must never tie one's hammock ropes to any stanchion or other support already pre-empted by another, lest the movements of one's turnings and twistings be transmitted to the next man. And one must wear a coat. No matter how hot or stuffy it may be; no matter whether one wears a shirt or displays an open front of bare brown belly; whether one goes in all the formality of canvas sneakers or is barefooted. One *must* wear a coat.

In this connection there is a perfectly superb story. There was an American who found the heat of the afternoon lunch-hour intolerable; even though the meal was served in the hot breeze of the open deck. So, since the other passengers displayed, some of them, dingy undershirts beneath their open-flung coats, and others no undershirts at all, he thought he would be justified in appearing at table in a clean silk shirt with a collar and tie. But no respectable boat could permit such a breach of decency. The captain, therefore, after glowering from the head of the table, signaled a waiter, whispered certain instructions to him, and despatched him to his cabin. In a few moments the waiter returned and presented to the improper American a white-duck coat upon a salver.

A terrible position for the American. But he rose to it splendidly. He accepted the coat, bowed to the captain, and put it on. Then he resumed his meal with commendable sang-froid.

That same evening he appeared at dinner properly garbed. Presently he signaled a waiter, whispered certain instructions to him, and sent him to his cabin. In a few moments the waiter returned and presented to the captain a neat little package upon a salver. The captain took it with surprise and opened it in full view. It contained a pair of socks.

That was Young America. I fear me he has given deadly offense to the captain; and in a certain measure I regret the incident. For I like to bear strictly in mind what we from the United States are only too often prone to forget—that we are foreigners in another people's country; and that it behooves us, as such, to mind our P's and Q's. But the offense, in this case, was on the part of the overbearing captain; and never have I seen a finer example of the retort courteous.

So, though our trip on this curious steamboat ends in disgrace, what matter? To-morrow we escape to the hotel at Santa Isabel.

Chapter XXVIII

THE DEBATABLE COUNTRY OF UP-RIVER.

We have duly reached Santa Isabel, the port of debarkation of up-river. But we were not surprised this time. We have become used to these grandiloquent towns. The "port" consists of just two buildings. One is an open shed and the other is an adobe mansion consisting of two rooms and a veranda. Yet in this limited accommodation are combined the functions of owner's residence, general store, and hotel. In one of the rooms lives the owner with three women and two children, a dog with a litter of puppies, two other dogs, two ocelots, and a monkey. In the other he keeps store. On the veranda he rents out hotel space—two stout hooks in the roof beams for one's hammock ropes and a third alongside fitted with a pulley and cord with which one hoists one's personal supplies out of reach of the dogs.

This hotel is run on the European plan; so one does one's own cooking over a fire which one builds anywhere outside that may be convenient. Fire-wood is plentiful and running water right handy in the river.

Just now the hotel is doing a roaring business; overflowing, in fact, into the annex, the shed which later in the season will be storehouse for the Brazil-nuts which are brought here for shipment by river steamer. At present it houses the first weeding out of the balata rushers who have toiled thus far to realize that the borderland of their hopes is just as far again, and that it requires more money and better boats than they had thought to get into the upper-river country.

The river-front is lined with mournful rows of a wonderful assortment of craft, from plain dugout canoes to commodious monterias. Some are waterlogged, some have filled up and sunk. The inexpert patching and the inadequate makeshifts have given out, and they have reached the end of their journey. Some of them, again, are in good condition; but in their case, their owners' money has given out.

A few adventurous ones whose ambitions have not died with their boats have a little money left still, so there is a vast deal of bargaining and haggling. Boats that are still serviceable are being sold for whatever their stranded owners can get from the wealthy ones, or are being exchanged for others good enough to get back home in but not strong enough to face the rapids higher up. New partnerships are being formed of boats against capital. Men who have reached their own limit are hiring out to more fortunate ones, to labor on a percentage basis.

More than ever does this wild balata-rush resemble the bitter romance of the Klondike.

Young America is inflamed with the glamour of it all, and tempts us again. But we, cravens, repel him with stern righteousness. The hired assassin of the wicked Emperor has supplied us with a big monteria and a crew of eight stout Indians, and we are all set to make another lap along the strait and narrow way of duty.

We must progress, it seems, in a series of such laps from now on. For up-river Indians are a queerly localized folk. They will in no circumstances travel any distance beyond the border of their own tribe. It is the old story of primitive man

rooted to his own soil; and I suppose there is some hang-over of fear felt from their intertribal warfare, even though they may be traveling under a white man's protection.

The assassin shrugs deprecatingly and says:

"The senhor must not blame these poor fellows; for there are Indians up there who care nothing for a white man's protection."

So this crew will take us as far as the great rapids of São Gabriel, eight or ten days farther.

After that—"*Quem sabe?*" We shall have to let them go back with the monteria and must make such further arrangements as we can make. We have availed ourselves of the prevailing balata misfortune to secure a cook here. A Colombiano. He can't cook, but he is at least willing to gamble on the prospect of reaching that Colombian border. I approach up-river with a quite irrelevant feeling of "Ho for the Spanish Main!"

The record must cover a period of wearisome days. For there is no travel more tiresome than canoe travel; and a monteria is, after all, no more than a big canoe; and even a twenty-five-foot canoe offers but the crampedest quarters for three white men and a cook and eight paddlers and about a ton of baggage—for that was what the irreducible minimum, including trade goods, came to. One sits hunched up on a bale of goods till one aches in every muscle; and then one changes position and sits on another bale of goods. One groans and stretches and dozes at intervals; and then one wakes up and stretches and groans. I have been so desperate with the torture of cramped limbs that I have taken a paddle from a wondering Indian and have put in a stiff couple of hours; and have thereby scandalized such balata boats as we passed; for such a thing is horribly derogatory to the white man's prestige.

When I say wearisome travel, I mean, of course, physically wearisome. For the rest, the journey is jammed full of interest for forty-eight hours every day. At all events, it is to me. Betwixt stretches and groans we complain bitterly of ennui. But Heavens! when nothing else is happening our Indian paddle-men are a source of unceasing interest.

They are Bahuana river Indians, a sturdy dark-brown naked people with the thin legs and muscular torsos of all river-dwellers. Their stamina is marvelous; and they will sit and keep up a steady stroke with the same incessant consistency as the bale of *pirarucu* sits up in the bow and stinks. The rule of the river is from dawn till midday, when the Indians announce that they must lay off for a half-hour's bath. This is *costumbre,* custom, which cannot be denied any more than a union laboring-man can be denied his lunch-hour.

I don't see how anybody would have the heart to attempt to deny the right; for *"costumbre"* has established the monteria as a boat with no shelter other than the palm-thatched cubbyhole aft; and the paddle-men sit, therefore, in the full red-hot rays of the sun and work more honest hours than any union laboring man—and we are less than one degree from the equator. Yet they don't by any means always bathe during that rest period. They beg, rather, for fish-hooks out of the trade goods and sit and fish with as much enthusiasm as any small boy.

I never have the moral courage to drive them to work at the expiration of the half-hour; for they have worked so splendidly and they enjoy their play with such complete abandon. But the R. M. calls admonishingly from the shade of the cubby-cabin and reminds me that the foot-hills are far away and the rainy season will soon be upon us.

After the bath- and fish- (more-or-less) hour comes another long stretch of cramps and groans till toward dusk, when it is time to begin looking for a camp site. The Indians know where the outcrops of high bank are; or sometimes where a boat can be forced between the trees till it reaches land dry enough for us to step ashore and build a fire. Sometimes they will push ahead to reach some favored spot before dark. Sometimes they will for their own mysterious reasons insist upon stopping long before dusk and will say that the only possible next camping-place is five hours farther on; and then the following day we pass an ideal spot half an hour after the start.

"Why wouldn't you do that extra half-hour?" I demand. And they shake their heads with utter finality.

"Quite impossible," they say. "In that place live three devils, an old male and two young females. They come and sit on men's faces at night."

Sometimes, again, the leader of the crew, the *capitâo*, will wheedle for a bakshish.

"If we work hard and make a big distance will you give us all a tot of *caxiri?*" *Caxiri* is cane alcohol. I carry a demijohn of it.

"No," I say firmly. "I will not give you *caxiri;* but I will give each of you a slab of *pirarucu."* And they are quite satisfied. For such a delicacy they will work just as hard as for a drink; and when they get it they will bolt it raw, with relish. At first thought it may seem strange that people who live in a tropic jungle should be so continuously famished. It must be remembered, however, that this country does not teem with the life that is popularly ascribed to tropic jungles. That awful yearly inundation drives away all terrestrial beasts and leaves a soggy floor which never dries up; for the sun can never reach down through the vast trees and interlaced vines.

Moist and steamy and dim-lit it is, under that impenetrable canopy; ground fit only for sluggish caymans and water-monitors and huge snakes. A gloomy, menacing silence hangs heavily in the hot greenhouse air, broken only when rank fruit drops with a soft *plosh* into the muck. With damnable coincidence pieces will drop in a regular succession like footsteps which will cause even a jungle man to tense and grip his rifle; and one wouldn't be surprised at all to see the bulk of a lost dinosaur moving among the trees.

Even monkeys and birds seem to avoid this sinister jungle. No parrots, no waders, no water-fowl. No wonder that the Indians people it with devils. Yet, by the same token, there are no insects. No mosquitos, no piume flies. There must be other insects, though, for the lack of decent flying creatures is made up by bats. Fierce vampires—what do they eat? I wonder—and little brown leaves of things that cluster around a tree stem overhanging the water so that it looks as though it grew a glistening fur coat; till a boat approaches within a few feet, and then the fur disintegrates into a million flakes that dart squeaking for deeper shelter. And then

there are great black-winged fruit-eating bats, huge things with a two-foot wing-spread that have learned to soar, stiff-winged, like vultures of the night.

It is easy to understand in such jungle why the Indians are always hungry. Particularly since I am beginning to find out that the hired assassin at Santa Isabel, while he zealously obeyed his master's commands about furthering us on our way, was not above making a little business deal on his own account. He contracted with me to supply these men at the rate of twenty cents per day per man; which rate was not excessive in view of the existing demand for paddle-men. Then he went swiftly and got these Indians, who are bound to him by virtue of that crafty system of advancing goods and keeping them in debt, and contracted with them to make the journey to São Gabriel for a flat rate of a piece of cloth—a piece is three meters and costs nineteen cents a meter—and their food. The accepted menu for Indian paddle-men is *farinha* for breakfast and *farinha* for lunch, with a small variation of *farinha* for dinner. Eight Indians will eat about ten pounds of *farinha* a day. Cost, seven cents.

Which explains how hired assassins get rich, and why Indians would rather fish than bathe, and why they are so eager to earn a little delicacy like pirarucu. Though it still remains a mystery how those other paddle-men, who work for river traders who don't spoil them as foolish gringos do, are able to keep up their strength and stamina on something less than one and one quarter pounds of *farinha* a day, which they gulp down with no other flavoring than river water. It does explain, in some measure, however, why these otherwise muscular and hard-trained men are all pot-bellied. For that dry granular stuff, when mixed with water, swells up like a cork and must cause enormous distension.

It is a wonder that they don't all suffer from terrible indigestion. To me, who have suffered, it is—it used to be, rather—such a wonder, that those alert child minds put one over on me with huge success. The thing began with one of the men having a violent ache in the middle from gobbling too large a portion of ptomaine fish. So I dosed him with chlorodyne, a nice, gingery-tasting English remedy containing chloroform, which I have found to be a godsend in the tropics. He liked it; and the very next morning three Indians stood before me and groaned. I am no diagnostician; so I tried the three with painkiller. The Injuns liked that as well as our Western farmers used to before the drug act interfered.

After that the thing became a game. Never was such a crew of ailing Indians known in all the rivers. Not a day passed but half of them would line up before the morning's start and would describe symptoms. And I, finding nothing extraordinary, considering their feeding-habits, in their being sick, doctored them according to the best of my guesswork. They were as cunning as foxes, too. I am convinced that they would sit up nights inventing symptoms for the next morning; and when one would draw something that tasted good there would be a run on those symptoms.

They had, of course, the universal idea of all savages that the white man's medicine must be good for them, sick or no; and with that idea they coupled an inherent instinct for experiment. A man would come and begin reciting his pains, and I could darned well see that he was keeping an eye on the bottles which I tentatively fingered. If I hesitated over some bottle which memory might have marked down as evil-tasting, he would swiftly add another pain with the hope that

my hesitant hand would pass on to something better. And the others would wait with the most childish transparency to see what he drew; and if it was good they would come right in and repeat.

Till I became suspicious of all these pains and gave my clinic a nasty jar one morning by dosing everybody with a stiff solution of quinine. I can't report a miraculous and permanent cure, for those children were as full of inherent curiosity as any other children. They just had to know what tastes were contained in all those fascinating bottles, and they were game to try anything once.

A delightful side-light on the Indian mind comes out in this pill story. I have a most excellent case put up by the Stoddard people, containing in pill form every drug imaginable, each in a screw-top bottle with a description of its uses. Many of these pills are as brilliantly colored as large marbles. Well, one of the Indians, who had been unlucky in his drawing of tasty stuff for a few days, came and said he had a pain.

"What sort of pain?" I asked him, not very sympathetically.

"I can't describe this pain," he said, "but it is a pain which requires a yellow pill."

"Why, of all things, a yellow pill," I demanded.

"I don't exactly know," he said. "But, you see, *Kariwa, I* have a yellow bead in my necklace. A yellow bead is good for me. Is not, then, a yellow medicine good for me too?"

The yellow pill is for puerperal fever, so I delighted his simple soul by giving it to him.

How can anybody complain about monotony when one travels with people like these? When nothing else is toward I am absorbed in learning their language. They all speak enough broken Portuguese to be able to understand; and the whole crew, as they swing their paddles, enter with zest into schoolmastering. Their own language, of course, is the Bahuana dialect; but a relic of the old Guarani tongue has become accepted along all these rivers as a common medium of conversation. *Lengua Geral*, it is called in Portuguese; and it is not at all difficult to acquire, the construction being non-inflected and the vocabulary small. Specially designed by Providence it would seem, for explorers who are interested in Indians and their ways.

Chapter XXIX

MAINLY ABOUT BUGS.

I have said hastily that there are no insects in this dismal jungle. I should have said, no stinging insects. And then I should have qualified that, again, by saying, no stinging insects that, voluntarily and unmolested, directly attack man.

There are ants. Ants in this water-soaked country sound like an anomaly. But these ants have adapted themselves to trees. The river fringe is lined with tree-ants' nests. Nests that look like footballs balanced on a limb. Nests that depend

from a limb, like paper-wasp nests. Nests that grow all around a limb, like great galls. Nests that run in earthy tunnels up and down the tree trunks. Vast nests that embrace whole sapling tops and bear them down with their weight.

Interesting, and harmless if strictly unmolested. But it is an evil provision of nature that a river current is always strongest out toward the middle. So a monteria toils up-stream as close to the tree fringe as may be. Let the steersman doze in the heat, or let some stray current drive the boat against an overhanging nest-laden limb, and immediately swarms of fighting ants will let go and drop upon the disturbing cause. And these are no temperate ants such as we know in the pantry at home. From half an inch in length, up, they run; and they are armed with stings like wasps as well as formic-acid-laden jaws. So that, like any other well-armed force, they carry a permanent chip on the shoulder. Let their nests be but jarred, and instantly they let go and drop in their thousands, ready for war.

It is a sublime example of the subservience of the individual to the community. For the naked Indians are alert against the menace, and it happens more often than not that they can quickly swing clear, or that just the tail end of the boat will jar the nest of those perfectly trained soldiers. But "Theirs not to reason why; theirs but to do and die." As the stern swings free, the fierce creatures, nearly one inch long, may be seen dropping like rain into the swift black water beneath their home.

But it doesn't always come out so fortuitously. In fact, it happens the other way often enough to breed a feeling of permanent vindictiveness against ants' nests. So much so that overhanging nests make good pistol practice, and Christian explorers view with satisfaction the sublime sacrifice of half a million or so ants from a well-aimed ball.

There are others, as, for instance, the terrible sauba-ants, which are an inconceivable force in the retardation of civilization if it is true that civilization is based upon agriculture. For it is on account of the sauba-ant that all the Indian tribes of all up-river can never grow a patch of corn or a potato or a sugar-cane crop or a tobacco-plant, and are condemned, therefore, to live on *farinha* alone; for the *mandioca* yam, on account of its prussic-acid content, seems to be the only humanly edible vegetable that the sauba won't eat first. Think of a people reduced to eating only what is too poisonous for ants!

God be thanked that they are vegetarians, even though their appetite knows no restriction within the vegetable kingdom. We met the sauba-ant first in one of our night camps. We came to some ideal high ground, and the quick eye of the Indians immediately knew that a human habitation was somewhere behind the trees. We disembarked and found a brand-new *moloca*, a great community house eighty feet long. It had progressed as far as roof and stamped-mud floor and fireplaces, and then it had suddenly been deserted. The only walls were thick jungle which had not yet been cleared. Not a sign of life was there. The builders had just cleaned up and gone.

The Indians said that a devil must have come to live there and chased the humans away; so they kept to the boat. But to us the roof poles seemed to be ideally spaced for slinging our hammocks. So there we camped.

In the night I woke, hearing a curious, faint click-clicking noise. I always make a practice, in the jungle, of hanging my holster and clothes over my hammock

head, and I softly reached for my gun and drew the flash-light out of my pocket. I threw on the light, but not a thing did I see. Nor could I quite locate the sound. I called to the others, to wake them; they heard it too, but that was all. It was very mysterious and ghostly.

"Hell!" grumbled Young America, drowsily. "It must be that devil who came to live here. Shut up and let's sleep."

It was all we could do. So we did. In the morning we found out why the builders of that *moloca* had packed up and fled. Young America had carelessly thrown his things on the good hard floor when he climbed into his hammock. And in the night the sauba had come. His khaki shirt was a little handful of rag; in a neat scalloped pattern, as caterpillars eat a leaf, the ants had clipped it away. His tasty cord breeches were eaten, all but the buttons and lace-tips. His leggings and his boots were scalloped, away down to the soles. The clicking noise that we had heard was the steady clip-clip of the great jaws. Don't deride. Sauba comes an inch long and has a spread of jaw of a quarter-inch.

It was then that I was glad that I always hung up my boots with my clothes in order to prevent scorpions and things from getting in. And with unction I pointed the moral to Young America.

There are yet other ants we have met—meat-eaters. We camped one night in an old tumble-down rubber-gatherer's hut by the river's edge, since we liked, wherever possible, to find roof shelter from the drenching dew. No devils haunted this place, so the Indians slept with us. We were awakened by a wild yell of *"as formigas!"* and a burning stab in the leg or arm. We had heard many tales of *as formigas,* and we knew what to do. This time ours not to reason why. We left everything as it stood and made one running dive into the river—and stayed there until daylight came.

When we could well and clearly see where we trod, we went back to the hut to get our belongings. Those ants were meat-eaters, as I have said—some ferocious breed of army ants. Our gear, therefore, was safe. But they had picked our big potful of *challona* fricassée clean; and some fish that the Indians had laid on the embers to roast overnight were scientifically prepared skeletons. A peculiar annoyance was that they had eaten out the bowl of my only Dunhill pipe to a thin shell. I wish the Entomologist were here to tell me why. I am reduced now to making a pipe out of a seed-pod and a reed and lining the bowl with clay.

There are still other things, in this Black-Water country, that build nests overhanging the water and that swiftly resent disturbance. Worse, perhaps, than ants, though happily not so numerous. Great black-bodied hornets. But we didn't meet these till we were well into the rapids.

Those much-talked-about rapids of São Gabriel, which apply the acid test to eliminate all but the stoutest of the remaining balata-rushers who have arrived thus far. *Muito peligroso,* we have been told by everybody. Very dangerous. Forty miles of fast water swirling and boiling down a chute where the great river has narrowed down to half a mile. *Peligroso* it surely looks. But why has nobody told us that it is also surpassingly beautiful? Palm-fringed cliffs on each side and spray-splashed jewels of emerald islands between. One looks at the wild tumbling water and holds one's breath; and then one looks at the shore-line and catches in the throat anew. For the bones of dead boats litter the eddy below the lowest run.

Old moldering bones, some of them; once the boats of traders who have been careless or unlucky. Others, new and ill-shaped—balata-boats, doomed already in advance by their poor construction and their lack of knowledge of bad water.

We, despite this grim reminder, approach the rapids with confidence. For our monteria is a sturdy river-runner's boat and our crew are experts selected by the agent of Jotte Jae, who knows the rivers.

The method of progression is simple though strenuous, no less than a four-day fight of sheer muscle and brawn and keen judgment against the current which runs twenty miles or thirty in some places. An Indian takes one end of a rope made of tough piassava fiber and crawls along the bank as far as the rope will reach. Then he makes fast and the crew hauls up on the line.

Sometimes the rush of heaving water is too strong along the shore-line even for eight strong men to haul against. Then a pair of them will take the tiny dugout which trails behind as a dinghy and will shoot across under the lee of a convenient island or rock, with the rope; and the monteria will swing dizzily out into the stream in a grand arc and will haul up to that vantage-point. From there, possibly, to another island farther ahead, or back to the shore side. Sometimes a point of shelving rock will offer an obstacle. Then the boat must be unloaded of all its goods and hauled bodily over the rocks for perhaps twenty or thirty yards. Here is where the test of a boat's stanchness comes; for an ill-constructed bottom will open out like the fingers of a hand.

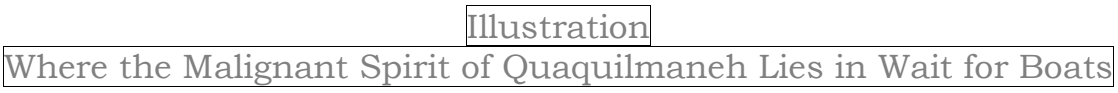
Illustration
Where the Malignant Spirit of Quaquilmaneh Lies in Wait for Boats


Illustration
The South-American Savage Meets the North-American Savage .25-3000
and Finds it to be Heap Big Medicine

And so, fighting every inch of the way, one comes on the third day to O Forno da Fortalesa, the Oven of Fortalesa. At Fortalesa lives the spirit of the rapids, Quaquilmaneh, who eats boats. He takes many shapes, according to his needs. Sometimes he appears as a sudden rock which was not there before; sometimes as a giant rushing wave; sometimes as a floating tree trunk. When he comes, there is no hope of resisting him. He always gets the boat. So at the eddy below the Oven the Indians go ashore and make each man a tiny altar of a flat stone set upon two others and upon it they leave an offering for Quaquilmaneh; a handful of *farinha* or a newly caught fish.

The R.M. and Young America jeered at me, but I went with my Indians to learn that ceremony and I made an offering to the hungry spirit of a good ration of *pirarucu.* And if I didn't feel a lot more comfortable after it, myself, I'm sure the Indians did. And I figure that a piece of *pirarucu* is well spent if the morale of eight men is bolstered thereby.

So Quaquilmaneh let us pass unscathed and gave evidence of his favor before we tied up for camp that same evening. That was when we met the hornets. We were hauling up on the rope when we brushed under a paper nest that had been

unnoticed in the foliage. In an instant they were out like red-hot imps out of hell. With a yell six Indians let go of everything and dived incontinently into the water. Young America, who was standing out in front with an expensive repeating shot-gun in his hands, jumped after them. I, knowing a little about wasps, hurled myself into the dimness of the palm-thatched cabin. Quick as we were, we were all pretty badly stung, with the exception of the R.M., who had been in the comparative dark of the cabin all the time.

Six Indians jumped, I said, and one was away on shore with the rope's end, leaving one Indian to account for, one hero. Think what would have happened if that one had jumped tool. The heavy monteria would have surged back in the current and pulled up when it reached the rope's limit, with a jerk that would have torn the nose out of her or snapped the rope like a thread. *Muito peligroso* indeed was that rapid. Just two white men on board with a puny paddle apiece would have had no more hope of controlling, or even steering, that monteria than they would a heavy runaway freight-car on a steep grade. The bones of our fair craft, and possibly our own, would have gone to swell the graveyard of ships in the eddy below the lowest riffle, and the legend in the after days would have been that the spirit of the rapids had manifested himself in a brand-new manner for the benefit of the white men.

But that single hero stuck. A naked Indian he was, mind you. But he took a turn of the rope round the bitts, buried his face in his arms, and hung on. When those hornets had finally got tired of stinging and had gone home we crawled out of our shelter and the others scrambled back from where the current had carried them fifty yards lower down. Young America's gun was gone for good, of course. We tried to dive for it, but recovery was impossible in that current.

"Let it go," I told him. "A thank-offering to Quaquilmaneh." And the Indians said sententiously:

"This day has the spirit spared us on account of white man's offering at O Forno."

I like to think that perhaps that offering had something to do with the courage with which the hero hung on in the white man's service. I couldn't decorate him with the congressional medal that he deserved, but I made him rich for life by presenting him with a five-dollar Collins machete, the sort of thing I had brought along for a present to a chief. He was so pleased that he was no good for work any more. He kept sharpening the thing and polishing it and admiring it instead of hauling with the rest on the rope.

By the next day we reached São Gabriel anyhow, without his help.

Chapter XXX

GOOD MEN AND BAD.

São Gabriel is a high bluff that thrusts itself into the rapids a mile below their angry beginning. About fifty people, mostly Indians, live there and don't know why. The settlement once more presents with arresting force the startling question

of why the Christian God alone of all gods permits some of those who sacrifice everything to his service to live in such utter wretchedness.

It is a ponderable observation that the priests of all other religions and cults of all lands—mullahs, bonzes, pongyis, shamans, angekoks, juju-men, witch-doctors, from highest to lowest—live, all of them, on the best that the land and their community afford. Why do so many of those who labor in all those lands, for the Christian God, stand out before all the rest as examples of unrequited labor?

Here at São Gabriel is another of those lost mission settlements, where two devoted priests struggle against overwhelming odds to persuade the heathen that their God is better than the medicine-man. They came long ago to this far outflung point on a dangerous river. Slowly and painfully they gathered together a little flock and built a church and a mission-house, denying themselves everything in order that everything might go into their work. In the course of years they taught their converts to labor for the betterment of their own conditions. They cleared the jungle and showed the naked savages how to plant beans and potatoes and sugar-cane. Some twenty acres of ground they wrested from the jungle and fenced the land strongly and marked it out into neat plots and labeled it and planted it. And for a time the rich soil gave back the hundredfold that their Scriptures promised, and São Gabriel began to be a prosperous little settlement.

Then the sauba-ants came out of the jungle. Only last season. And now they have eaten every last vestige of all that planting, and their tunnels and underground caverns infest the whole of the twenty hard-won acres.

Why?

The patient priests cross themselves and say it was the will of their God, and they look hopelessly upon the ruin of the labor of years. The Indians say it all happened because the great spirit of the rapids was scorned. Quaquilmaneh was no more than a silly superstition, the priests had said, and it was wicked to make offerings to him at the pool of O Forno. They had even held a service to exorcise him, I understand, and they told their Indians then that he was gone; he had ceased to exist even as a superstition.

So Quaquilmaneh laughed and bided his time, taking his toll, every now and then, of the mission canoes. Till his full time was ripe and the mission was ready for his stroke. Then he told the hosts of the sauba in the jungle where there was a rich settlement for them to come and live in. And they came in their hordes and ate up that settlement in a single season. And now the converts, who were attracted by the beans and the potatoes and the cane, are already falling off. There women and children remain, but the men are few. Such seems to be the undeserved fate of all missions.

It is almost a relief to turn from these uncomplaining priests in their misfortune to the prosperous witch-doctor who lives up at the head of the rapids and does a thriving business in the sticks that do service as calling-cards.

A good stick is as important as a good Bradstreet rating. It must be carved with cryptic designs in a diamond pattern, and with circles and swellings to fit the hand which convey to the initiated the attributes of the owner. It functions in this respect something like that inexcusable thing, a sealed letter of introduction, for the individual has no means of knowing what his stick says about him. Among all these up-river tribes there seems to exist a ceremony of calling which is as

meticulous as that of the open season at Newport. When a stranger arrives at a jungle village, he must not walk rudely in, but must send his stick to the *moloca* for inspection. There the local witch-doctor reads it; and if the caller's rating is up to par on the social register, the chief sends back the stick and with it his own stick. The stranger is then at liberty to interpret the chief's stick as best he may; and if he likes its report of the chief, he can then go up to the community house where the elders await him with ceremony.

River traders, rude fellows who wouldn't understand a calling-card anyway, sometimes barge into river-front villages without first observing the amenities. In these peaceful days they are not killed,—often,—and so they feel that they are above the social customs of a savage people. But Heaven preserve me from being regarded by the Indians with the same hostile suspicion with which they regard traders. One of my problems, in fact, is to persuade them that I am not some new kind of trader coming along with a novel form of ulterior motive.

So I had to get me a good and proper stick. Sub rosa I had to visit the witch-doctor, for I would not offend the good padres. A crafty rogue was that magician. He was not overly interested to know who I was or what I wanted to do, but he said, "For a piece of cloth and a machete and a mirror I will carve you a very good-speaking stick."

I dared not haggle over the price, for fear of defamatory runes, so we struck the bargain, and he has delivered to me a very beautiful stick. About six feet long, it is, cut out of a very handsome hard redwood which takes a high polish. It is pointed at one end so that it can be thrust into the ground, and the other end, for a distance of about two feet, is carved with this diamond-and-circle design. Some of the diamonds are smaller than others, some of the circles are closer set; and the interstices have been filled in with an orange-colored ocher.

Altogether it is a very handsome letter of introduction, though I can't help feeling that these regular designs surely cannot convey much meaning. I have a suspicion that there is a good deal of hokum attached to it. But I shall probably have ample opportunity to compare it with other sticks and to test out its efficacy. In the meantime I am sorry that I can't delude myself into the hope of discovering some hidden system of writing which would be as interesting as the string *quipus* of the Incas. But my calling-card does give me a certain feeling of confidence.

As to just where we should go, it is very much a matter of *"quem sabe?"* Five or six days' journey farther up, the Rio Uaupés comes in at the right bank, and three or four days farther again the Rio Issana comes in on the same side. Some say that the Rio Uaupés is a horrible river full of bad Indians, particularly those Tucana of the Tiquié tributary, who are haters of trader-men and are killers. Others say that the upper Issana is worse. Nobody has been very far in either direction.

The good padres say, "My son, we dare not advise in such a matter." But they tell me that at the mouth of the Issana is a wondrous settlement, established long ago by a renegade Spaniard who has raised a whole colony of stalwart half-breed sons and quarter-breed grandsons, and who rules them like a king. The King of the Issana, he is called; and, say the padres, he is at least a good Catholic. They suggest, then, that we go to the Issana and there obtain information.

The council of the three, solemnly convened, says, "Good! the Issana let it be." But how to go is something of a problem. We have of course, according to agreement, sent back our good monteria with the eight paddle-men. No boat of similar size is available here. Almost does it seem that we have arrived at a blank wall.

Illustration

Illustration
The Lovely Home of the Murderer of the Uaupés

Illustration
The drum is now in the Museum of the American Indian
Heye Foundation

Illustration
Jungle Telegraph
The signals are heard—so they say—for fifty miles

There exists a kerosene-burning launch that once upon a time came up the rapids during a particularly favorable season and lies now in a tiny creek just above the beginning of the bad water. The Old Indian pilot, who had fished up and down the rapids for forty years and knew the currents like the hairs on his head, was inconsiderate enough to die; and the owner of the launch has never dared to attempt the down-passage since. So he has become a disconsolate resident of the mission settlement and his boat lies rusting in the creek. I have suggested to him that he earn a little money by making a trip with us, but he has sunk into a condition of hopeless apathy. He throws out his hands and shrugs.

"Impossible, senhor," he says. "The engine is rusted solid."

Young America comes forward with an alluring suggestion. (He used to be, in the far-away days of New York, an earnest student of the more lurid celluloid drama.)

"Shucks! Let's hold up some balata-runner and take away his boat," he urges.

I weep for the trammeling inhibitions of respectability. But there is the germ of an idea in his thought. Maybe some balata-runner will arrive here in exhausted enough condition to be willing to trade in his outfit; or possibly some such one may be able to convey us as far as the Issana for a consideration. There is nothing for it but to sit and wait for *amanha.*

That tedious *amanha* came at last and has gone, and direful things are to record, which have shown us that the director of an expedition has to be, in addition to his other qualities, as wise as a serpent.

No less than three fortuitous balata-runners survived the rapids and arrived in a bunch. Colombians they were; and they were banded together for mutual defense and, as it transpired, offense.

Our cook, good fellow, held a long conference with his compatriots and then brought them round to talk business. They had a boat apiece, and their supply of stores had been sufficiently depleted, during their long up-river journey, to enable them to find room for our gear. They were bound for the Uaupés themselves, where rumor had it that those first discoverers had gone, but they would be glad to carry our stuff the extra distance to the Issana in exchange for sundry trade goods; for replenishment of their own supplies was almost imperative.

A providential arrangement, wasn't it? Unfortunately, they shrugged, their boats would be loaded to the limit with all our voluminous equipment; so they could not possibly take on four extra passengers. But that would be easily arranged. A small chief had just come down-river with a big canoe and a couple of men, and they would arrange with him to take us as passengers, and we would all go up together in a fleet.

Splendid. We interviewed the chief, a brilliant fellow named Pacheco, who said he would carry us in exchange for a Winchester rifle and a hundred cartridges, and came down from that, in painful steps, to an ax-head, a piece of cloth, and a dozen fish-hooks. Everything was arranged and with the first dawn of the morrow we would start.

For the first time in some days we slept without worrying about our progress. Perhaps as much as five or six pleasant hours—and then we woke and found good and sufficient cause to worry again. Those three very clever balateros, plus one astute cook, had hauled their boats up the remaining mile of rapids overnight and had gone, leaving a message that we, in our light canoe, should follow them and could easily overtake them in a day or two.

Rather a sudden procedure, it seemed to us, and an unlooked-for decision for those men to arrive at overnight without telling a word to anybody. We were vaguely uneasy about it—till we found that Pacheco's canoe had somehow or other during the night bumped a hole in its bottom.

Then we realized what gullible gringos we three had been, and exactly how imperative had been the need of those clever balateros to replenish their outfit.

It was not a happy position to find ourselves in. Our trade goods,—without which we couldn't pay our way for half a mile,—our personal gear, our instruments, cameras, everything, were somewhere on the Rio Negro bound for the balata jungles of the Uaupés and going hard.

As to chance of overtaking them, minus nil. Those men would travel till their arms dropped off. And when that happened they could dodge behind a hundred islands and hide up a thousand creeks.

There was one last, lone hope—the God-given stranded launch. If it could be made to go. The owner threw up his hands, with a dozen impossibilities.

"Senhor, it will require a machinist. I am no *mechanista,"* he wailed.

"Before you stands a one-time U.S. Navy first-class carpenter's mate," I told him, "and an ex-navy man can do anything."

"Senhor, I have no tools."

I borrowed tools, wrenches, and such, from the sympathetic padres' farm supplies.

"Senhor, there is no kerosene-oil."

I sent the R.M. and Young America to scour the settlement and buy up every stray bottle of oil and empty every lamp. And I went with the launch-man—who didn't know quite so little as he had pretended—and together we took that defunct engine apart, praying over every rusted nut and making burnt offering over each solid bearing.

As the owner began to see his machine reassemble before him he perked up and grew hopeful.

"Senhor," he said, "there is a place two days up where the river narrows down to a kilometer and there are no side channels. Those ladrones have one day's start. In the launch—if by the mercy of God it will go—we can make it in one day. *Basta!* it is enough. They may elude us among the islands, but we shall wait for them in the narrows. *Caralhos!* will the senhor kill?" *"Quem sabe?"* was all I could tell him.

This is no fiction record, in which the suspense must be dragged out. Suffice it that the engine did go and there was enough kerosene and we reached the narrows, having seen nothing of our pirates. I was horribly worried lest they had traveled faster than we thought and had possibly passed the spot. There was suspense enough for many books of fiction while we waited, not knowing whether our goods were coming toward us or had gone and were getting happily farther every minute. Suspense through an entire night of darkness, though the launch-man assured us that the Indian family who lived on that point would surely hear the boats passing. Gnawing suspense. Suspense again in the morning, when a cursed mist hung over the river.

However, they had not passed, and the mist thinned out sufficiently with sunrise to let us discover them stealing up under the shadows of the far shore. We were all prepared, of course, and our plans were made—had been for hours. The Indian family had a dugout canoe which would carry not more than three men. We judged it wise to have them handle it in the swift current of the narrows, so room was left for only one. Young America was motion-picturesquely heroic with a gun swinging low on each hip—positively swelling with the glorious opportunity to race off in the frail canoe to hold up the pirate galleons. That there might be danger in the proceeding never gave him a moment's pause; but such is the universal attribute of young Americans. The R.M. and I took up a strategic position, with those wicked Savage rifles, on a point of rock, and set the sights for a thousand yards in case the bandits might not be amenable, or—what we thought more likely—should elude our gunman.

Happily, everything went well. Away out on the other side of the river we could see Young America risk our all by standing up in the precarious canoe in order to get the better effect while he called to the pirates, *"Em cima os maos,"* which I am positive he got from a lurid Western film, and which is the Portuguese translation of "Stick 'em up, gents."

They did so with precision, and he herded them in. But my land's sakes! when they arrived! The flood of virtuous indignation was sheer artistic rhetoric. They didn't understand. What did this mean? They were affronted—in fact, hurt. They were proceeding leisurely, looking back for us every moment. How were they to know about a hole in the Indian's canoe? Of course, if we wanted to break our contract with them, we just had to say so. There was no need to stage insult like this. But since we had taken it upon ourselves to do this ungentlemanly thing,

they wanted to have nothing more to do with us; they would unload our gear immediately; and would we kindly pay them for having transported it thus far?

So good were they that I bethought me guiltily of our previous director's bandit in the Bolivian hinterland and wondered whether I might not have been flying to too hasty a conclusion. But then I remembered.

Why had our cook run off with them? I demanded. There had been room for him in Pacheco's canoe. Did he think we shouldn't want to eat during the days before we caught up? That was the one point they had forgotten to prepare for in advance; and they were at a loss for an immediate explanation.

I was satisfied. But what was there to do? What vengeance is there, when one is dealing with hard practical life, that one can visit upon four grown men where there is no policeman to whom one can turn them over? None. A foolish thought did come to me that I might confiscate something of theirs as a punishment. But the poor devils had nothing. So all that we did was to transfer our gear to the launch and tell them to go away swiftly from that place. And glad enough we were to have our goods back and let it go at that.

So ended an episode that taught us some of the yarns about the wild and woolly up-river which we had pooh-poohed in Manáos were not rumors of whole cloth, and which, had it ended otherwise, would have meant that three intrepid explorers were stranded in a devastated mission settlement without the means to go either forward or back. Good Lord! we should have had to become converts and live on the charity of the mission! But, as it was, we took our lesson very carefully to heart, and on the launch we came up to this *sitio* of the old Spanish gentleman at the mouth of the Rio Issana.

Chapter XXXI

AN UP-RIVER KING.

This King of the Issana is another of those inexplicable commuter complexities. He came about forty years ago. Why he came, nobody knows. He just started up-river and he kept going till he found a place that suited him, and there he stayed and began to build the first little hut that has now expanded into a community. His sons are strong grown men and his grandsons are rearing their little brown babies. Indians they are, in feature and complexion, but their speech is Spanish and their manners are those of the hidalgos of old Seville.

The old don rules them and their wives and their multitudinous Indian relatives like a veritable king indeed. When they come into his presence they remain silent until he signs that they may speak. When they have spoken, he gives them his hand to kiss before they withdraw. His word is law among the tribes along a hundred miles of river-front; and there is no doubt at all that without his permission no man may travel his river. Which explains why those balateros have gone up the Uaupés.

"Whatever balata is to be found in the Issana," he says grimly, "I shall work. I have sent a message to Jotte Jae to send me an expert."

One feels that this wise monarch will work balata with a prudent eye to conservation; so that this sudden new wealth may be more than a mere flash in the pan, like other balata finds.

The record has talked much about balata, but has said very little about it. Only that it is a latex which oozes from the inner bark of a tree. There are two ways of extracting balata. One, the idiotic popular one, is to fell the tree, gash it all over with a machete, and leave the juice to run out upon a bed of banana leaves. After a week or so the balatero comes back on his round and—if some other balatero hasn't stolen it—gathers up the coagulated mess, leaves and all, and takes it to his base camp. Here he puts it into big tin pans and boils it and strains it and boils it again and strains it again. Four times in all; though six times is better. The final straining is poured into square molds and there hardens into a white non-elastic brick known as "first-grade white."

Within a month or so the balatero has cut down all the trees in a circle round his camp as far as he and his crew can comfortably travel. So he packs up and moves to a new center where the trees are not too widely separated to be profitable. Perhaps his circle overlaps that of another balatero. Then the rule seems to be that the one who has the straighter-shooting crew wins. We hear stirring tales, up here, of jungle battles that for sheer savage ruthlessness leave nothing to our wildest scrambles of "forty-nine."

But, whoever wins, presently there are no more balata-trees. That is what happened to the Rio Branco balata. It was just worked out; cut down and killed off. Not like rubber, which these same thoughtless fools had learned to collect by systematic tapping. That is why, when a rumor of a new balata-strike comes, there is such a crazy scramble to get on the ground first.

Yet balata can be tapped, too, though tapping is something of a delicate process requiring some knowledge of arboriculture so as not to kill the tree. Hence the wisdom of the King of the Issana, who holds down his ground with an army of some four hundred Indians under his command and sends to the Emperor in Manáos for an expert.

To us, the King is the soul of dignified courtesy. All that his house affords is ours. He deprecates the poverty of these days; but feeds us—of all things—on *pâté de foie gras* and Huntley & Palmer's biscuits, delicacies which have not been known in the upper rivers for ten years.

He tells us that the Rio Issana is, for our purposes, hopeless. There are countless bad rapids farther up; there are, also, bad Indians, wild nomads of the inner jungles who have no more settled habitation than monkeys and who hunt game by *scent*, like dogs. And furthermore, the Issana head-waters would lead us nowhere.

No, we must go up the Uaupés, he says. He has a well-built monteria; and he will transport us another lap on our journey as far as the territory of the King of the Uaupés. No farther, he regrets, because if his monteria were to attempt to return through that territory alone, without our protection, the King would seize it and would murder the crew. For he is at war with that king, who is a Negro-Indian-Portuguese and a scoundrel as black of heart as he is of complexion, and is an Indian-killer besides.

We are surprised at his sudden tirade from this so courteous old don. It intrigues us to make discreet inquiries; and, after much hemming and hawing and furtive fear of the old man's wrath, a delicious story pieces itself out. It is a story about a drum and is worthy of space in the record.

Everybody has heard about the great wooden signal drums of the Amazon. *Trocáns,* they are called. Like the African drums, they are used to send messages in code and the sound of them is supposed to carry for incredible distances. Well, there were three such drums known to exist in the Rio Negro country. One, the Italian explorer Stradelli got twenty years or more ago. Another fell to Koch, the German. The third remained inviolate because its location was far up this Tiquié River of that implacable sept of the Tucana tribe.

After many years—not so very long ago, in fact—there came an American explorer who wanted to go through the Casiquiari, the mysterious natural canal that connects the Rio Negro with the Rio Orinoco, not so very far from this Issana *sitio*. But bad Indians frustrated the attempt. This explorer, then, asked the King of the Issana whether he thought he might be able to get that Tiquié drum for him.

"But certainly," said the King. "It is only a matter of money and men."

"How much?" asked the explorer, with American promptness.

The King looked him over and considered his outfit in shrewd estimate and decided that the explorer looked to be as rich as all American explorers are thought to be.

"A thousand dollars," he said.

The American, fortunate man, was rich.

"Done," said he. "Here is my address. If you can get that drum and get it shipped to me, I'll mail you a check for a thousand dollars, to any bank in Manáos you want to name."

A simple way of doing business, but, between two gentlemen, perfectly adequate. The explorer duly took his departure, and in the leisurely course of time the King got together the men and the money for his expedition to fetch the drum.

That is to say, he sent three trusty fellows in a canoe, with thirty dollars' worth of trade goods, to go and trade in that drum. Since the three were Indians, there was no danger for them. They went down the Rio Negro to the Uaupés; up the Uaupés to the Tiquié; up the Tiquié to the drum. They traded the drum in for twenty-eight dollars' worth of their goods—it was expensive because it was the tribal ceremonial drum and there were no others like it—and they started merrily home with their prize.

Alas for international discourtesies! Here is where the ruffianly King of the Uaupés injected himself rudely into the story. He was a shrewd villain, it seems; and in order to provide himself with a certain official standing under which to cover his nefarious dealings with the Indians he had applied to the Government in Manáos for appointment as local Indian agent. That was in the old rubber days; and he had found no difficulty in getting the necessary affidavits from fellow-crooks among the rubber-gatherers, and so was duly appointed.

Like all the rest of the stranded rubber-men, he hadn't seen a piece of money for ten years; when suddenly came this drum sailing through his territory with the story about the crazy American millionaire whom all the rivers knew by this time

to have offered one thousand incredible dollars for it. So the King of the Uaupés affected a great and sudden virtue.

"What?" he exclaimed. "Shall I permit my poor Indians, whom I am sworn to protect, to be robbed in this manner? Twenty-eight dollars' worth of miserable trade for a thousand-dollar drum? Horrible! Infamous!"

So he confiscated the drum and sent the three Indians home to his neighbor, the King of the Issana, with a message something to the effect of:

"Fifty-fifty, *amigo*, and I'll let you have the drum."

Of course the King of the Issana wouldn't listen to any such preposterous proposal. So there followed some bickering and night raiding between the two, in which a few Indians were killed on each side. But the Uaupés monarch, seeing that he was in possession and that he didn't worry about the law anyway, held much the stronger hand; and there the drum stayed.

Presently the Issana monarch desisted from his raids; and the Uaupés one chuckled to think that he had frightened him off. But not so; the Issana side was merely busy. The King was no dull-wit to let a thousand dollars go by like that. So he sent a man out with an ax to find a hollow tree and to fell it and cut a good five-foot section out of the trunk. Then he filled in the ends of the cylinder like a barrel, cut sound-holes into it, had an Indian artist paint it up with a nice design. And lot he had a wonderful drum, better, if possible, than the genuine article, because much newer. He wrapped the rare thing up in sacking and sent it all the way down to Santa Isabel in his own monteria and shipped it to the address that the rich American explorer had given him.

In the course of time there arrived at the designated bank in Manáos a letter of warm appreciation, thanking the King for the trouble he had gone to and the danger he had incurred, and telling him that the lovely drum had been formally presented to the museum of the explorer's very highly educated university town and that it was an object of national envy because even the National Museum in Washington didn't have one like it. And with this hearty letter of thanks, to show a more substantial appreciation, was inclosed a check for *one thousand American dollars!*

And it was our good fortune to arrive at the court of the King of the Issana just as the first immediate shipment from Jotte Jae had arrived by special monteria to relieve the ten-year famine of *pâté de foie gras* and Huntley & Palmer's biscuits and champagne.

Chapter XXXII

AN AFFABLE MURDERER.

We departed from the court of that very entertaining King of the Issana, with regret and with expressions of international good-will, sworn to see to it that his monteria, after delivering us at the rival capital of the Uaupés, should depart unmolested.

This Uaupés king lives in the security of several days' journey up his river, at a place called the Island of the Crocodile; and the monteria paddle-men have told us that he is the crocodile. There is a very illuminative expression in the Geral *language—Ohkohthiurunga,* which means, "Man Who Makes the Water Bloody"; and we have been told frightful tales about him: How he would arrive at an Indian village and demand food; and if it were not forthcoming on the instant, he would cut down the man with a machete. How he would force the Indians to work for him and would pay them nothing; and if one had the temerity to ask for the promised payment, he would laugh and would shoot at him with a big pistol. How he lived now, shunned by the Indians, whole villages of whom had deserted their homes and moved farther into the jungle creeks, leaving him with a small following of not more than fifty of the immediate relatives of his wives, a hard-bitten gang who went armed to the teeth for fear of reprisals.

Tales, the counterpart of those Putumayo atrocities, which once again reminded us that perhaps the alarmists in Manáos had not been altogether liars when they spoke of dark doings up-river which were better not to be permitted to leak out. It was not without a certain apprehension and a shamefaced looking to our guns, while we yet jeered at one another, that we swung into the *sitio* of this monster.

We found this well-hated and feared king to be in appearance—well, perhaps worthy of the scandal that was retailed about him. A low mud veranda fronted a particularly lovely stretch of river, commanding a clear view for a good mile in each direction. In the veranda hung a most gorgeous grass hammock decorated with humming-bird's feathers. In the hammock lay a gross, ponderous person, dressed in dingy white-duck trousers and an open coat displaying a corpulent expanse of black hairy chest and stomach. His features were negroid, and my immediate impression was that we traveled, not the Uaupés River of South America, but the upper reaches of the Congo, and that we were meeting the chief of some central African tribe. From the head-rope of the hammock depended a huge holster from which protruded the butt of an extraordinary weapon, a double-barreled shot-gun pistol; or, to put it another way, a twenty-gage sawed-off shot-gun with a pistol grip. Against the wall, ready to hand, leaned a Winchester .45.

A murderous-looking outfit, and alert for any emergency. But the King proved to be—to us, at all events—an affable and an amusing host; and if all those stories about his savage cruelties were true, he coupled with cruelty the other equally African trait of easy good nature.

Of course we wanted to see the drum.

"Oho!" He rolled out a great husky laugh. "That was a good joke on that stuck-up fellow of the Issana! And the skinflint wouldn't go halves with me. I ask you, senhores, whether I didn't offer him a fair bargain. He got the business, true enough; but *carralhos!* it was my drum, out of my river, wasn't it?"

A novel point of view, it seemed to me, which afforded an interesting insight into the convictions which these up-river squatter monarchs hold about their rights. With the utmost cordiality the King had the drum dragged forth for our inspection.

Illustration

A moloca—eighty feet wide by one hundred deep

Illustration
The Ceremonial Cigar, built of leaves and wood chips and gum and a little tobacco

Illustration
"Bad Indians" who Kill Traders are Deeply Interested in Presents of Cloth

Illustration
Boys must be boys
The veriest bratlings get huge enjoyment out of paddling in the wash-basin

It was a huge log of the same very hard and heavy redwood that my calling-stick was made of; about five feet long by six in circumference, and weighing some four hundred pounds in spite of the fact that it was only a shell. At intervals of a foot apart, three hand-holes had been cut, and through these the interior of that hard log had been scraped away with infinite patience and probably no better tools than a short piece of a broken machete blade. The whole was painted with an intricate Greek-border design.

"Want to hear it?" asked the King. "I have an old Indian who knows how to beat the code."

And forthwith he went to no end of trouble to have it slung in a cradle of ropes, just as the Indians suspended the thing, he told us; and a wizened old man came and beat a tattoo upon it with a pair of rubber-topped sticks. The code was a distinct long-short of varying lengths, and the tone was a deep, booming note which seemed to have a considerably penetrating quality. The old man became so enthusiastic that he beat upon the thing for half an hour in a sort of religious ecstasy and wouldn't stop till he was quite exhausted.

It was altogether a very complete exhibition of a most interesting tribal rite which few white men have been privileged to witness. And when it was all over, the King claimed his justification. Was such a drum not well worth the half that he had demanded from that skinflint? he asked. And I said it was even so.

"Then," said the King, "Senhor Americano, I will sell you this beautiful drum very cheap indeed. Give me but the five hundred dollars which is my rightful share, and it is yours."

Much would I have loved to have the thing and ship it home; for it was without doubt a rare museum piece. But alas! I had to explain that we were no rich American expedition de luxe with five hundred dollars to spend on a single specimen. He accepted my statement politely, but it was quite clear that he didn't believe me one little bit. For the rest of our stay he kept trying to sell me that drum, each time reducing the price. He was beginning to realize that the thing was something of a stolen white elephant, and that the only possible purchaser was an expedition. And expeditions to the Uaupés River were few and far between. By the time we came away the price had come down to two hundred dollars and I was weeping that even at that figure I couldn't afford to buy.

Yet even though we could do no business together, the King remained affable and did his best to make our stay comfortable. He gave us a whole palace to live in, which palace is worthy of record as a supreme example of the luxury that those rubber barons of the good old days dragged up to their sitios at an expenditure of money and labor that was an insanity.

This Island of the Crocodile was the farthest and most inaccessible of the rubber settlements. Yet here had been brought all the way from Manáos tons of pink and pale-green and rose glazed tiles. Since the impatient new-rich wanted his palace in a hurry, a crazy structure of lath and plaster had been thrown up, and over this flimsy base tiles had been stuck from floor to ceiling, a different color for each room. Artists, actual painters, had been brought to decorate the ceilings with lewd nude figures à la Versailles. A piano had been lugged the more than thousand miles up-stream, on a special raft. There was a patent Swiss instrument that played a whole band of chimes and snare drums and gongs and things from a toothed roll. There were upholstered chairs. There were vaudeville-house glass chandeliers and plate mirrors. And everything that could be thought of besides.

Nobody here could play the instruments or knew what the luxurious furnishings could be used for. But what matter? They cost money, therefore these half-civilized and wholly illiterate people desired to possess them as evidences of culture. Since money was just rolling in from the jungles, they got them, no matter what the cost.

And now the equatorial rain and the tropic damp have done their work. The painted ceilings have fallen down; the pink and green tiles have fallen in; the piano stands a skeleton of split veneer with intestinal wires sprawling through its bones; the patent Swiss contraption leans drunkenly on one caster and its glass front lies in splinters at its feet; a six-foot plate mirror hangs diagonally from a precarious hook in the disintegrating plaster wall. And the King lives in a mud veranda and three rooms of what used to be his rubber-shed and was therefore built to withstand the climate!

And yet, if he regrets the glory of the past, he doesn't show it. He shrugs and laughs his throaty negroid laugh.

"It came," he says, "and it went. It will come again—with balata, maybe. Quem sabe?"

And so back to balata we come; that exasperating product that all along the line has dogged our footsteps and raised the cost of our travel and the difficulty of getting transportation. Here again we are held up by balata; and here we get the story of the balata-rush from its beginning—possibly to its end.

The King has a monteria left over from the old rubber days in which we can proceed on our journey. He has three, as a matter of fact. But the difficulty is not conveyance but men. Two of the monterias have quickly been patched and calked and crammed with all the available men of the sitio and sent up after balata. Thus does he explain the shortage of his subjects.

"For," says he, "he who has most men gets most balata." An obvious enough conclusion. But the King makes his meaning clearer by adding: "Had I guns for all of them, I would get all the balata in those jungles."

With the most naïve candor he told us, then, the story of the balata in the Uaupés. When those three first discoverers passed down his river he didn't know what they had, he said regretfully, leaving it to be inferred that had he known, they would never have passed. But since they did pass, and the thing was now known, what could he do but get in on the scramble? And the pickings would be good enough; he wasn't afraid. About a dozen boats had come up, a dozen out of the couple of hundred that had started so crazily from Manáos, and he had let them pass. Why not? Would they not, those who survived the strenuous and dangerous work in the jungles, have to come back through his territory and past his very front door? (Inference again of eliminative warfare in those dark jungles and of tribute to be levied upon the survivors.)

So must a robber baron have spoken from his stronghold on the Rhine. One can't feel altogether hostile toward this bold swashbuckler, even if he has earned the ominous title of *Ohkohthiurunga*.

We have eaten dinner with the murderer. He served, this man who used to import pianos and French lingerie for his naked Indian wives, boiled *pirarucu,* boiled rice and *farinha.* No salt; no flavoring; nothing to mitigate the mess. And he sat at his perfect ease, unabashed, and paddled his bare toes in the pans of water in which the table legs stood to keep the ants from crawling up; the while he related Rabelaisian stories interspersed with snatches of invaluable information about farther upriver.

A route would be possible, he told us. Another explorer had come down the Uaupés once from the Cano Grande—which we knew. Why should we not find some means of going up, if indeed we were foolish enough to persist?—for the rapids were bad and God knew what came after.

Indians? Well, Indians were good and bad. It was wise to be always on the alert and to keep a gun well in view all the time. If an Indian made a suspicious move, it was foolish to give him a chance to do anything treacherous with a poisoned arrow. It was wiser to shoot him at once and so to demonstrate that the gun was loaded. On the whole, Indians were safe enough if one didn't relax one's perpetual guard.

But those Tiquié people, six or seven days' travel farther up on the right bank,—that is to say, on the left-hand side as we traveled up-stream,—they were not so good. They were one of those hostile tribes who had established a strong outpost *moloca* at the mouth of their river and plainly let it be known that they wanted no white strangers—white being anybody who spoke Portuguese—in their country. If traders persisted, they were killed. Yes, it was true that they had shot two of his trader friends not so long ago with poison blow-guns, for no other reason than that they had stolen a couple of women. They were bad people.

I began to have an inkling that I understood something of the reasoning of these Tiquié people. Like those much-lied-about San Bias Indians, they had been so exploited and cheated by the unscrupulous men who went after rubber that they had just tarred all white men with the same brush and had retreated up their river and issued a notice to all strangers to keep out.

So, when one traveled up the Uaupés, the King went on to warn us, it was wise to keep close to the right-hand or farther shore, and to keep going hard till one was well past that hostile country.

We should have nothing to fear, he assured us. His monteria, as soon as it could be calked, would be at our service and he would presently be able to find some sort of crew. He had told his wives to send the word among their menfolks, and one of these days a crew would be assembled. We must not expect them to be expert river-men, but we ought by this time to know enough about river travel to drive them. In the meanwhile, why be excited and anxious? To-morrow was another day; and all time was before us. Furthermore, he was glad to have us here. Was he not doing his best to make us welcome?

True, all of it; all very nice and hospitable and fine. But these delays are frightfully exasperating. To the R. M. they are such an irritation—getting nowhere and accomplishing nothing, as he says—that he begins to fret and to murmur that he has important obligations, at home in the U. S. A., to fulfil. All time is, therefore, not before us; and what very surely is before us is the rainy season.

So, also, it seems, are my directorial worries. It appears that the ideal director of an expedition ought to possess, in addition to all his other superhuman qualifications, that of commanding the elements as well as wild Indians and dilatory boat-owners and kings.

Chapter XXXIII

ADVENTURE WITH A VENGEANCE.

It was wise old Confucius who said: "If a man might know the future, he would never dare to go farther on the road of life." So with us. Had we known what we were coming to, we would very certainly never have gone any farther than that last *sitio* on the Uaupés.

How shall the record describe the tribulation that has befallen us? The affable murderer gave us a cordial send-off, wished us luck, apologized for the miserable set of his wives' relatives, who had been the best he could procure, told us to beat them well if they didn't work hard, and warned us not on any account to spoil them by giving them presents when we dismissed them. As to payment, we had settled that with him, and if the poor relations got any of it they would be lucky.

So we started off at last on our next lap, without too much trouble. The Indians were a miserable lot, as was very reasonably to be expected, since they were the nondescripts among the relations, too worthless, for one reason or another, to be enrolled into the King's robber band. They knew nothing of handling a boat and were entirely unacquainted with the river. Not that that mattered so very much; for we had had quite enough monteria experience, as the King had suggested, to know what to do. But it was an unthinkable nuisance not to know about camping-places. We would pass some possible spot as evening was drawing on and we would be in a quandary to know whether we should stay where the staying was

good or go on farther at the risk of being caught by darkness half-way between nowhere and no place else.

Much time was lost through this hesitancy on our part; and particularly exasperating it was, too, because it always turned out on the following day that we could have had another hour or so of good going and found a perfectly suitable camping-place. To go or not to go, that was the question. And the daily council of war developed into an acrid argument. The impatient R. M. was all for pushing on. I, more cautious, was in favor of staying. Every next day the R. M. would be in a position to grumble:

"There, look at that! I told you we'd find a place if we kept going."

Yet the only time that I was overborne by importunity, we dragged on wearily for hours after dark, hemmed in by a solid wall of trees standing in deep water. Finally, in desperation, we tied the boat alongside the jungle fringe and slung our hammocks from tree trunks overhanging the water. There was no reason why that should not have been perfectly comfortable except the psychological one of feeling sure that that night of all nights we should roll out of our hammocks in a nightmare.

In spite of that experience, the R. M. chafed at each hour's delay and his impatience became an insistent complaint. There began to grow up an atmosphere of recrimination which brought me forcible and sympathetic memories of that other harassed director whom we all blamed all the time for faulty judgment.

However, we progressed, even though slowly. Only two incidents worthy of note occurred. One was that I swam a record of fifty yards in about ten seconds flat. We had stopped for the customary midday bathing-fishing period. Latitude was about half a degree south—that is to say, within thirty miles of the equator—and direction was slightly north of due west. So it was hot enough for anybody to enjoy a swim.

I was enjoying it accordingly, when I noticed, out of the corner of my eye, a round head and black shoulders bobbing and ducking just out of clear view. I thought it wanted to play tag and that it was one of the Indians. So I called to it a couple of times. When I received no answer, I rolled over to see which dumb Indian it was. And it wasn't; it was a big, splay-lipped, goggle-eyed manatee.

That was when I made my record. A manatee, of course, is a perfectly harmless, good-natured freshwater cow. But there is something terrifying about suddenly finding oneself in deep water in close proximity to a beast that lives in it all the time and is twice as big as oneself. I can perfectly believe the theory put forward by folklorists who claim that the manatee is the basis for the mermaid myth.

The other incident was that the sauba-ants ate up the small tent. I had looked forward to purchasing in Manáos a less cumbersome shelter than that horrible wall-tent which we had all cursed so fervently and oft. But not a tent was to be found in the whole city—evidence again of how thoroughly it had changed from the days when people congregated there as the last outfitting station for their jungle camps in the rubber country. So I had a small tent made by hand for a dew-shelter for the fine-weather camping along the trail. But I was forced to bring along that big horror for the rainy season that was ahead of us, and incidentally I had a new top of a most excellent English green waterproof canvas sewed in by the same hand; and the whole tedious job cost only four dollars and a half.

We used the little tent, then, for our night shelter, and we had learned the trick of building a barricade against the ants on the same principle that the Western plainsman encircles his sleeping-ground with a horsehair lariat to keep the rattlesnakes out. It doesn't keep rattlesnakes out, but it serves to illustrate the principle. To keep out sauba-ants one encircles one's sleeping-quarters with a train of *farinha.* And this trick has the virtue of doing the trick. The ants, if they come, will check gratefully at the *farinha,* and as long as any is left they will not come in and eat up one's clothes. If no ants happen to be in that vicinity, one sweeps up the barricade and carries it on to the next camp.

Well, on this particular night, we duly laid our barricade and went to sleep. We awoke, as one often does in the jungle, with the uneasy sensation that all was not well. The disturbing cause was easy to determine. That ominous clip-clipping sound, which ought to have been comfortably all round us, was also above our heads. We opened our eyes and then asked one another whether they saw the same thing that we saw. It was mystery enough. Where we had gone to sleep under canvas, we now saw the galaxy of the tropic stars. It required an appreciable time for our sleep-sodden senses to figure out just what had happened. Ants, of course. But how? Had the infallible farinha trick failed?

Flash-light investigation showed that the barrier was still there and doing its duty. Ants by the voracious million were busily carrying the *farinha* home as requested. We concluded that we must have pitched our tent right over the opening of one of their tunnels. But no, there was no tunnel; after more than a year's experience of jungle camping we were not quite such babes in the wood. So the mystery remained, like all jungle mysteries, till the daylight came. And then we found that one of the tent-ropes had been pegged down *outside* of the charmed circle; and that a gay column of ants was walking the tight rope, each holding a neatly scalloped piece of the tent top over its head like an umbrella.

Once again I wished that the Entomologist were with us to tell us why the sauba would prefer a moldy tent top to good *farinha*. Perhaps just because it was moldy; for the sauba belongs to that uncannily clever group of ants who rear their young on fungus artificially grown in underground beds. The Entomologist doubtless would be content to record an interesting scientific fact. But we, in the meanwhile, were condemned once again to that ponderous and accursed wall-tent.

It was small satisfaction that we were getting to higher ground and that camping-places with available space for the circus top were more frequent. For with higher ground came animal life; and with animal life, insects. Mosquitos and piume flies. And I had designed the little tent to be bug-proof; whereas we should be lucky if that wall-tent thing kept the rain out.

And so to the great tribulation. In retrospect it is easy to reflect that it is incredible what simple fools three grown-up white men can be. Yet at the time no one of us saw anything to suspect. This is what happened.

Camping-places always seemed to occur most alluringly on the far left shore; while we were traveling up on the right. One of the bovine Indian paddle-men even made the flat statement that on that shore there were no mosquitos and that the current was less strong and that it was better in every way.

"Why, what are you talking about? You don't know the river," I charged him.

He pointed with his chin.

"I know that shore," he said doggedly.

That shore was the side we were avoiding on account of the Tiquié River. But:

"I know the Tiquié," the man insisted again. "We avoid them too; for those men are the enemies of the *sitio* of the Crocodile."

All that seemed to be reasonable enough. So one evening, when a particularly inviting site lured us and when nothing else was in sight on our side, we went across; and we found what the man had said about current and mosquitos to be delightfully true. This substantiation of his statement, coupled with the fact that a knowledge of camp sites really meant the saving of at least an hour's running-time every day, sometimes two hours; added to which we knew that the men of the murderous Crocodile would surely not be popular with a hostile tribe—these must stand as our excuse for what would otherwise have been carelessness amounting to insanity. As it was, we let ourselves rely on the man's obvious knowledge and did not consider how small that knowledge might really be or how great a fool a dull-witted Indian can be. We did ask him from time to time about the advisability of crossing back to the right shore again.

But, "Plenty of time," said he. "I know the Tiquié. Four or five days yet."

I concede the man credit in that I believe he was genuinely a fool and that there was no treachery intended on his part; for when the horrible surprise came, he was as properly scared as he will ever want to be again. What happened was this:


Illustration

The Ark of Refuge


Illustration

Bow-and-arrow fishing requires a sure hand and a surer eye

Some of the hasty calking put into that old monteria began to shred out and the boat leaked badly—which was providential, for it was owing to that fact alone that our gear was saved to us. Evening came, and the camping-place which the fool expected was not there; as a matter of fact, his landfalls during the last few days had seemed to be rather fortuitous. It was dusk, then, before we came to an inviting slope of open ground. We tumbled out, and I had all the gear dumped out, too. On the morrow I would see what could be done about those leaky seams.

All unsuspicious, we found a spot some forty yards away where we could put up the tent. We left the Indians to prowl about down by the boat, for they were useless to help us in this. We were struggling with the beastly thing in the dark, when with a suddenness that left us helpless to do a thing to prevent it, the catastrophe befell.

There was a wild yelp from the Indians and a chorus of terrified chattering. *"Mmm-ma le!"* I caught the exclamation of dismay. *"Impesa phani! Inga Tucana shiko!"*

And with one rush they piled into the boat, shoved frantically off, and bent to the paddles as if in the shore mud they had come upon the fresh tracks of the devil himself. In a second they were a blur on the dark surface of the water. In

another they were gone, and only the splash and clatter of their oars came back to us, going hard and in wild confusion.

That was the last we ever saw of those Indians or of that boat. And that sudden desertion left us in the most unpleasant situation I have ever known. What those miserable runaways had yelped in their panic was:

"My God! Here are footprints! This must be the place of the Tucana!"

Consider us, then. There we were on a little strip of land, hemmed in by the jungle on each side of us and by the river behind. Somewhere in the gloom farther up the slope was the *moloca* of those implacable people of the Tiquié River whom we had been warned against at every stage of the way ever since we had left Manáos. Of course they were the Tiquié people. What other Tucana would have terrified those Indians so, except the Tiquié men who had recently shot two trader friends of their master's full of blow-gun darts?

What were we to do? We were there on their private dock, so to speak, and we couldn't go away anywhere else. Wild thoughts came to us of taking to the river and swimming. Where to—without equipment, guns, anything? We were up against hard, practical facts. It is only in fiction that men swim long distances holding rifles and ammunition and matches and so forth high and dry in the air with one hand. And even if we had managed to get away with arms and ammunition, where should we have gone? White men—or Indians, for that matter—can't suddenly land somewhere in the dark out of nowhere and hew their way for two or three hundred miles through the tangle of the Brazilian jungle.

Wilder thoughts came of finding a canoe, perhaps, and getting away with the barest necessities which we could sort out of our piled gear in the dark. But how were we to find a canoe? Investigate with a light, and perhaps invite a silent sliver of cane out of the black shadows, tipped with a poison that kills in ten seconds?

No, there was nothing to do but lie very flat on the wet earth behind our various bales and boxes, with rifles poking out in front and with the safe, empty river at our backs and spend the night listening for all the noises that our crawling imaginations could conjure up for our worriment.

What a night that was! A clammy mist hung over river and shore. The sodden earth was wet under our bellies and the heavy dew was wetter above. Every night noise of the jungle was translated by our tense nerves into whisperings and stealthy footfalls and snappings of twigs. All excited imagination, of course. Morning came after a hundred hours, and nothing had happened. Daylight showed that there had been no miraculous mistake about habitation. A well-trodden path led from the water's edge through a thin fringe of scrub. A tiny creek cut in under dark overhanging trees. There would be the canoes of the village. Dared we attempt to steal one now? The thought wasn't even discussed. That other recurrent thought about blow-guns was a powerful deterrent.

No, our most urgent considerations were distinctly passive. What should we not do that might annoy these people? What were they intending to do? Why had they made no move as yet? Of course they knew we were there. A thousand questions we asked one another, over and over again, repeating the same thing in futile variation through the whole of that nerve-racking morning. And still the Indians made no move.

It was noon before a naked boy appeared, coming down the path, half frightened, half sullen. Obviously he had been sent to scout; to draw our fire, as it were. It occurred to us immediately, snatching at hopeful straws as we were, that perhaps all of the nervousness had not been on our side. Three white men, after all, could do some damage if a hostile move were made. The boy, then, had been sent to report upon our attitude. Whether we appeared to be on the aggressive or otherwise. We, by all the gods, didn't wish to start anything.

On the spur of the moment I called the boy and told him:

"Hey, take my stick up to your chief and tell him that visitors wait!"

He didn't understand the *Geral*, apparently; but he understood the meaning of a carved stick. With some hesitancy he edged near and took the stick; and then he ran like a scared monkey, up the path.

We had played our calling-card; and upon its reception now everything depended. If these people accepted the call, it would mean, according to the conventions of all the river tribes, that we were at least on terms of neutrality, if not of friendliness. They might not be in a hostile mood, we hoped, and so might do no more than tell us to hurry up and get out of their country. If they didn't accept the call, who knew what they might do? Who knew, anyway, whether these Tiquié people adhered to the conventions of the other river tribes? On the other hand, we began to have a vague, wild hope, since they had made no hostile move as yet, that they might prove to be more tractable than we had been led to expect. Indians had been known to show some discretion before now; and who knew what that carved stick said—if anything?

We were left for another couple of hours to finger rifles and cartridge-belts and ask ourselves these conundrums. It was afternoon before at last the head and shoulders of a man appeared above the scrub. Imagine how we strained our necks to see what he carried as he walked down the path! Did he come as an armed bailiff, to throw us off the lot, or was he an ambassador? For that one moment, at the extreme pinnacle of the long tension, I could feel my pulse pounding in my diaphragm. Then at last the man came round the bend of the path, into full view. A strongly built fellow of middle age, naked except for a gee-string and a necklace of jaguar-teeth and triangular pieces of silver, which proclaimed him a sub-chief. And—thank God!—he carried my carved stick and another.

Solemnly he strode forward and planted both sticks in the ground a foot apart and squatted behind them. I knew what to do. I had carefully learned all the ceremony of calling. I squatted opposite to him with the sticks between us. They formed a neutral barrier of immunity. Through the space he spoke and gave the prescribed greeting. *"Hath theá puré, Kariwa* [The chief sends his stick]." That meant, "Greeting White Man." The proper answer was: *"Hath theá bíme, Ipangu* [Thank you for the greeting, Warrior]."

That was all. The warrior rose and departed. But that all was as though the plenipotentiaries of the nations had spoken at Geneva. The chiefs and the *ipagés*, the witch doctors, had decided for some reason or other that they would not open hostilities against us. We were to be received—at all events for the present. The rest would depend upon our conduct.

We knew how people feel when the governor's reprieve arrives. It was up to us, now, to return the chief's stick in person and to make the ceremonial visit. That

visit is distinctly worthy of space in the record; for it was a most interesting—and, to us reprieved ones, most impressive—ceremony.

Let me try to draw a picture again.

We took the stick and went up the path. About fifty yards up, it debouched into a great clearing, at the far end of which, fronting the river, stood the chief or council *moloca*, a long barrack of split palm-trunks and a high palm-thatch roof with a full eighty-foot front. In the background, through the trees, the roof corners of other molocas showed. But not a sign of life about any of them. The great clearing was deserted. Even the dogs and fowls had been chased away in preparation for this solemn and obviously unusual affair; for these Tiquié people were surely not in the habit of receiving white men.

Not a sign of life. Yes, just one. The only things that moved were the white eyeballs of two naked warriors who stood stiffly behind their spears, one on each side of the single doorway. There was nothing very inviting about all these indications of an armed neutrality; and I, for one, would rather have turned tail and run from that inhospitable door. But I had taken careful instruction in this important ceremony of calling, and not one of the rules was I forgetting. So, without a word, we walked past the guards, through the door.

Within, was the immediate gloom of a lofty windowless structure. Away at the rear, a good hundred feet off, was a square of light, a back door, which served only to render more obscure the objects in the foreground; and they were ominous enough in all conscience. To the left, just inside the door, were low stools, hewn out of a single piece of wood. These were the guest-stools. We sat ourselves down upon them and planted the chief's stick before us.

Menacing silence still. In the semi-darkness facing us was a circle of naked warriors, perhaps fifty of them, hemming us in from wall to wall, stiffly statuesque behind their weapons, like the guards out in front, and monstrous with the dim high lights glinting from their muscles.

Still no word. There is something creepily ominous about a prolonged silence when many people are present; a sense of something portentous impending. Although I knew that we were there under the sanctuary of the chief's carved stick, that feeling of something hanging over me in the gloom gave me a crawling all up and down my back.

At last came a sound from the far rear. Soft padding footsteps. The men in the center of the semicircle made space, and two women came through, one carrying a basket tray of great slabs of a coarse bread made of *mandioca* meal, and the other a shallow pot containing a sauce made of red-hot chili peppers and a spinach-like leaf called *manisawa*. Without word or sign the women set down the viands in the center of the space within the half-circle of warriors and withdrew. The men who had opened up closed together again and the silence was as before.

Without a word we three well-instructed white men rose from our stools, squatted before the offering, and—listen to this extraordinary coincidence of convention—we broke bread and dipped it into the chili stew (it might almost have been wine) and we ate thereof.

We were almost strangled by the excoriating mess. I nearly coughed my head from my shoulders. But not till each one of us had broken bread and eaten at

least one mouthful in that house and then returned to our stools was the silence broken.

Then, like a crash of drums: *"Hath theá pureé, Kariwa,"* boomed from fifty throats at once.

I choked desperately over my *"Hath theá bíme"* return.

The warriors all squatted down on their hams, and then for the next half-hour I was kept busy answering a string of questions that were fired at me from all quarters, in a manner so ludicrous that if I hadn't been afraid, I should have giggled out loud.

"Who are you? What is your name? Where do you come from? Where are you going? What is your business?"

The questions were strictly formal. But every man in the circle had the right to ask as many of them as he wished, for his own satisfaction, no matter whether that question had been asked and answered or no. It was as though each individual felt it to be his privilege to inject himself into the conversation. And to each one I had to answer what it might be and to add, *"Theá bímige,"* equivalent to, "And thank you kindly for asking." Whereupon the man would acknowledge my reply and my thanks by repeating, "*Bímige* [Thanks for telling me]."

In this extraordinary manner an hour was spent in replying to half a dozen simple questions. Then the chief, who squatted in the center of the semicircle, made a sign into the gloom behind him, and a woman brought the cigar. And then at last I felt easy. The breaking of bread meant that hospitality had been accorded to us. And the ceremony might have gone no farther if the answers to the formal questions had not proved satisfactory. In that case we should have been at liberty to withdraw and to camp in their territory without molestation until we should be ready to depart. But the cigar signified the distinct hand of friendship.

It was a portentous thing, two feet long and as many inches thick, rolled in a spiral of a thick leathery leaf and containing certain other aromatic leaves, some chips of a soft white wood, gum from the cajunut tree, and a little tobacco. It was held between the prongs of an elaborately carved holder shaped exactly like a huge tuning-fork, the lower end of which was sharpened so that it might be thrust into the ground. A double-size stool of the same shape as the guest-stools was brought for the chief. He seated himself on the one half and indicated the space at his left. Nothing appealed to me as being ridiculous as I went and sat beside this burly specimen of a naked savage. Nor to him, of course. Gravely he plucked the great cigar-holder from the ground, puffed a cloud or two, and passed it to me. Gravely I puffed and planted it in the ground again.

Then the chief made his first conversational remark to me—other than his legitimate share of the questioning—and provided me thereby with a source of amazement which has left me still mystified.

"Kariwa gave a true report about himself," said he, almost as though acknowledging a virtuous deed.

"Kariwas always speak the truth," said I, sententiously.

"Not so," said the chief, with a grim intonation. "None of the others ever did so. But you gave the same report as the signals said."

"What signals?" I wondered. Had we been craftily spied upon as we traveled up-river?

The chief grinned at my wonderment.

"Has Kariwa forgotten our *trocân* at the *sitio* of the Crocodile? From the *trocân* we know that you are strangers and no friends of that man who is our enemy."

That is what has left me wondering. Those signal drums have been reported to carry extraordinary distances, but this was incredible. We had been eight days en route and must have averaged twenty miles per day, in spite of the stiff current. There must be other relay drums among the back-creek tribes; and immediately my mind grasped at the idea of a specimen. But the chief only grinned and shook his head. If there were other drums, they were being kept a secret. And I haven't yet been able to find out the truth.

There is little more to record about that ceremony. With the smoking of the cigar, as a matter of fact, it was over. Others of the men came and squatted in front of me from time to time, took a puff at the cigar, and handed it to me. I puffed, and a few words passed. Our nerve-racking crisis of the night and forenoon was over. The chief gave us to understand that on account of the good reports about us, by stick and drum, which said we were a different breed of white man from those who traded the rivers, we were welcome to stay in their country till we might be ready to go, and that there would be no enmity between us.

With that we were more than satisfied. Whether the reason given was true or no, we were accepted, at all events, on a non-hostile basis. We could rest in peace; for the reputation of all the up-river Indians was that they would respect the neutrality imposed by the ceremonial of breaking bread—provided, of course, that no offense were given later. The suspense was past. We breathed again and felt that we had lived through an adventure. Which I offer in support of my contention that an adventure is a happening which may strike different people differently; though it is always an unpleasant happening. Judging by which standard, again, this was considerable adventure.

Chapter XXXIV

RENUNCIATIONS AND REVISIONS.

Time has passed since the last recording. Uncertain days of indecision, leading into weeks of futile hoping and bitter abandonment of cherished plans, and progressing into the strenuous labor of maturing new ones and becoming enthusiastic over them.

Look back for a moment to where we left off: Though the fear of battle and murder and sudden death had passed from our immediate horizon, our sky was by no means clear of the dark clouds of calamity. There we were, in that village of all others which we had been particularly warned to keep far away from, surrounded by Indians who, while for some providential reason or other they were not actively hostile toward us, were not overflowing with peace and good-will. We had leave to stay on the front lawn, so to speak, until we could make arrangements to go away.

Well, what arrangements could we make to go anywhere, either forward or back? There was, of course, no monteria available among those savages who preferred to regulate their lives according to the closed-door policy. They had dugout canoes for their own little purposes of fishing and moving up and down their rivers, but the biggest of those was capable of carrying not more than four men without baggage. A fleet of canoes might possibly convey us to some point farther up where we could connect again with other canoes, but those Indians were not interested in providing a fleet of canoes. They shook their heads and laughed.

There was no point farther up-river where we could get canoes, they said. As a matter of fact, I don't suppose they knew what was farther up-river, any more than any other Indians ever knew what was to be found more than fifty miles beyond the confines of their own tribe. But what they did know was that fourteen other boats, traders' boats, had passed up close to the farther shore—they meant the balateros, of course—and they were at enmity with all trader people.

Well, would they carry a message down to the *sitio* of the Crocodile for us?—an S. O. S. calling loudly for help? At that they laughed as at a great joke. Very particularly would they not venture into that *sitio;* for if the Crocodile were to catch any one of them the things that he would do would be unspeakable. As they, too, they added with a certain bravado, would do to him or to any of his murderous gang if they were to catch them. It followed then—here they slapped their buttocks and roared at the jest—that even if we could contrive to get a message to him, he would never send a rescue ship to their *moloca.* By no flight of imagination would he do any such thing. Ha, ha! very surely not! For he was afraid of them, was that wicked and very cunning old Crocodile.

What, then, was left? Could we ourselves, perhaps, trade in a canoe and go down to the sitio, and, if we survived, somehow persuade the Crocodile King to let us have his monteria and a crew again? In view of the Indians' grim amusement at the thought, we imagined not. Nor did we think we dared to leave our valuable equipment and trade stores among those people who, through their very self-imposed isolation, were destitute of every priceless product of civilization that traders could supply.

Again, since it would require at least two men to handle a canoe in the river currents, could we leave one of us behind to guard our treasures? Emphatically not. Which of us would care to stay? Not I.

Marooned, we were again, as at Espía. Only, there we had been helpless for lack of Indians, and here because of the belligerence of Indians. And, incidentally, it didn't tend to make us any the more comfortable to reflect that we were isolated amongst a tribe whose very ferocity isolated them.

Days passed thus, we hoping vaguely for we didn't know what God-sent deliverance. A lone belated balata-boat, perhaps, which we might signal as it sneaked up the farther shore, and which, if it would come to our call, we might bribe to jettison its less valuable cargo of boiling-down pans and to carry us forward. Or if—as would probably be the case, since those balateros, too, must have been filled up with *schrecklichkeit* about these Tiquié people—they would not respond to our signals, we steeled ourselves in our desperation to Young America's

piratical suggestion of going over in a canoe and brandishing guns at them till they should see reason.

But no balatero passed. Either the last survivor of the long journey had already gone through, or if more had come, the King down below there was holding them up on some pretext or other, for fear of overcrowding those upper jungles where the commodity was none too plentiful anyhow.

Illustration
Five-o'clock Tea

Illustration
Honest-to-goodness explorers MUST discover a race of pigmies
The tall ornamental pole is the author's calling stick

Illustration
A Cage for Ants

Illustration
The Sauba is Eagerly Caught and—in Retaliation—Eaten Alive and Raw

The days of anxious waiting passed into a couple of weeks; and one thing at least became certain. Even though some floating miracle should come up-river to deliver us, we could no longer hope to work our way up the foot-hills and over the mountains before the rainy season was upon us. That part of the expedition would have to be abandoned. Turn as we would and twist how we might, we had to make up our minds to relinquish that hope with which we had struggled so far.

No need to dwell upon our disappointment and heartaches and the acrid arguments that followed. I should have preferred to go on, at all events as far as we could until the rain stopped us. The R.M., on the other hand—now that the consummation of our project was impossible—developed an obsession for getting out of the country as soon as possible. His private affairs at home, he insisted, were of vastly greater importance than fooling about on a worthless and unknown river.

Both of us argued from empty theories, of course. For there we were stuck, and we had no means of carrying out the wishes of either of us. Yet the fact that we argued was a sad blow to me, who had been pluming myself so on the harmonious running of an expedition under my communal plan. I find an excuse in the condition of our nerves, which had surely been under a considerable strain for a long time.

Young America had the only useful suggestion, which he voiced with his customary terse bluntness.

"Jeez!" he said. "You poor pills give me a cramp! We came to make records of Indians, didn't we? Well, what more interesting Indians could we find than this bunch? Nobody knows anything about 'em, except that they don't want to be known. They're an absolutely new field. What more could you fat-heads want? As for their bad rep, that's a lot of blah."

"'Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings,'" I quoted, but he was sublimely unconscious either of its origin or its meaning.

There was worth in Young America's suggestion. And as time passed, the conditions of our stay among these people had so altered that it was beginning to be possible to carry it out.

Those ferocious men of the Tiquié had turned out to be a very human people who had accumulated a reputation for badness only because their untamed spirit had rebelled against injustice. Their story was the story of all Indians since the coming of the white man. Their original impulse had been to meet him with friendliness. But they had been subjected to so long a series of exploitations and petty treacheries on the part of the rubber-men and the unprincipled traders, that they had finally retaliated in kind. That was all.

With us they had been aloof and suspicious in the beginning. They had accepted us as not very welcome guests, dumped willy-nilly upon their private landing-place, and while they didn't incontinently massacre us, they let us severely alone in our tent down on the waterfront.

But presently, as they found that we didn't interfere with them or their women, and that we paid what we promised for small services, they were ready enough to be friends. It began with a boy whom I commandeered to bring in some fire-wood. He did so unwillingly enough. But when I gave him a fish-hook he gaped at the thing in wonderment and then ran like a deer to his *moloca*, almost as though he were afraid that I would take it away again. After that, a few of the bolder youths, who had hung about the tent out of curiosity and at a respectful distance, were shyly on the alert to be told off to bring more fire-wood or to fetch a bucket of water. And each time I paid some exorbitant fee, such as an iron nail or a queer tube of white paper containing tobacco. And each time they were as delightfully surprised as ever. This was a new kind of white man.

Presently a few of the men came and acted like disinterested statues, some distance from the front of our tent. Each time they did so I went out and talked to them and handed out a little tube apiece. They knew of these from the old rubber days, and they enjoyed them as much as the river kings enjoyed their *pâté de foie gras* after a long period of abstinence. I forced myself to the heroic penalty of smoking with them; the cigarettes were trade cigarettes put up in Manáos at three cents for a package of twenty-five. Men visitors became a daily occurrence.

Then I played my master stroke of diplomacy. I sent the chief—who had maintained himself in dignified aloofness since the ceremony of the reception—a present of a machete and invited him to tea. Him alone, with no other to detract from the dignity of the occasion. I have a priceless photograph of that powerfully built naked savage sitting in a canvas camp-chair before a folding table, grinning with supreme delight over a tin cup of very sweet tea with two honest-to-goodness white explorers. The whole village gathered round to envy; and the chief right royally would nod to some lesser dignitary, from time to time, and show him honor by letting him approach for a sip from the kingly cup. And guess what intrigued him most and what he kept telling his people about. The nice slick feeling of the greasy old well-worn canvas chair against his naked skin!

After that our tent was no more our own. Morning, noon, or night, whether we were dressing or undressing or eating, naked men and women and children sat

about upon boxes and bales and hammocks with a familiarity that was hideously embarrassing to the Respectable Member, and with delightful friendliness chattered about everything and nothing.

Such were the ferocious people of the Tiquié who not so long before had shot two traders full of poisoned blowgun darts.

It seemed quite feasible, then, in these pleasingly altered circumstances, to avail ourselves of a unique opportunity to make an intensive study of the manners and customs of a hitherto unapproachable people. I told the chief that we should like to see more of his people; we should like even to go up this forbidden Tiquié River where no white man had been before and visit some of the other villages of the tribe.

He was doubtful. Himself, he would be willing enough, but this was against all tribal custom. Since they made that rule, no white man had ever been allowed even to approach their river. This was a matter which would have to be discussed by the *ipagés* and the upriver chiefs. But he was anxious to oblige; he would send a man in a canoe to carry a message and a recommendation to the other chiefs, and upon their decision we should have to wait.

More waiting. And the problem still remained of how to go, even if permission came; and if it did not come, of how to get away from that place before the rainy season began.

There was a slim chance, of course, of those balata-boats returning down-river when the rain began to drive them out of the jungles. We could doubtless make some provision or other for connection with them. But they, again, would be loaded down to the gunwales with balata; and while they might possibly find room to take on three extra passengers amongst them, they would have no room for our gear and for the specimens which we had been collecting all this while. So that far prospect offered nothing to hang our plans upon. Besides, we were all of us desperately tired of being forever dependent upon the whim of local boatmen who would carry us just so far and no farther.

Well, what did a certain other bold pioneer do when he was threatened with considerable rain? We were in better condition than he. So I conceived the ambitious idea of building me an ark of refuge.

Time was what we had nothing else but. Hardwood lumber cluttered up the jungles. And labor was plentiful. Tools, thanks to my obstinacy, I had. No boat-building tools, to be sure; but with an ax and some nails to hand, was a navy rating of first-class carpenter's mate to be nonplussed?

Illustration

Stools are Hewn with this Queer Tool, out of a Single Block of Wood

Illustration

Cigar-makers

Illustration

Nature Provides Sandpaper in the Leaf Called Kaa-Saimbé

Illustration

A Self-baiting Jaguar-trap Alluringly Close to the Chicken-coop

About a mile up-river there was an old war-canoe which had stove a hole in its bottom and sunk. Thirty feet long, it was, and of solid mahogany; so it was virtually imperishable despite ten years' immersion in the mud. I bought it from the chief, in situ, for an iron spoon, and I contracted with him to supply me with three strong men for as long as I should need them for a lump sum of three pieces of cloth, fifty fish-hooks, and as many iron nails as I should have left over out of my store after finishing my boat.

It was then that I thanked that factor of Jotte Jae down in Manáos who had so shrewdly outfitted me with the things that I might need most in the up-river country.

That old war-canoe was to be the base of all my building. To it I proposed to attach floating ribs and so build up my sides, thus obviating the laying down of a keel, which is an intricate process even when one has more tools than an ax and some iron nails.

Planks were the main difficulty, of course. It is not till one starts to build a boat in the jungle that one realizes how terribly dependent modern man is upon a sawmill. What did that other ark-builder do? I wonder. Anyhow, I was away ahead of him, in that my ax was not a sliver of stone, but a good United States "Plumb" which held its edge against any hard wood.

I sent my three strong men into the jungles with it, to fell me trees of the same sort as that war-canoe was made of. No cheap boat was my ark to be. Mahogany of the finest, no less; and hand-hewn planks, at that. The Indians were adepts at this—amongst us—lost art of splitting wood and shaping planks by hand. Similarly with ribs.

To cut short uninteresting detail, they supplied me, in the course of time, with eight beautiful pieces of wood—thirty feet long apiece by about eighteen inches wide and two inches thick; each plank the full length of flawless mahogany so that I should have no scarf-jointing to do. That was a herculean labor, and at the price I paid I didn't think it too expensive.

After that the ark grew apace. And the length thereof was ten cubits and the breadth thereof two cubits. The next rule about ark-building, as I remembered it out of my early teachings,—Sunday-school, not navy,—was that it must be "pitched within and without with pitch." Now, I had no pitch. But I had five pounds of resin which that splendid factor of Jotte Jae had included for trade with Indians, who used it for fastening their spear- and arrow-heads solidly into the shafts. So I unraveled rope and shredded it to make calking-material for the seams; and I commandeered all the canned Argentine butter and all the soap out of expedition stores and melted them down with the resin, and so contrived a splendid seam-pitch. It had to be laid warm and melted in with a hot machete-blade. But it served its purpose of making a tight seam.

The anxiety which all ship-builders know, the momentous day of launching, arrived. We held a solemn ceremony. We made a rich wine of the red juice of the fruit of the *pupunha* palm mixed with *caxiri,* that terrible cane alcohol out of the demijohn; and we wasted none of it on the prow of our ship. We drank it up while

half the tribe heaved the ponderous craft into the water. It floated right side up and it didn't leak any more than was to be expected of a dry boat. So we shouted with a loud voice and named it *Mizpah.*

The rest was easy. I had the Indians roof over the after end with palm thatch, as was done with monterias, and over the forward half I added an invention of my own, evolved out of observation of one of the chief discomforts of monteria travel. This was a framework over which I lashed our big tarpaulin. It served a threefold purpose: the rowers would be sheltered from the sun; the overlap was sufficient to roll down the sides like awnings and keep out the rain when it came; and, most important of all, under it we could lash our hammocks and so be independent of camping-places ashore. All that we should need to do would be to tie up to a tree at night, let down our shades, and be all cozy within.

Between the after cabin and the forward sleeping-quarters I built me a bridge-deck, two planks wide; just wide enough, that is, for two canvas chairs side by side, or for the kerosene tin with a grating in it which did duty for the traveling kitchen range.

I was inordinately proud of that boat, as may be inferred by the space I have given it in the record. But, after all, was it not the most important effort of the whole expedition? For therein lay our means of escape and our future independence. Full-fledged rivermen were we now; no mere miserable strangers begging our precarious way from one boat owner to the next. All that was left to do was to engage a crew of husky lads and train them to row in more or less unison, with oars made of paddles lashed to poles.

And then, just as it was all finished, the labor of four hard weeks, and my crew was shaping up like a Carlisle eight, of course the invariable least-expected thing happened.

A balata-boat came down-river. And empty. It wouldn't listen to our signals; and away from the farther shore we could see its miserable crew of three straining frantically at their oars to get out of that locality of evil repute. But what did that matter to us? We dashed out in our low and rakish galley and intercepted the skulking trader. The man's surprise at seeing white men come from that man-eating village was a one-act playlet. He kept saying, "But senhores, that is Taraqua, the Tiquié outpost, is it not?" And we told him that surely that was Taraqua, the village that killed traders; but that he might pass unmolested if he gave us all the news of up-river.

His story was simple, and for us, who had talked with the King of the Uaupés, full of illumination. Balata was there, he said, just over the Colombian border. But the woods were full of desperate men who stuck at nothing. The Colombian Government, having heard of this new wealth in its far borders, had sent down a brace of forest wardens to establish a reserve and to exact an operating license of one thousand milreis—about a hundred dollars—from all non-Colombian citizens who might come up-river.

From what we knew of the bold balata-men who reached that far up-river, we couldn't see that a pair of forest wardens would be able to collect many hundred-dollar license fees.

Yes, said the man, that was true; the wardens had quite naturally been killed very early in the proceedings. And so had sundry others of the balateros lost their

lives in the struggle which ensued for the control of the district. He himself couldn't quite make out just who was fighting whom. But he valued his life more than balata. So he just packed up and got out.

We thought that we could enlighten him a little about just who was campaigning to get control of that balata district, but it was none of our business to disseminate scandal up and down the rivers; so we told him nothing, except that if he had but come a month or so earlier, he would have been able to reimburse all his losses by hiring out his boat and his crew to us. His eagerness to persuade us to employ him now was pathetic. He had, like so many others, staked his all on this rush for balata. Like so few of the others, he had been able to reach the ground; and there he found that he lacked that last murderous qualification which was necessary to holding his own.

He was willing and anxious to take us as passengers to any place at all; to carry our freight, everything. But—saddest words of tongue and pen!—if only he had come a month earlier! Now we had our own beautiful mahogany yacht, and word had come but two days before that the chiefs of the Tiquié River would welcome us. Nothing would make me forego that unique opportunity to get into the very backwoods of these people's country.

But this balatero who fled for his life was a God-sent opportunity for the R.M. He was as eager as the rest of us, now that the private yacht was in full commission, to make the Tiquié voyage of discovery with us, but he had been in the jungles now for a year and a half—much longer than had been estimated at that faraway time of our triumphal start from La Paz. His home affairs needed urgent attention, so he made a swift decision to seize the opportunity. The balatero was all fidgety to get away from the danger zone and the scowling glances of our crew.

"All right," said the R.M. "Hold him for half an hour, fellers." And in half an hour he had stuffed his duffle-bag with his immediate belongings and was gone.

We regret him. He has been a stanch *compañero* of the trail and even when he didn't like it, his stern sense of duty has impelled him to carry his full share of the burden. May he get out without mishap! I mark him off as Number Seven to leave the expedition.

Young America and I are left, out of nine who started from the United States. How long can we stick? we wonder. Or, rather, how much can we accomplish in this next lap of travel up an unknown river, and what can we get from an unknown people to make up for the enforced abandonment of our other plans? We are full of enthusiasm for our yachting-trip; and one thing that we are determined upon is that it is going to be a joyous picnic.

Chapter XXXV

DELIGHTFUL BAD INDIANS.

The record doesn't know what to select out of its wealth of unique material. We have ascended the Tiquié River to the limits of the Tucana people. We

have discovered new things, and have definitely placed and made motion-picture records of things which existed before only in rumor. Notably "Amazon Stones"; *caapi*, the mysterious drug that makes men brave; and the Cihuma, that queer jungle tribe of near-apes who can follow a trail by scent, like dogs.

Some description of these things will not be tedious.

The savage Tiquié people, too, furnish some interesting data. They have turned out to be, as I have already noted, a people of naturally friendly tendencies who have just become soured against the so-called white man on account of ill treatment and have had spirit enough to resent it. From the chief we got the story of the killing of those last two traders.

"Of a surety I killed them," said he, stoutly. "For a long time we had been peaceful; so those two came, and with presents of cloth lured two of our women to go with them. When we missed them, we followed in three canoes. We caught up with them on the second day, and we hung back, for they had guns. Then in the dark we came upon their camp. Out of the dark our darts found them. We took their goods and put them into their monteria and pushed it off to float down-river and carry the tale."

The story was clear-cut and hard as a machete-blade in the simplicity of its telling.

"But what became of the women?" I asked.

"The women? Oh, we beat them and brought them home," said he.

All perfectly logical and proper. It was a simple act of theft and its punishment; a direct sequence of primitive reasoning unencumbered by any complexities of civilized law. I didn't blame the Indians one little bit; and I felt that as long as we conducted ourselves on a basis of square dealing we had nothing to fear from these people of such evil reputation. The message from the up-river chiefs had been that the white men who were the friends of the outpost guard at the mouth of the river were welcome to visit them as friends. So we just up and went.

An interesting feature of the Tiquié River is that it is unique in flowing directly along the line of the equator. Sometimes a little north of the line, sometimes a little south, it crosses some score of times in a length of about three hundred miles. The country begins here to be generally higher ground than that awful flood country through which we have traveled for so long. So game begins to be plentiful again and human habitation frequent. Despite its zero degree of latitude, this river isn't nearly so hot as might be expected. Daytime registers about 110° in the shade; but there is always a cooling river breeze; and at night the temperature drops rapidly to about 60°, so that a blanket is a comfort.

In this connection there is an interesting anomaly. We found, as your yacht tied up at one village or another, that we were awakened every morning at the unholy hour of three by the whole populace coming down and bathing; the women, with a strict observance of the moralities, first; and then the men. After which they would return to their *molocas* and go back to bed. We wondered over this queer ceremony of purification, till we discovered the simple explanation that these naked people in their grass hammocks, with nothing to cover them, became thoroughly chilled at around that cool hour of lowest vitality; so they came down to take a cold bath in order to get warm—since the river, of course, maintained its comfortable average of about 90°.

Our progress up-river was almost a triumphal procession. At each *moloca* we went through the same elaborate ceremony of making the call; and at each we were received with open friendliness and with the additional variation this time that sundry of the sub-chiefs and warriors who smoked a puff of the cigar with us withdrew quietly and came back with a small present—bananas or pineapples or a painted gourd or some such thing—and laid it on the ground before us. Later, when we were ready to return to our boat, each man took up his present and came with us. Then:

"I would like, in return for my present, a mirror for my woman," one would say. And I would solemnly hand it to him. Or I would say:

"Oh, I don't think your present is worth so much. If you will give me another pineapple or a bow and arrow, I will make you a present of the knife [or whatever it might be] that you want."

Or sometimes, again, the man would say with charming insouciance:

"Very well, then. I will give you my present for nothing to make friendship between us; and you can give me anything you like to make friendship."

Which was shrewd business on his part.

Moloca life is well worthy of record. It is the supreme example, practically worked out by these primitive savages, of that dream of our wild-eyed radicals—communism.

These Tiquié people are a sturdy tribe of medium height and of a dark-brown color, ranging about 4 on the Broca scale. They are unusually quick-witted and intelligent and seem to be gifted with an unfailing sense of humor and good temper; which makes communism possible.

They live, then, twenty or thirty families in a *moloca,* which is nothing other than a lofty empty barrack of split palm trunks and palm-leaf thatch, almost invariably a hundred feet in length, with a frontage of eighty. To each family in the *moloca* is assigned an eight- or ten-foot space along the wall, separated from the next, very often, by no more than a low rail as a line of demarcation. Privacy is unknown. The space acts as hammock-room for the family; that is all. Cooking is done at the communal fireplaces between the central roof-supports; and *not* by each individual wife, but by the women who have been told off to that job.

Illustration
The Statue of Liberty Head-dress

Illustration
The Author in his Hour of Madness

Illustration
Sheiks Dolling up for the Devil-hunt

Illustration
What the Well-dressed Man Will Wear

Everybody is told off to such work as he may be best fitted for. Men with an aptitude for hunting are told off to hunt. Fishermen to fish. Artisans to make canoes or weapons. Musicians to make flutes and rattles, which take an important place in their ceremonies. Women attend to the housekeeping; to the growing of the *mandioca* crop and its preparation into *farinha;* and since they earn their place in the community by their honest labor, they are not the beasts of burden, to be which is the fate of so many Indian women.

All labor is for the community. There is no private property, although a man retains for his personal use the tool or the weapon or whatever it is to which his hand has become accustomed. But here again these people draw a curious distinction. It seems that certain duties are necessary for the benefit of the community. The product of such labor, therefore, belongs to the community. But when a man has done his allotted stint, if he cares to make for himself or to earn some article, that article may belong to him as an individual.

For instance, when I hired a man to do some service for me,—guide me out hunting or bring me some specimen of his handicraft,—his earnings were his own. In which connection is a lamentable example of how many a strong warrior may be dominated by his women-folk. Listen to this, you downtrodden husbands, and groan for your naked brothers of the Brazilian jungle.

Many a time when I owed for some service and asked the man what he wanted, he would say, "Wait a minute till I go and ask my woman." Many a time the weaker sex would be waiting right at the landing-place to see that the man should get away with nothing. And immediately she would say, "Ask for a piece of cloth," or "for beads," or for some such futile feminine frippery. And the man, though I might know that his soul hungered for a knife, would say meekly, "I want a piece of cloth."

Then when the woman had duly taken the cloth away from the man, she would later come round to the boat, begging:

"What can I do with a piece of cloth without a needle?" And when she had the needle: "What can I do with a needle without thread?" Even unto buttons would such an one beg.

When I would say in exasperation:

"Go hence, thou daughter of the horse-leech. Go and borrow a palm-thorn needle from thy more provident sister and go twist for thyself the good tucum fiber which is better than thread."

She would begin to wheedle:

"Look, Kariwa: If you will give me just one needle and a piece of thread so long, and only six buttons, I will give you—look—four big handfuls, like this, of cassava bread, all hot, to make friendship between us."

When a woman would get such a piece of cloth and the necessary implements, she would immediately go and make for herself a much-pleated skirt which she would fasten round her waist with a draw-string and then would parade, purring, before her envious friends.

Sisters under their skins, are they, all of them, all the world over; unprincipled, scheming creatures, whose instinct teaches them how to get what they want from men.

So mournful was it to me to see stalwart men bullied out of the fruits of their labor, that finally I took to asking them when they were out in the jungles with me, away from the dominant female eye, what they wanted for payment. And when they would say with shining eyes, "A knife," or, "Some fish-hooks," I would say: "Very well, I will give you a knife. That is my promise." And upon return to the boat I would with joyous deliberation select a knife for my man while his woman was whispering angrily over his shoulder, "Tell him you want beads," or "Ask for a mirror."

It has even happened that a man, in fear of the wrath to come, has changed his mind and has asked weakly for cloth. Whereupon I have earned his gratitude by saying sternly, "No, a knife was my promise; and a Kariwa's promise must be kept."

All the more extraordinary is this henpecking because the women are only temporary burdens. In this perfect commune there is no permanent marriage. A man and a woman live together for just as long as they are individually so inclined. Either one may at any time change to another *moloca*, or perhaps just sling the hammock in another partition across the hall. There seems to be no jealousy or quarreling about such a transfer of affections—if the crude instinct of mating may so be termed. The necessity for jealousy has not been evolved.

Consider. If it is a tenable theory, as certain psychologists contend, that marriage, reduced down to its primal beginnings, is the outcome of the need for fixing responsibility upon both parties for the care of the offspring of their union, then in such a community the need for this responsibility has never arisen. If, on the other hand, as certain other psychologists argue, marriage is the precaution necessitated by the great primal instinct to hand down one's property to one's own direct offspring; then, where there is no property, that instinct has never evolved itself.

The children are the children of the tribe. Food, shelter, protection are provided, not by the individual parent but by the tribe. And, as a matter of practice, the children, as soon as they are old enough to toddle, eat at the communal cooking-pots with the other children and are cared for by the women who have been assigned to that job, while their own mothers go out to work perhaps in the *mandioca* fields.

The communal practice, then, seems to be absolutely logical. No property. No urge to hand down one's accumulated goods to one's direct offspring. No need, therefore, to be sure of the fatherhood of offspring. No need to accept responsibility for offspring. Ergo, no need for permanent marriage.

These people, then, have apparently reached the communist ideal. Or is it that they have not yet evolved out of the communist ideal?

Chieftainship would seem at first sight to be anomalous. But not so. The position is elective, the individual, as well as the sub-chiefs, being chosen for their wisdom, and their authority being exercised in an advisory capacity to guide the destinies of the community. While the tenure is for life, referendum and recall are constant incentives to good behavior.

Illustration

Paint is a *Sine Qua Non* of any Lady's Ball-room Make-up

Illustration
Makers of Fish-traps

Illustration
A good day's fishing—manatee and pirarucu—
total weight, a little over half a ton

At a place called Taapiiraa there was a chief who disagreed with the witch-doctors about some policy or other, and the witch-doctors naturally contrived to persuade the people that this chief ought to be removed from office. The chief, however, stoutly maintained that he was in the right, and refused to give up his office. So the village held an election without him and appointed a new chief. Somebody inserted the end of a blow-gun through the wall of the *moloca* where the chief sulked in his corner, and removed the recalcitrant incumbent; and all was peace once more.

Absorbingly interesting savages, aren't they? It seems that some of their political methods might be introduced with benefit into the communities of the United States.

Their religious ideas are a sudden stride groping into the dim theories of ultra-modern spiritism. They have no conception of a God. Their minds don't accept any sort of benevolent deity. Yet listen to this.

Their burial is of the crudest. They just deposit their dead on a rude platform in a tree, or even anywhere in the jungle far enough away not to pollute the jungle paths; and they don't mourn. I wanted to know, of course, whether they felt no squeamishness about jungle beasts devouring their departed dead. Their reply was astounding!

"Why should we mind? *He* is not there. Only his body, which he isn't using any more."

"Well, where is he, then?"

"Oh," with an all-embracing gesture, "he is somewhere around. Anywhere, everywhere."

A distinct idea of a spirit existence. I wanted to fathom the theory of the happy hunting-ground. What kind of country did the spirit live in? Was there plenty of game and fish? What was the climate?

No, there was no game or fish. He didn't need to eat. There was no climate. He didn't feel hot or cold. He just existed. Beyond that their minds were unable to conceive. Only, they said, it was a very beautiful country. No sickness; no trouble; and there was beautiful music there.

How did they know these things? I asked. They knew, they 'said, because sometimes those who had died came and talked with their *ipagés*, their witch-doctors.

Isn't it amazing? Yet these people, withal, cannot count beyond twenty. Ten fingers and ten toes. Ten, for instance—in their own language, not Geral—is *peni phanna,* ten fingers. Eleven is *nikan dupoka peni phanna,* one toe and ten fingers.

After twenty, numbers become vague and are expressed by "a small crowd," "a big crowd," and "a very big crowd." Part of the payment for my boat-building was a very, very, very big crowd of iron nails.

The only concept they have of a supernatural being is an evil spirit. Not a devil, mind you, with horns and tail and all the other monstrous visualizations of our Christian civilization, but an abstract malignant force, without form, without physical attributes, who lives not in a fiery hell but in the thunder and in the fierce lashing rain-storms and in the deep black pools of the jungle; and who manifests himself by bringing sickness to a village, or by driving away the game from the jungles or the fish from the rivers.

The name of this malignant spirit is the same that is universally current among all the river tribes—the Jurupary. But these Tiquié people, so original in so many of their ways, deal with the Jurupary in a manner that is unique.

All other savage peoples—our own Indians, Africans, Polynesians, Malayans, and so forth—have developed elaborate ceremonies for propitiating their evil spirits. Not so these bold men of the Tiquié. Their whole impulse when the Jurupary visits is to fight him off.

Which leads directly to the amazing ceremony of the *caapi*, the drink that makes men brave for so fearsome an ordeal.

Chapter XXXVI

THE DRUG THAT MAKES MEN BRAVE.

I had heard of *caapi.* It had been reported by explorers as far back as Koch and Gruenberg. But it was always a rumor. This extraordinary ceremony existed somewhere among the jungle Indians always farther up-river. Nobody had seen this *caapi* ceremony. Imagine, then, the thrill of learning that here were these Tiquié people at last practising the rite in the most remote and hidden of their villages.

But how to witness this very secret thing? That no other white man had more than heard of it was proof that it was no ceremony that was generally broadcasted. There had been sickness at one of the biggest villages at a place called Ohkohthithero Caxoeira, the Rapids of the Water Pig, or Manatee; and one of our boat's crew confided the deep secret to me that a great Jurupary-beating was to be held as soon as the white men should terminate their visit. Naturally I made up my mind that somehow, by hook or by crook, the visit should not terminate until after this unique ceremony.

It was a matter, of course, that rested with the witch-doctors. Now, it seems that according to all the prescribed rules, the good Christian explorer must always be at daggers drawn with the witch-doctors, who are the disciples of the devil. Countless bold travelers have come to grief owing to the machinations of the witch-doctors whom they have offended. As for me, I am not that good a Christian. I always make friends with the witch-doctors and missionaries.

These Tiquié *ipagés* don't live in the *molocas* with the rest of the tribe but in little huts apart in the jungle. So I sent my carved stick to the chief *ipagé* of the metropolis of Manatee Rapids, with the intimation that I should like to give him a present to make friendship between us.

Illustration
A People of Exquisite Musical Taste

Illustration
We, About to Drink *Caapi*, Shall be Afraid of Nothing—
not even the Bagpipe

Illustration
The Youth of Noble Ambition who Fain Would be a Piper—
with his Fair Offering

Illustration
But then, it has been spitefully remarked,
that a man who would like to learn how to play a bagpipe
would have no morals anyway

What present, now, would be most acceptable? In consultation with Young America, whose reading had familiarized him with all the rules for intrepid explorers, we decided that there was a certain merit to be gotten out of some of them—particularly the one in which the white man confounds the witch-doctor with a magic of modern civilization. These Tiquié people were no fools of the good old school who would fall down and worship matches or make a god out of gunpowder. But I thought that in all our trappings I ought to have a magic that would impress a witch-doctor. And I proposed, not to confound him with it, but to give it to him for his own later aggrandizement.

So when the *ipagé's* stick came back with my own, I stalked forth to the little group of hidden huts and went through all the breaking of bread and the searing of my throat with the chili stew, in solemn privacy with the great wizard; and then I laid before him a wondrous magic—a large round disk of clear glass, convex on both sides, such as effete white men with weak eyes use for the purpose of making print appear large.

Nothing very startling or valuable in that, you'll say, to a man who couldn't read. But, ah!

"For what purpose is this magic good?" asked the *ipagé,* politely enough, but not exactly leaping with enthusiasm.

"This magic," I said, "is the most useful of all the magics of the white men. I will show you in the sunlight."

Sunlight was available in powerful equatorial quantities right outside the witch-doctor's door. There I took a dry leaf and focussed the glass on it. It was a very large and a good lens. In a second the little spot of concentrated heat smoldered, smoked, and burst into flame. The wizard clapped his hand to his mouth.

"Amm-mu! that is a very good magic!" said he.

And so it was. Consider a people who have to make fire by rubbing sticks together. You who have tried it after reading of *Chingachgook* will know how impossibly dry such sticks have to be. Imagine, then, how carefully a people must conserve fire who live in a country where for six months in the year everything, under cover as well as out, is soaked with the damp of the monsoon rain. Wasn't an imperishable means of producing fire at a moment's notice a worthwhile magic to the chief wizard of such a people? And wouldn't such a necromancer be pleased, who had bluffed his way along for some forty years with his wizardries and now had an honest-to-goodness magic for the first time in his life?

He was.

"And," said I, "I give you this magic to make friendship between us."

"Mm-mm! *theá bíme,"* muttered the wizard. "And what can I give Kariwa to make friendship?"

This was the chance I had played for.

"Look," I said. "I am the friend of all the Tiquié people. Everything that they do I do with them. I hunt with them. I fish with them. I spear the manatee with them. I make music with them. And therefore, *Ipagé,"* I concluded, "I want also to make this Jurupary-hunting with them."

"*Mm-mm-mm!*" the wizard intoned again, and squatted, thinking. Then: "Let us talk of other things, Kariwa. I will talk with my brothers about the hunting."

That was as much as I could get out of him. But, to cut it short, in a few days the wizard sent his carved stick down to our boat, and I sent mine back, and he came and was properly entertained on the private yacht; and he told us that it was all agreed. There was no reason why we, as friends of the village, shouldn't help our friends hunt their devil.

The ceremony, of course, is worthy of place in the record; for it is queerer and even more impressive than that ceremony of making a first call before we were certain of the attitude of our friends the bad Indians.

The whole purpose of the thing, as I have said, is to fight the Jurupary. In its entirety it is a protracted ordeal consisting of three days of continuous dancing, accompanied by the drinking of the *caapi* drug which emboldens the men to meet their devil face to face and to show him that they are in no way afraid of him.

The first day is spent in dressing up for the ceremony; the women mostly in paint, helped out by such ornaments as they happen to possess. Those who have no ornaments or "pieces of cloth" use more paint. The men, however, are particularly gorgeous in a criss-cross design done all over their bodies with the scarlet juice of a berry—by certain expert women—and in elaborate headdresses and bands and streamers of feathers. A hundred times more colorful than anything our own Indians ever achieved; for these people have the brilliant greens and blues and vermilions of macaw and toucan and humming-bird feathers to apply to their decorations.

As evening approaches, the men—for women mustn't touch *caapi*—sit opposite one another in little groups and intone a long chant:

"Now we are about to drink the *caapi.* Now we shall be brave. We shall not fear the Jurupary when we see him."

This goes on for an hour or so; and then *caapi* is served in little carved gourds, by cup-bearers who wear a specially gorgeous head-dress of about a thousand dollars' worth of egret plumes.

This *caapi* deserves special notice. It is a thin, almost colorless liquid, flat-tasting and bitter, concocted from the leaves of a vine. As to its vaunted effect—well, what can I say? Both Young America and I partook of it freely with the rest, and of one thing we are certain: it is not intoxicating. At least, not alcoholically so. But it imparts a distinct and almost immediate exhilaration. In cold retrospect I can't call it courage. But one acquires a certain feeling of—well, devil-may-care irresponsibility. It can best be described by the fact that both Young America and I, who like to think that we are not mountebanks, felt sufficiently stimulated and unselfconscious to demand suits of parrots' feathers, strip down to the buff, get painted up by the women, and join the other excited savages in their interminable dance.

As to receiving courage from the drink, there is no doubt that the Indians are stirred to a pitch of bravery which makes them face without flinching what must be, to them, a very terrifying ordeal. But there is also no doubt that that condition is largely the result of their psychological reaction to their hereditary superstitions, their environment, and to the rhythm of an unceasing and unvarying vibration beating upon their excited nerves and empty stomachs for three days.

At sundown the dance begins. The musicians set up a sudden shrill whistling upon reed flutes; and immediately the whole populace, men and women, form an immense circle, with arms interlocked over one another's shoulders. In the center of the circle stands a pregnant woman, holding by the hand a boy and a girl. The obvious symbolism of which is to show the malignant spirit who oppresses them that he isn't by any means decimating the tribe.

With another shrill whistling the circle breaks into what is no more nor less than a snake-dance. The musicians play a plaintive melody which repeats itself every fifteen notes and carries a marked beat at every fifth. This they accompany with brightly painted gourd rattles containing little pebbles with which they emphasize the beat. To this rhythm the dancers sway and weave and coil and uncoil, stamping the fifth beat with their feet. This weird music with its recurrent rhythm never ceases; the musicians work in relays. And in endless time with its rhythm the dancers stamp and weave and swing and coil unceasingly through the night, through the next day, the next night, the day again, and so to the third night—the dread night of their meeting with their devil face to face.

From time to time a dancer breaks from the line to snatch a breath and a drink of caapi. If he stays too long, the jeers of the others force him back. Some slight rest is thus gained, though not much. The symbolism of the ceremony being that the people show the evil spirit thereby that they are a strong, virile tribe with plenty of stamina. The women drop out early in the dance. The older men gradually are weeded out. Only the strongest young men stay till the grim third night of the ordeal.

I must try to draw you a picture of that ordeal.

As dusk approaches, the women are all herded into the council moloca and guards are posted to keep them strictly indoors; for it is death for a woman to see

the Jurupary. Even his name mustn't be mentioned in her presence; the reason for which I was never able to discover.

Imagine the scene.

The moonless night. The swift chill that comes with the darkness. The great clearing fringed by the tall, dark *molocas* and the darker jungle beyond. Away to one side a cold gray river of clammy mist. No speech. No sound—except the interminable wail of the flutes and the stamp of the dancers and the jar of the rattles, which has ceased to be a sound and is now only a rhythm that beats at the brain. In the midst of all this, the shadowy forms of the dancers, on whose wet bodies the light from just a few little fires gleams as they pass, and who are suddenly perceived to be stark-naked, having shed all their ornaments and feathers; and who dance now singly, each man on his own merits, to face with his own courage what is coming.

Even I, cold-blooded observer that I am, having dropped out of the dance long ago, respond to the theatrical effect of it all and sense the creepiness of the occasion.

Then, into the silence of that rhythm comes a sound. Afar in the jungle at first. *Boom-boom! boom-boom!* it comes. Almost like deep drums, yet too protracted for a drum.

"Aa-aah!" a whisper goes up from the still figures who stand about me. "The Jurupary comes."

And he comes swiftly. The booming approaches nearer, with a peculiarly all-pervading sound. It is impossible to tell whence it comes, or how near or how far, except that it grows louder and crashes all round, till the night is all one booming vibration; and the vibration is the demoniac rhythm that has beat into one's brain for three incessant days.

Then with a sudden shock one notices that the shadowy dancers have been augmented by fantastic figures weirdly painted with white which glimmers in the firelight. When they came or how, is unknown. They are just there; and they sway and stamp back and forth amongst the dim dancers and blow ever upon great funnel-shaped horns from which issues this maddening booming. Some one gasps in the dark near me. *"Amm-mu i qua!* The Jurupary! *Mma-u,* six to choose from!"

So here is the devil in person—for this is their belief. These men, the six who blow upon the Jurupary horns, which symbolize the voice of the devil, all-pervading, are neophytes of the witch-doctors, who, while the warriors have been performing their three-day ceremonial of preparation, have been in the deep jungle undergoing a secret preparation of their own at the hands of the *ipagés*. Details of this preparation I was never able to ascertain; for it is a secret even from the chiefs. But during that preparation—which is surely some form of spirit-raising, for the men appear to be in a sort of trance—the Jurupary himself has entered into the body of one of them, even the *ipagés* don't know which one.

So there, among the six, is the devil in person, circulating among the dancers. Here comes the ordeal, the crucial proof of courage. Suddenly one of the dancers, nerving himself to the utmost, rushes to the side line and takes a deep draft of *caapi* from one of the ever-ready cup-bearers, and so, stimulated to the highest pitch of his courage, rushes back and taps one of the six on the shoulder—for all he knows, the devil himself.

This is the challenge. Instantly the rest, never ceasing their weave and stamp, open out and leave a space with the two dim figures, the challenger and the challenged, in the middle. One positively creeps with the tenseness of the moment.

Then it is observed for the first time that the Jurupary man carries, in addition to his horn, a long whip. A terrible thing made of some kind of vine, with a tapering lash like that of a coach whip. Without more ado the challenger lifts his arms above his head and stands so, naked and unprotected. The Jurupary man takes aim with his whip, measuring the stroke and the distance to the man's naked waist; and then, with all his strength—*ss-swish!*


Illustration
The Deadly Blow-gun


Illustration
The Poisoned Blow-gun Dart


Illustration
The Mark of the *Jurupari*—see the welt on this warrior's side


Illustration
Devil-devil Men with Jurupari Horns

Even in the dark one can see the immediate welt where the lash has curled round the man's body. But never a groan. Never a wince from the still figure. Instantly the booming horns crash out with a renewed vigor. The man has passed. The devil himself has tried to wrest a sign of fear or pain from him and has failed. In the surrounding dark one hears murmurs of approbation.

Immediately follows the most extraordinary change-about. The devil, having failed to break his man, must now take his turn. Without a word he hands the terrible whip to the man and in turn lifts his arms. Whereupon the man braces his feet and takes a careful measurement—and he surely tries to wrest a groan from the devil.

Truly an extraordinary ordeal. And then, before one is well aware of what has passed, out of the darkness where another warrior takes the ordeal of his courage, comes another swish. And presently another; and another. And so on, far into the night. Ever the booming rhythm of the Jurupary horns, and ever and anon the terrible swish of the whips.

The uncanny night wears on, till all the men who have lasted so far have taken the test. Some of them, out of sheer bravado, twice, or even three times. Presently one is aware that the Jurupary men have disappeared the way they came, without warning, taking their terrible horns and their more terrible whips with them. The incessant booming dies away in the distance. The Jurupary, discomfited at not finding a weakling amongst all the young men of the tribe, has retired into his blackest dens of the jungle. And then at last the dark figures in the firelight, dancers and watchers, begin to realize that they are a very sore and a weary tribe.

In twos and threes they drop off and stumble to their *molocas*; and presently only Young America and I are left, standing alone in the dark, tingling still and drunk with the rhythm that pulses in our blood, and looking for devils. We make haste to reach the shelter of our boat.

Not till the late morning are we sane again; and we review and recall to mind the incidents of this extraordinary ceremony. We agree that those Indians have surely been stimulated to a supreme pitch of courage; both moral—for they have met face to face one whom they implicitly believe to be the devil—and physical, for they have met without flinching what to us is far worse, those terrible whips. We agree, too, that psychological reaction must be held accountable for at least fifty per cent. of that courage; for while we drank the *caapi* and danced like naked savages with the rest, at no time did we feel emboldened to uphold the white man's prestige by facing a curling coach-whip lash in the hands of a brawny devil.

But one phase of the ceremony stands out as stark magic. Some ninety young men underwent the ordeal, against six Jurupary men. Of the ninety, each had received at least one lash; some, two or three; and each had returned his awful cuts to one of the six. Why were those six not dead? Surely some magic is known to those *ipagés!* And surely is this devil-baiting rite, with the help of the drink that makes men brave, one of the queerest of all queer savage ceremonies!

We feel that we have been privileged to see what no other white man has seen.

Chapter XXXVII

SIDE-LIGHTS.

The record feels that it has reached the point at which it must face the question that is presently, in one way or another demanded of all intrepid explorers. Women. Happily in this case it is easily disposed of. One of the prescribed rules, closely analogous to the one that lays down the stern religious principle and next in importance to it, seems to be that the bold explorer must also be a man of steadfast virtue in the face of temptation. Since I have been admittedly remiss in upholding the religious principle, I fear me that I have laid myself open to suspicion. I submit for consideration, therefore, the cogent fact that, principles or no principles, a poison blow-gun is a powerful incentive to morality.

There was, indeed, a youth, a handsome lad, who came to me as a pupil. He was a tribal musician and a maker of flutes and ceremonial rattles; and his soul was fired with the noble ambition to learn how to play the bagpipe. These Tiquié people, I should say, have a very highly developed sense of music, and used to send delegations bearing gifts of pineapples down to our boat to beg me to come and give concerts at night in their *molocas*, where they would sit in long naked rows, saying never a word, fascinated and wondering whether their beautiful land beyond the grave might possibly furnish music such as this. It is one of my griefs that the dim torch-light was always insufficient to let me secure a photograph of this exhilarating spectacle.

This enlightened youth, then, bewailed the fact that he had nothing which he could give me to make friendship between us in return for the inestimable boon of the bagpipe. So he brought me his two sisters and said that they had now reached the marriageable age and that they had tentatively been marked down by a couple of young sub-chiefs as their prospective mates. But, he added, among good friends there would be no difficulty about adjusting a little matter like that, with perfect amity.

I had seen one of those same sub-chiefs kill a dog with a blow-gun at forty yards. So I took a carved flute instead.

Something about blow-guns will not be amiss. They are nothing more or less than giant pea-shooters, eight or ten feet long. The tube consists of two pieces of hardwood with a half-circle channel carved in each half and the two clapped together. This tube is carefully bound and glued with some kind of jungle gum and is then inserted for protection into another tube made of a slender palm trunk from which the pith and knots have been removed. Sights, front and back, made of the teeth of some small animal, are attached, and behold, a gun which has this one advantage over a modern rifle—the larger the game, the easier it is to kill it, for it is easier to hit. And that is all that is required of a blow-gun dart—just to prick or to scratch its game.

The darts are knitting-needle slivers of hardwood tufted with tree-cotton to fit the half-inch bore of the tube. The poison, about which so much secrecy has been written, is made from a vine called here *uirari*. The whole vine is used—leaves, stem, everything. It is simply macerated in water and boiled down to a sticky black paste which is stored in little pots. And its action is unbelievably rapid.

I used to have a comforting feeling that even if a man should get hit with one of these darts, modern science surely knew a way of combating the poison. In fact, I placed a good deal of confidence in my excellent Mulford snake-bite outfit. Till I witnessed that incident of the dog.

The creature was running about, yapping and biting at things. I was wondering whether I ought not to shoot it; yet I hesitated about killing somebody else's dog. While I waited in uncertainty, that young sub-chief darted into his *moloca*, came out with his blow-gun, and sent one of the deadly little darts into the beast's flank. It ki-yied, ran perhaps a hundred yards, staggered, lurched, and dropped dead. All within ten seconds. What chance would modern science have to apply an antidote? No, a flute was much safer.

I have spoken about hunting manatee with the Indians. This is one of the breath-snatchingest sports I know. Miniature whaling in a dugout canoe, no less. We go out in the heat of the afternoon, when the beasts are drowsing on the shallow bottoms of their reedy lagoons. Two men to a frail canoe. The Indian in the bow locates a sleeping beast, by some process of clairvoyance which I have been unable to fathom. With a long thin rod he probes the black water and cautiously feels out the form of the creature. Then, when he has got his bearings and is sure of his mark, be plunges down a harpoon having a head made of notched *chunto* palm and attached to a stout line of tucum fiber.

There comes a snort and a vast upheaval under the canoe, and away goes the stricken beast, towing the canoe behind him with a bow wave for all the world like

that of a whale-boat. The Indian yells. The white man clings to the gunwale, a bare two inches above the water, and wonders why the crazy thing doesn't upset. The Indian watches the line like a hawk and follows its every swerve and turn with a skilful twist of his paddle, so as to avoid any sideways drag, which would certainly bring disaster.

Half an hour, perhaps, of this wild rushing about, till the beast begins to tire and comes to the surface. That is all that is needed. There is none of that hauling up close and dashing off again as in whaling. The Indian has a swifter method. Let the beast show his back for just a few seconds, and a blow-gun dart finishes the fight in a very few seconds more.

When the great four- or five-hundred-pound mammal has been hauled ashore, the Indian will likely say:

"Just as well that we didn't upset in that lagoon; for there are the biting fish in it."

Manatee meat tastes very much like beef; and the Indians soak it in an astringent juice and smoke great fatty slabs of it, after which treatment it seems to become imperishable.

A very pleasing side-light is available for the record. A stalwart hunter-man came to me with his little boy. He said he wanted me to make the white man's magic over the child. I was nonplussed. What magic? I wondered. But the hunter knew all about it. He had traveled down to the rubber country in the old days and he knew many of the white men's customs.

Illustration
Homeless nomads
who live under the shelters and trail game by scent

Illustration
Young America Enjoying his Alternate Day of Malaria

Illustration
Sauba Ants as Big as Baby Mice

There was a magic, he said, which the white witch-doctors made over children. It consisted of pouring water over their foreheads with cabalistic signs and incantations, after which the child would grow up tall and strong, and immune against evil spirits. He wanted me to make this magic over his boy so that he might become a mighty hunter, unafraid of the Jurupary devil even in the darkest jungles when the thunder spoke. And—well and truly had the man observed!—he knew that a fee had to be paid for this magic, and he brought it with him, a pair of gorgeous blue-and-yellow macaws whose names were Bra and Mumbra. They were very beautiful macaws, and I coveted them with all my heart and with all my soul and with all my strength.

So—well, as I have said before, a man with a U. S. navy rating of first-class carpenter's mate can do anything. I took the brat and I delved back in my memory for all the stern teachings that had been beaten into me by my sainted

grandfather; as well as for whatever my vicarious readings and wanderings had taught me of other methods. And I gave that child the most complete all-round baptism in history. I marked him and sprinkled him and ducked him,—and he bawled lustily, all according to regular ritual,—the while I recited reams of those ineradicable teachings along with sonorous hexameters out of Vergil and the longest Latin grace ever written.

And I named him Hector Sebastian Ursula Petrus Genevieve Mac. And I told the proud father that the last was the greatest of the white man's gods; and that the boy might be called by all the other names until he should grow up and prove himself to be a mighty hunter; and when he had at last proved himself to be a man and had taken the dread Jurupary ordeal, he might at last be called Mac.

Thus did I earn those two beautiful macaws. But—is it possible that evil haunts the earning?—one of them bit my wrist to the bone and flew away on the second day that I had it.

I have mentioned Amazon Stones. The only value attaching to them is derived from the lie imported by Raleigh about the Amazon women presenting them to their temporary husbands, and the fact that they had apparently disappeared from existence since last reported by Schomburg. Well, here I saw a stone, a flat oval disk of what looked like marble, carved with crude designs of the same diamond pattern as the calling-sticks. It belonged to a witch-doctor who used it as a charm for pains in the liver. He wouldn't sell it to me; but he told me that Amazon Stones were made at a place four rapids above the last one in the territory of this tribe, and that I could get plenty of them if I went so far.

So this seems to be a re-discovery of the stones.

The highest rapid in the country claimed by these people as theirs is called Cururu Caxoeira, the Tree-Frog Rapid. Beyond that is no man's land. That means that they themselves have no settlements farther than Cururu, and that the next recognized human tribe isn't met with till four rapids farther. Five days' journey, they say, which may mean anything from a hundred to two hundred miles, depending upon the current.

They tell us alluring things about this no man's land. It is roamed by one of those queer jungle nomad tribes who seem to edge in on territory that is too unattractive to support anybody else, and who are very much looked down upon by the settled tribes. They are an unclean people, who wash no more than do monkeys. Nor have they homes any more than monkeys. They live in temporary wind shelters and eat beetles and grubs. Sometimes the Macu nomads may be met with in no man's land; or sometimes those people who are lower even than the Macu, the Chima or Cihuma, the men who follow a trail by scent like the other animals.

Again we meet the queer story about these Cihuma. We have heard all the usual stories about a white tribe and about Amazon women who permit men to visit them only once a year and who kill all the male offspring. Always vaguely "somewhere higher up." But these trail-smellers seem to be definite, at last. Here is something that we must distinctly go to see and record. Our friends can't understand our eagerness. A nasty, low-down, treacherous people, they tell us,

whom there is no honor in consorting with. Much better that we stay among the Tiquié people, who have made friendship with us.

We feel flattered and gratified; for we like our friends the "Bad Indians" of the Tiquié very much. But what explorers have ever had the chance before of viewing at close range a people who hunt by scent? Decidedly we must go and see what we may see of these Cihuma.

Chapter XXXVIII

THE INEVITABLE CATASTROPHE.

Direful things are to record. The expedition has come to a sudden and most unpleasant end. One of the rules that explorers know is that if a man stays out in the jungles for long enough, it is inevitable that some accident will overtake him. It is the truest of all the rules. The only question is, how long is "enough"?

In our case, two years was the limit of the precarious thread that the Norns had woven for us. The record comes to an end in Manáos once again. I write with a shaky hand and a lusterless eye and a permanent pain as of green apples. But that very clever doctor of the providential British foundation tells me to rejoice that I am alive and to be of good cheer, for he will have me toddling around on my feet in a month or so.

But I am being previous. I must begin at the beginning of the downfall.

We went up, Young America and I, beyond the Cururu, with just two of our faithful bad Indians. We went in a canoe, leaving our cozy yacht below the rapids. We found an encampment of nomad semi-apes making a crude fish-trap. A squat, misshapen gang they were, with large bellies and thin limbs and low gorilloid foreheads and prognathous jaws. Such a contrast to our own alert, well-muscled, Tiquié men! Dirty they were, too, with matted hair and greasy bodies; dirty by preference, like monkeys; for it was hot enough, in all conscience, for them to bathe with enjoyment. I weep that we were not able to learn more about them; for, by all the miracles, they did seem to be able to smell out what only a dog might be expected to find by scent.

They knew nothing of *Geral* nor of the Tiquié talk. But our men made friendly signs to them, and so they didn't run away, but sat around in a listlessly sullen manner, apparently taking no interest in us or in our doings. Except that, like dogs, they nosed about our fire and our cook-pots and they carried off the cleanings of a curassow that we were plucking for supper.

Our men contrived to make them understand that I would give a present of fish-hooks to any man who could find a well-used khaki shirt that we would hide in the bushes. At that they grinned their first pleasant look. We tried to make a real test of it by hiding the thing where we were not observed. But what sort of a test can be made in one attempt? I make no assertion here. It is quite possible that we were spied upon by one of those cunning jungle-dwellers who directed the others to our cache. All I can say is that we thought we had avoided any chance of being overlooked.

Anyhow, when we gave them to understand, "Go seek 'm, Tighe," they went through the motions of sniffing the air. Standing on tiptoe, they wet their noses and quested with lifted heads for the upper currents. Then they bent low and quartered the ground. In less than thirty seconds they were heading in the right direction, pulling aside bushes and scratching up the under scrub. In less than a minute one of them cackled loudly to the pack, plunged forward on a true scent, and found the shirt which we had stuffed into a crevice in a tree. Then, with simian suspicion, he scuttled off with the find, chattering, evidently preferring to be sure of what he had in hand rather than trust to the white man's promise of payment in fish-hooks.

Was it an uncanny sense of scent? Or was it an equally uncanny visual tracking? We thought we knew enough of junglecraft not to leave the latter too easy. Possibly it was a combination of the two. A single test like that would tell us nothing. I was planning a series of these most interesting tests, hoping by elimination of trickery to arrive at some definite conclusion. But then the catastrophe befell, and we had to leave it all suddenly and swiftly behind.

We ate our supper that night—or rather, I did. Young America was having his spell of malaria, the luckiest sickness of his life, so he didn't eat any of that pot around which those Cihuma dog men had been sniffing so busily.

By morning his little fever had passed. But I was a woefully sick man. I vomited frequently and sweated between whiles. My limbs had no power to respond to my will, and a burning pain gnawed at my stomach.

I had nothing in my emergency medicine-kit that would help, except some digestive tablets and chlorodyne; and by noon I was convinced that I should have to get back to our boat.

Young America rose to the occasion splendidly. He took charge of things, and he surely made those Indians work, and helped with the spare paddle himself. Late into the night they kept going, and covered in about nine hours the distance that had taken us two days to go up—with the help of the current, of course.

In our boat I had a vast store of drugs for my inexpert choice. My guess was that I needed an emollient. So I took four horrible ounces of castor-oil and, later, my priceless chlorodyne. Who knows but that I saved my life? But I remained a sick, sick man.

Our good friends of Cururu told me:

"Yes, those are bad people, as we advised you. They have put oil of the *botu* fishes' liver into your cooking-pot. If you did not know all about white man's medicines you would have died: We shall go up and kill those men, to teach them that our friends are our friends."

Gratifying, but not helpful. This botu liver—if that was the cause of the trouble—seems to have some peculiarly virulent principle. The Indians, of course, say that it is a deadly poison and that even buzzards won't eat it. They add cheerfully that a man who survives it goes mad.

Be that as it may, I remained helplessly weak and with a permanent pain which nothing short of cannabin compounds could alleviate. How thankful I was for that Stoddard medical kit, with symptoms and uses printed and placed in each bottle of pills! I suppose I can laugh now to think of the way I read the labels and tried everything that I thought might alleviate that pain. But it wasn't easy to laugh

then. By that evening I was properly frightened and had come to the conclusion that I was no case for amateur doctoring. What I had to do was to get down to Manáos as fast as possible. And Manáos, according to our most hopeful calculations, was between six and seven weeks' journey distant.

Let me give credit to Young America. He engaged a double crew and worked them in relays from early dawn far into the night. We reached Taraqua at the mouth of the Tiquié in six days. That was splendid progress. Manáos might now be reached in five more weeks, if we caught the river steamer at Santa Isabel without having to wait a month; and if—a contingency that had worried me much as we raced down the Tiquié—we could somehow induce a crew of those men to take us down through the territory of their enemy, the Crocodile King of the Uaupés.

Let me give credit heaping over to those so much maligned men of the Tiquié. There was no hesitation in my hour of need. The chief himself stoutly announced his intention of coming in person to see that there should be no hitch about anything, and he gave swift instructions for eight of the strongest of his young men to waste no time but to come right along.

"What of your enemy, the Crocodile?" I asked him.

He grinned a truculent grimace even as he gave his quick orders and collected his weapons.

"What of him?" he demanded. "We shall be nine armed men, and we go under the additional protection of the Kariwas, who have guns. The Crocodile will make no war with us."

And so it was. The men whom the chief had picked worked wonderfully, keeping up a steady pull for hours at a stretch and dawdling no minute of the way. Some of it, I like to think, was due to the awning on that expertly designed yacht, which sheltered the rowers from the sun. And for myself, never was I more grateful than that I had built that boat. Had I had to make the long journey in a dugout canoe, I should have been in very miserable case. As it was, I had all the comforts of home. While still wretchedly weak and in pain, I was able to sit in a canvas chair on the bridge-deck and see what was passing.

My chief anxiety was food. I could assimilate nothing but milk—canned, of course. I had two cans of condensed milk which I eked out a spoonful at a time; and even so it was an irritation to my wrecked stomach. On those two cans of milk I subsisted for the ten days from the Cururu down to the *sitio* of the Crocodile King; and there my forlorn hope was to find five ancient-looking cans with the familiar Borden label, which I had noticed as a startling curiosity on a shelf when we dined with the King on boiled *pirarucu* and rice.

When we reached the sitio, Young America took the bold initiative of leaping ashore with his hand on his gun and proclaiming a neutrality for our crew. The King—I must give him credit, too—when he saw my condition, was cordial enough. He shrugged with a vast good humor over the menace of the gun, grinned wolfishly at the scowling Tiquié men, and growled:

"All right! all right! we'll have no fuss, as long as your men don't start any trouble. I'll even give them food.

"And I'll settle my account with them some other time. Their country won't run away."

He was in great spirits, these days, and full of confidence; and I thought I could guess the reason why. From where I sat on my bridge-deck I could see the half of his veranda stacked high with great slabs of white balata. Much would I have liked to get the inside story of that balata war up on the Colombian border, and to learn how many of those balateros ever got out with anything. Judging by the accumulated wealth on the veranda, I should say that survivors who were not the King's own men were not many.

He felt rich; and like a man who for a very long time has had no money to spend, he was crazy to go on an orgy of buying. All my remaining goods and stores he bought; everything that I would let him have, it didn't matter what. I was glad enough to get rid of it; for I certainly should have no more use for it. I saved only my museum specimens and what I needed to pay off my faithful crew with, and some things that I wanted to give as presents to alleviate the unenviable lot of those good padres down at São Gabriel. Like a drunken sailor he cleared out everything else I had. And he paid me in balata; nice clean white bricks of balata that didn't look like the price of many men's blood.

When it was all over and I had an empty boat, he rubbed his hands and smiled his fat, expansive smile and said:

"Now, senhor; you have a fine mahogany boat that needs ballast. What about the drum?"

Little energy had I to bargain. Yet that beautiful *trocán* was a powerful incentive to making a deal; particularly since I had photographs of the very place up on our Tiquié River whence it had come. Listless as I was, I couldn't resist haggling over the thing. Two hundred dollars had been the last quotation as we went up-river. From that we wrangled down to one hundred, to seventy-five, to fifty; and I was sorely tempted. But suddenly he threw up his hands.

"All right, senhor," he roared. "You are sick and you want it for a museum, you say. *Então basta.* For the sake of the advancement of knowledge, I, who have not been without culture in my day, give in. Give me that Savage rifle that you so boast about, and the drum is yours."

So on that basis I traded in the famous thousand-dollar drum. In it I got a prize indeed. But then, so did he, in that rifle.

[This *trocán* is now in the Museum of the America Indian, Heye Foundation, New York City.]

The next thing that his acquisitive eye fell upon was the Remington typewriter. He had to have that too. That went for his wonderful grass hammock with the humming-bird feather decorations. Another prize.

After that he was magnificently generous. Those five cans of Borden's condensed milk? Sure he had them still. He had had them up on the shelf for eight years. With a superb gesture he made me a present of them—and thereby saved my life. Eight years they had been on that shelf through monsoon and sun, half a degree from the equator. The labels were yellow and rusty and half eaten up by cockroaches. But on those five cans of condensed milk and on nothing else I subsisted for four more weeks, till we reached the river steamer at Santa Isabel; and amazingly sweet and well preserved the contents were, too.

The record, I fear me, is becoming garrulous. The great expedition has come to an end; but the record finds it difficult to follow suit. Let me not waste time and space.

We parted from the Crocodile King of the Uaupés almost with regret. Murderer of Indians and luckless balateros he may be, but to us he was affable and good-natured and decidedly helpful. From his *sitio* to Santa Isabel was a long, grinding race; for he had given us the date of the month, and we knew then that we could just make the connection with the steamer's next monthly trip. Which we just did with a day to spare.

At Santa Isabel we parted from our good bad Indians with real regret. I like to think that we had quite gained their confidence; and they, on their part, had shown themselves to be stanch friends in need. I made them happy as well as rich for life by presenting them with all my tools and miscellaneous hardware, knives and machetes and things, which I had saved for them out of the all-embracing sale to the King, as well as with a perfectly huge dugout canoe for their return up-river.

"What about your return through the Crocodile's country?" I asked them with some concern.

But the chief grinned without any concern at all.

"We shall come to his place by night," said he. "There we shall steal two or three of his canoes, to leave our mark, and then we shall go on to our own place. When Kariwa comes again to visit his friends we shall still be the enemies of that Crocodile—unless he shall have fallen into our hands first."

Men of sterling quality are those "Bad Indians" of the Tiquié.

What more is there to record?

With a pang of regret, again, I sold the beautiful mahogany yacht, to a Brazil-nut gatherer, for a hundred dollars. Well had it repaid the labor I had spent on it, in both comfort and profit. But I wished I could bring it home as a specimen for the wonder and envy of all the New York yacht clubs.

The very next day the steamer cast off from the palm-tree which forms the Santa Isabel dock and started for Manáos. We arrived without even a breakdown of the engine. I, just alive enough to go ashore and sick enough to be very nearly devout in my thankfulness at getting into the hands of a physician who knew everything that was to be known about tropical disorders.

He took me in hand and heard my story and examined me and sounded me, and then he told me that he was glad to have me as his first case of this mysterious *botu* poisoning, of which he had heard the most alluring rumors. He congratulated me on having a talent for picking up new and fascinating ailments. First that superb *dermatobium* thing in my leg, and now this most interesting poisoning. All that I needed now, said he, was a new lining to my stomach; and he would guarantee to give me that in six or eight weeks if I would adhere very strictly to the diet of nothing at all to eat, except curdled milk, and the medicine which he would prescribe.

So here I am, the last of nine men who started out from New York City two years ago to explore unknown routes over the Andes and to study unknown Indians of the Amazon. Young America has gone out and is on his way home. I have marked him off as Number Eight to leave the expedition, having come through with flying

colors. He has grown in these two years, as well as young Americans of the best kind always do. The appellation fits him no longer. He is now a full-fledged *expedicionista*, a good man to have along on any trip.

For myself is left the not very proud position, in the circumstances, of Number Nine, the last to go home with the tag ends and remnants and inhumanly voluminous reports of the expedition.

And of that expedition my final report is that despite its mistakes and its quarrels and its hardships and its dangers, I have enjoyed all of it amazingly. It has failed, in the last item, of its avowed object. But it has made up for that. Those unknown and unapproachable Indians of the Tiquié River alone would compensate for a dozen useless routes over the mountains.

It has been a good expedition. May it rest in peace.

I trust it has been a good record. May it live forever.
