

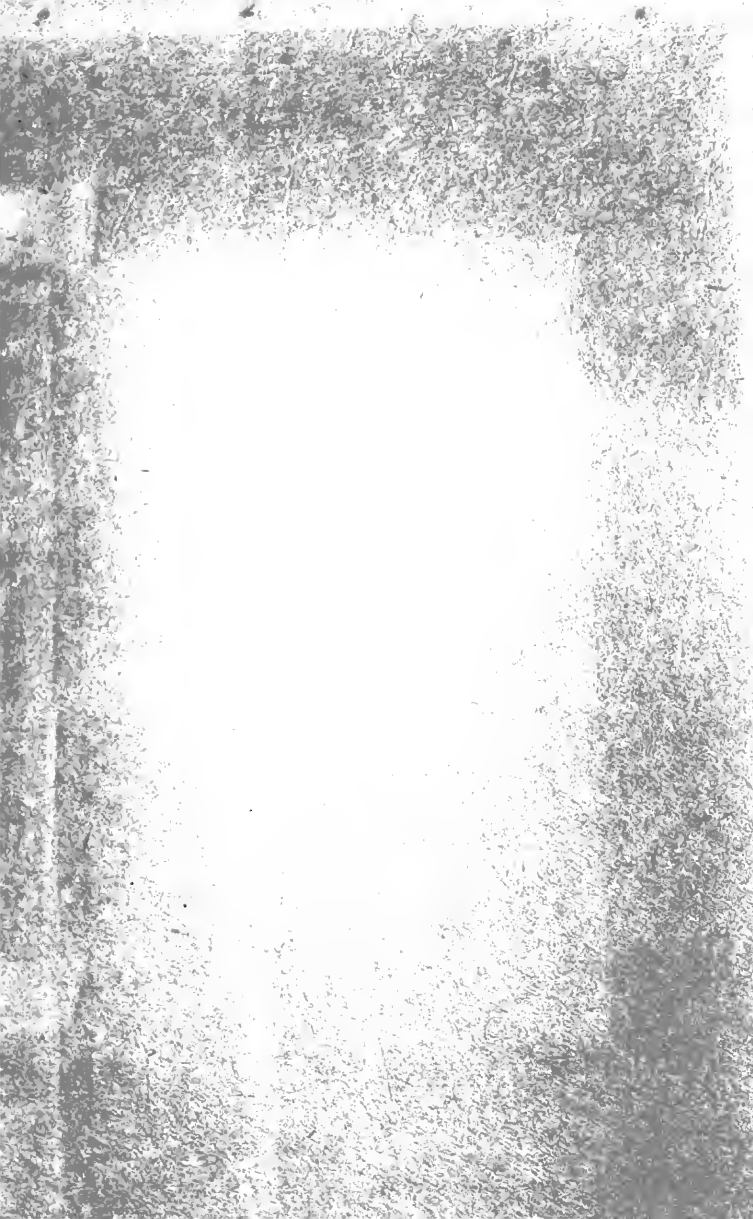




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BROUGHT FORWARD

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

FAITH.

HOPE.

CHARITY.

SUCCESS.

PROGRESS.

HIS PEOPLE.

A HATCHMENT.

THIRTEEN STORIES.

MOGREB EL ACKSA : A Journey in Morocco.

(New Edition in Preparation.)

BROUGHT FORWARD

BY

R. B. CUNNINGHAME GRAHAM

LONDON

DUCKWORTH & CO.

3 HENRIETTA ST., COVENT GARDEN, W.C.

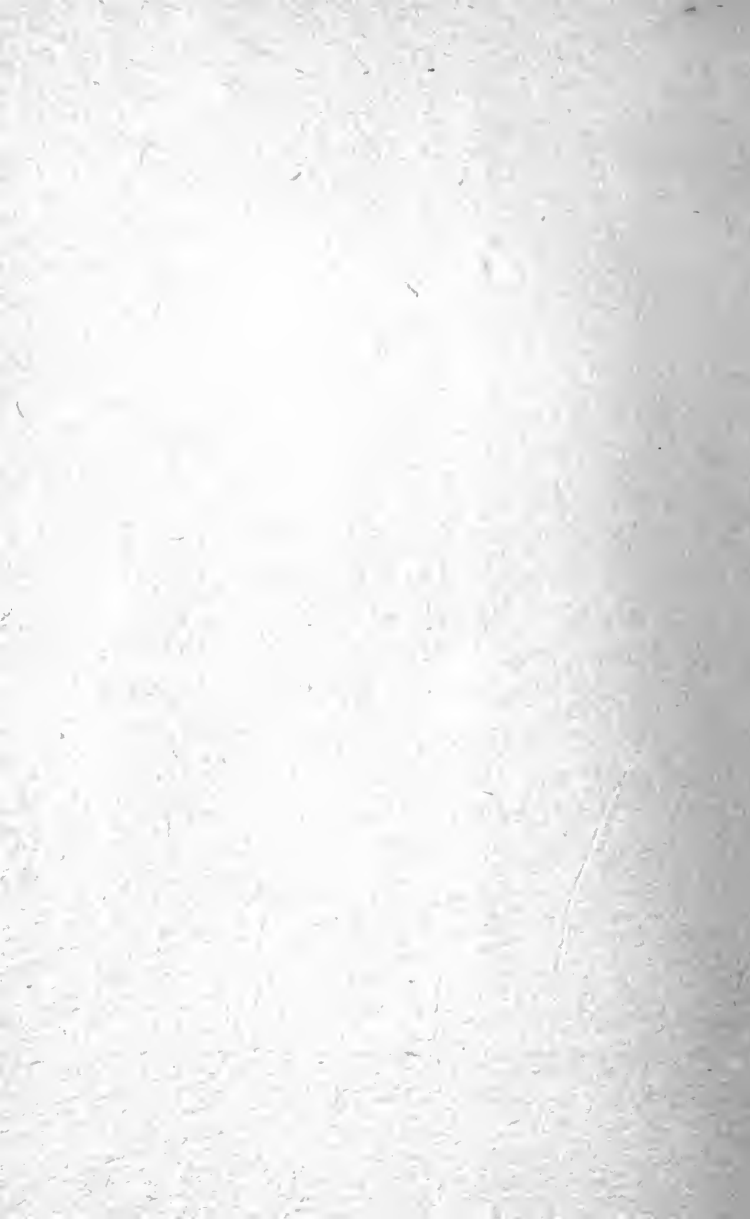
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TO
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PREFACE

LUCKILY the war has made eggs too expensive for me to fear the public will pelt me off the stage with them.

Still after years of writing one naturally dreads the cold potato and the orange-peel.

I once in talking said to a celebrated dancer who was about to bid farewell to her admirers and retire to private life, "Perhaps you will take a benefit when you come back from finishing your last tour." She answered, "Yes . . ."; and then added, "or perhaps two."

That is not my way, for all my life I have loved bread, bread, and wine, wine, not caring for half-measures, like your true Scot, of whom it has been said, "If he believes in Christianity he has no doubts, and if he is a disbeliever he has none either."

PREFACE

Once in the Sierra Madre, either near the Santa Rosa Mountains or in the Bolson de Mápimi, I disremember which, out after horses that had strayed, we came upon a little shelter made of withies, and covered with one of those striped blankets woven by the Návajos.

A Texan who was with the party pointed to it, and said, "That is a wickey-up, I guess."

The little wigwam, shaped like a gipsy tent, stood close to a thicket of huisaché trees in flower. Their round and ball-like blossoms filled the air with a sweet scent. A stream ran gently tinkling over its pebbly bed, and the tall prairie grasses flowed up to the lost little hut as if they would engulf it like a sea.

On every side of the deep valley—for I forgot to say the hut stood in a valley—towered hills with great, flat, rocky sides. On some of them the Indian tribes had scratched rude pictures, records of their race.

In one of them—I remember it just as if now it was before my eyes—an Indian chief, surrounded by his friends, was setting free his

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favourite horse upon the prairies, either before his death or in reward of faithful services. The little group of men cut in the stone, most probably with an obsidian arrow-head, was life-like, though drawn without perspective, which gave those figures of a vanished race an air of standing in the clouds.

The chief stood with his bridle in his hand, his feather war-bonnet upon his head, naked except the breech-clout. His bow was slung across his shoulders and his quiver hung below his arm, and with the other hand he kept the sun off from his face as he gazed upon his horse. All kinds of hunting scenes were there displayed, and others, such as the burial of a chief, a dance, and other ceremonials, no doubt as dear to those who drew them as are the rites in a cathedral to other faithful. The flat rock bore one more inscription, stating that Eusebio Leal passed by bearing despatches, and the date, June the fifteenth, of the year 1687. But to return again to the lone wickey-up.

We all sat looking at it : Eustaquio Gomez,

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Polibio Medina, Exaltacion Garcia, the Texan, two Pueblo Indians, and I who write these lines.

Somehow it had an eerie look about it, standing so desolate, out in those flowery wilds.

Inside it lay the body of a man, with the skin dry as parchment, and his arms beside him, a Winchester, a bow and arrows, and a lance. Eustaquio, taking up an arrow, after looking at it, said that the dead man was an Apache of the Mescalero band, and then, looking upon the ground and pointing out some marks, said, "He had let loose his horse before he died, just as the chief did in the picture-writing."

That was his epitaph, for how death overtook him none of us could conjecture; but I liked the manner of his going off the stage.

'Tis meet and fitting to set free the horse or pen before death overtakes you, or before the gentle public turns its thumbs down and yells, "Away with him."

Charles Lamb, when some one asked him

PREFACE

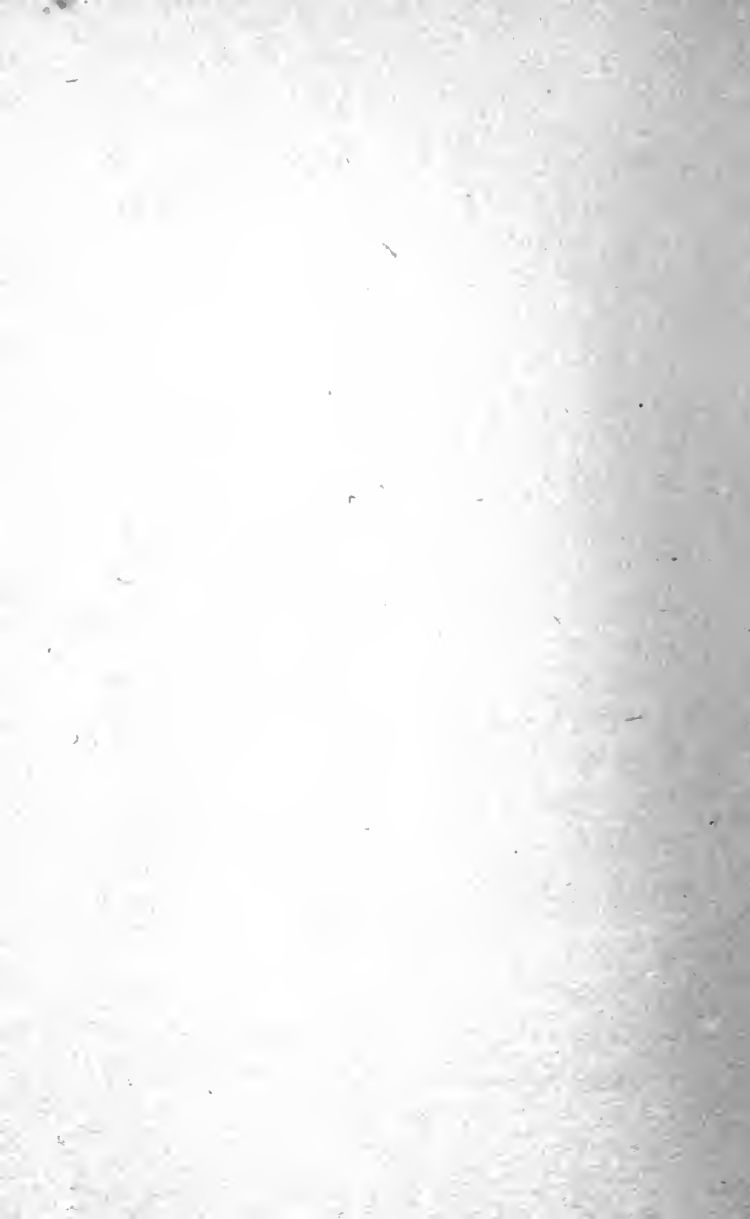
something of his works, answered that they were to be found in the South Sea House, and that they numbered forty volumes, for he had laboured many years there, making his bricks with the least possible modicum of straw, just like the rest of us.

Mine, if you ask me, are to be found but in the trails I left in all the years I galloped both on the prairies and the pampas of America.

Hold it not up to me for egotism, O gentle reader, for I would have you know that hardly any of the horses that I rode had shoes on them, and thus the tracks are faint.

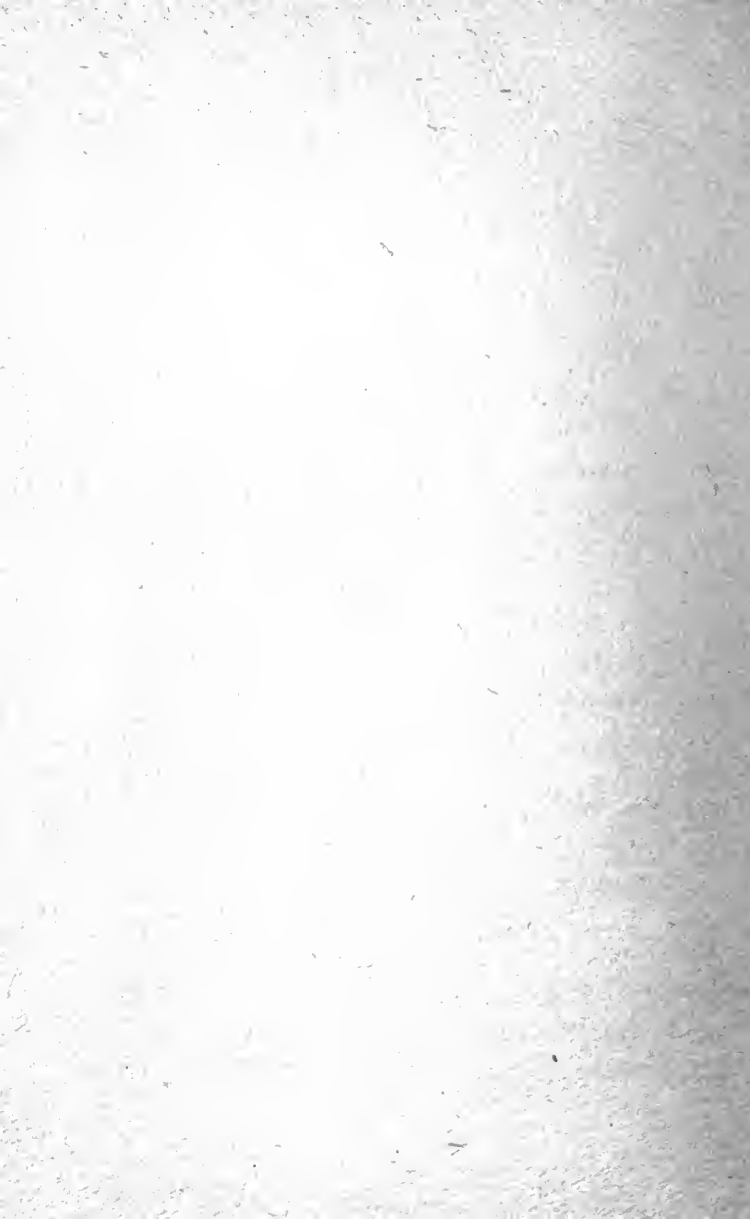
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R. B. CUNNINGHAME GRAHAM.



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I

BROUGHT FORWARD

THE workshop in Parkhead was not inspiring. From one week's end to another, all throughout the year, life was the same, almost without an incident. In the long days of the Scotch summer the men walked cheerily to work, carrying their dinner in a little tin. In the dark winter mornings they tramped in the black fog, coughing and spitting, through the black mud of Glasgow streets, each with a woollen comforter, looking like a stocking, round his neck.

Outside the dreary quarter of the town, its rows of dingy, smoke-grimed streets and the mean houses, the one outstanding feature was Parkhead Forge, with its tall chimneys belching smoke into the air all day, and flames by night. Its glowing furnaces, its giant hammers, its

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little railway trucks in which men ran the blocks of white-hot iron which poured in streams out of the furnaces, flamed like the mouth of hell.

Inside the workshop the dusty atmosphere made a stranger cough on entering the door. The benches with the rows of aproned men all bending at their work, not standing upright, with their bare, hairy chests exposed, after the fashion of the Vulcans at the neighbouring forge, gave a half-air of domesticity to the close, stuffy room.

A semi-sedentary life quickened their intellect ; for where men work together they are bound to talk about the topics of the day, especially in Scotland, where every man is a born politician and a controversialist. At meal-times, when they ate their " piece " and drank their tea that they had carried with them in tin flasks, each one was certain to draw out a newspaper from the pocket of his coat, and, after studying it from the Births, Deaths, and Marriages, down to the editor's address on the last page, fall a-disputing upon politics. " Man, a gran' speech by Bonar Law about Home Rule. They Irish, set them up, what

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do they make siccan a din about? Ca' ye it Home Rule? I juist ca' it Rome Rule. A miserable, priest-ridden crew, the hale rick-ma-tick o' them."

The reader then would pause and, looking round the shop, wait for the answer that he was sure would not be long in coming from amongst such a thrawn lot of commentators. Usually one or other of his mates would fold his paper up, or perhaps point with an oil-stained finger to an article, and with the head-break in the voice, characteristic of the Scot about to plunge into an argument, ejaculate: "Bonar Law, ou aye, I kent him when he was leader of the South Side Parliament. He always was a dreary body, sort o' dreich like; no that I'm saying the man is pairfectly illiterate, as some are on his side o' the Hoose there in Westminister. I read his speech—the body is na blate, sort o' quick at figures, but does na take the pains to verify. Verification is the soul of mathematics. Bonar Law, eh! Did ye see how Maister Asquith trippit him handily in his tabulated figures on the jute business under Free Trade, showing that all he had advanced about protective tariffs and

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the drawback system was fair redeeklous . . . as well as several errors in the total sum ? ”

Then others would cut in and words be bandied to and fro, impugning the good faith and honour of every section of the House of Commons, who, by the showing of their own speeches, were held to be dishonourable rogues aiming at power and place, without a thought for anything but their own ends.

This charitable view of men and of affairs did not prevent any of the disputants from firing up if his own party was impugned ; for in their heart of hearts the general denunciation was but a covert from which to attack the other side.

In such an ambient the war was sure to be discussed ; some held the German Emperor was mad—“ a daft-like thing to challenge the whole world, ye see ; maist inconsiderate, and shows that the man’s intellect is no weel balanced . . . philosophy is whiles sort of unsettlin’ . . . the felly’s mad, ye ken.”

Others saw method in his madness, and alleged that it was envy, “ naething but sheer envy that had brought on this tramplin’ upon natural rights, but for all that he may be

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thought to get his own again, with they indemnities."

Those who had studied economics "were of opinion that his reasoning was wrong, built on false premises, for there can never be a royal road to wealth. Labour, ye see, is the sole creative element of riches." At once a Tory would rejoin, "And brains. Man, what an awfu' thing to leave out brains. Think of the marvellous creations of the human genius." The first would answer with, "I saw ye coming, man. I'll no deny that brains have their due place in the economic state; but build me one of your Zeppelins and stick it in the middle of George Square without a crew to manage it, and how far will it fly? I do not say that brains did not devise it; but, after all, labour had to carry out the first design." This was a subject that opened up enormous vistas for discussion, and for a time kept them from talking of the war.

Jimmy and Geordie, hammering away in one end of the room, took little part in the debate. Good workmen both of them, and friends, perhaps because of the difference of their temperaments, for Jimmy was the type

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of red-haired, blue-eyed, tall, lithe Scot, he of the *perfervidum ingenium*, and Geordie was a thick-set, black-haired, dour and silent man.

Both of them read the war news, and Jimmy, when he read, commented loudly, bringing down his fist upon the paper, exclaiming, "Weel done, Gordons!" or "That was a richt gude charge upon the trenches by the Sutherlands." Geordie would answer shortly, "Aye, no sae bad," and go on hammering.

One morning, after a reverse, Jimmy did not appear, and Geordie sat alone working away as usual, but if possible more dourly and more silently. Towards midday it began to be whispered in the shop that Jimmy had enlisted, and men turned to Geordie to ask if he knew anything about it, and the silent workman, brushing the sweat off his brow with his coat-sleeve, rejoined: "Aye, ou aye, I went wi' him yestreen to the headquarters o' the Camerons; he's joined the kilties richt eneugh. Ye mind he was a sergeant in South Africa." Then he bent over to his work and did not join in the general conversation that ensued.

Days passed, and weeks, and his fellow-workmen, in the way men will, occasionally

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bantered Geordie, asking him if he was going to enlist, and whether he did not think shame to let his friend go off alone to fight. Geordie was silent under abuse and banter, as he had always been under the injustices of life, and by degrees withdrew into himself, and when he read his newspaper during the dinner-hour made no remark, but folded it and put it quietly into the pocket of his coat.

Weeks passed, weeks of suspense, of flaring headlines in the Press, of noise of regiments passing down the streets, of newsboys yelling hypothetical victories, and of the tension of the nerves of men who know their country's destiny is hanging in the scales. Rumours of losses, of defeats, of victories, of checks and of advances, of naval battles, with hints of dreadful slaughter filled the air. Women in black were seen about, pale and with eyelids swollen with weeping, and people scanned the reports of killed and wounded with dry throats and hearts constricted as if they had been wrapped in whipcord, only relaxing when after a second look they had assured themselves the name they feared to see was absent from the list.

Long strings of Clydesdale horses ridden by

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men in ragged clothes, who sat them uneasily, as if they felt their situation keenly, perched up in the public view, passed through the streets. The massive caulkers on their shoes struck fire occasionally upon the stones, and the great beasts, taught to rely on man as on a god from the time they gambolled in the fields, went to their doom unconsciously, the only mitigation of their fate. Regiments of young recruits, some in plain clothes and some in hastily-made uniforms, marched with as martial an air as three weeks' training gave them, to the stations to entrain. Pale clerks, the elbows of their jackets shiny with the slavery of the desk, strode beside men whose hands were bent and scarred with gripping on the handles of the plough in February gales or wielding sledges at the forge.

All of them were young and resolute, and each was confident that he at least would come back safe to tell the tale. Men stopped and waved their hats, cheering their passage, and girls and women stood with flushed cheeks and straining eyes as they passed on for the first stage that took them towards the front. Boys ran beside them, hatless and barefooted, shout-

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ing out words that they had caught up on the drill-ground to the men, who whistled as they marched a slow and grinding tune that sounded like a hymn.

Traffic was drawn up close to the kerbstone, and from the top of tram-cars and from carts men cheered, bringing a flush of pride to many a pale cheek in the ranks. They passed on; men resumed the business of their lives, few understanding that the half-trained, pale-faced regiment that had vanished through the great station gates had gone to make that business possible and safe.

Then came a time of waiting for the news, of contradictory paragraphs in newspapers, and then a telegram, the "enemy is giving ground on the left wing"; and instantly a feeling of relief that lightened every heart, as if its owner had been fighting and had stopped to wipe his brow before he started to pursue the flying enemy.

The workmen in the brassfitters' shop came to their work as usual on the day of the good news, and at the dinner-hour read out the accounts of the great battle, clustering upon each other's shoulders in their eagerness. At

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last one turned to scan the list of casualties. Cameron, Campbell, M'Alister, Jardine, they read, as they ran down the list, checking the names off with a match. The reader stopped, and looked towards the corner where Geordie still sat working silently.

All eyes were turned towards him, for the rest seemed to divine even before they heard the name. "Geordie man, Jimmy's killed," the reader said, and as he spoke Geordie laid down his hammer, and, reaching for his coat, said, "Jimmy's killed, is he? Well, some one's got to account for it."

Then, opening the door, he walked out dourly, as if already he felt the knapsack on his back and the avenging rifle in his hand.

II

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THE amphitheatre of wood enclosed a bay that ran so far into the land it seemed a lake. The Uruguay flowed past, but the bay was so land-locked and so well defended by an island lying at its mouth that the illusion was complete, and the bay appeared to be cut off from all the world.

Upon the river twice a day passed steam-boats, which at night-time gave an air as of a section of a town that floated past the wilderness. Streams of electric light from every cabin lit up the yellow, turgid river, and the notes of a band occasionally floated across the water as the vessel passed. Sometimes a searchlight falling on a herd of cattle, standing as is their custom after nightfall upon a little hill, made them stampede into the darkness,

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dashing through brushwood or floundering through a marsh, till they had placed themselves in safety from this new terror of the night.

Above the bay the ruins of a great building stood. Built scarcely fifty years ago, and now deserted, the ruins had taken on an air as of a castle, and from the walls sprang plants, whilst in the deserted courtyard a tree had grown, amongst whose branches oven-birds had built their hanging nests of mud. Cypresses towered above the primeval hard-wood, which grew all gnarled and horny-looking, and nearly all had kept their Indian names, as ñandubay, chañar, tala and sarandi, molle, and many another name as crabbed as the trunks which, twisted and distorted, looked like the limbs of giants growing from the ground.

Orange trees had run wild and shot up all unpruned, and apple trees had reverted back to crabs. The trunks of all the fruit-trees in the deserted garden round the ruined factory were rubbed shiny by the cattle, for all the fences had long been destroyed or fallen into decay.

A group of roofless workmen's cottages

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gave an air of desolation to the valley in which the factory and its dependencies had stood. They too had been invaded by the powerful sub-tropical plant life, and creepers covered with bunches of bright flowers climbed up their walls. A sluggish stream ran through the valley and joined the Uruguay, making a little natural harbour. In it basked cat-fish, and now and then from off the banks a tortoise dropped into the water like a stone. Right in the middle of what once had been the square grew a ceiba tree, covered with lilac flowers, hanging in clusters like gigantic grapes. Here and there stood some old ombús, their dark metallic leaves affording an impenetrable shade. Their gnarled and twisted roots, left half-exposed by the fierce rains, gave an unearthly, prehistoric look to them that chimed in well with the deserted air of the whole place. It seemed that man for once had been subdued, and that victorious nature had resumed her sway over a region wherein he had endeavoured to intrude, and had been worsted in the fight.

Nature had so resumed her sway that

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buildings, planted trees, and paths long overgrown with grass, seemed to have been decayed for centuries, although scarce twenty years had passed since they had been deserted and had fallen into decay.

They seemed to show the power of the recuperative force of the primeval forest, and to call attention to the fact that man had suffered a defeat. Only the grass in the deserted square was still triumphant, and grew short and green, like an oasis in the rough natural grasses, that flowed nearly up to it, in the clearings of the woods.

The triumph of the older forces of the world had been so final and complete that on the ruins there had grown no moss, but plants and bushes with great tufts of grass had sprung from them, leaving the stones still fresh as when the houses were first built. Nature in that part of the New World enters into no compact with mankind, as she does over here in Europe to touch his work kindly and almost with a reverent hand, and blend it into something half compounded of herself. There bread is bread and wine is wine, with no half-tints to make one body of the whole. The one

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remaining evidence of the aggression of mankind, which still refused to bow the knee to the overwhelming genius of the place, was a round bunch of eucalyptus trees that stood up stark and unblushing, the colour of the trunks and leaves so harshly different from all around them that they looked almost vulgar, if such an epithet can be properly applied to anything but man. Under their exiguous shade were spread saddles and bridles, and on the ground sat men smoking and talking, whilst their staked-out horses fed, fastened to picket-pins by raw-hide ropes. So far away from everything the place appeared that the group of men looked like a band of pioneers upon some frontier, to which the ruins only gave an air of melancholy, but did nothing to dispel the loneliness.

As they sat idly talking, trying to pass, or, as they would have said, trying to make time, suddenly in the distance the whistle of an approaching steamer brought the outside world into the little, lonely paradise. Oddly enough it sounded, in the hot, early morning air, already heavy with the scent of the mimosas in full bloom. Butterflies flitted to and fro

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or soared above the scrub, and now and then a wild mare whinnied from the thickets, breaking the silence of the lone valley through which the yellow, little stream ran to the Uruguay.

Catching their horses and rolling up the ropes, the men, who had been sitting underneath the trees, mounted, and following a little cattle trail, rode to a high bluff looking down the stream.

Panting and puffing, as she belched out a column of black smoke, some half a mile away, a tug towing two lighters strove with the yellow flood. The horsemen stood like statues with their horses' heads stretched out above the water thirty feet below.

Although the feet of several of the horses were but an inch or two from the sheer limit, the men sat, some of them with one leg on their horses' necks; others lit cigarettes, and one, with his horse sideways to the cliff, leaned sideways, so that one of his feet was in the air. He pointed to the advancing tug with a brown finger, and exclaimed, "These are the lighters with the horses that must have started yesterday from Gualeguaychú, and ought to have been

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here last night." We had indeed been waiting all the night for them, sleeping round a fire under the eucalyptus grove, and rising often in the night to smoke and talk, to see our horses did not get entangled in their stake ropes, and to listen for the whistle of the tug.

The tug came on but slowly, fighting her way against the rapid current, with the lighters towing behind her at some distance, looking like portions of a pier that had somehow or another got adrift.

From where we sat upon our horses we could see the surface of the Uruguay for miles, with its innumerable flat islands buried in vegetation, cutting the river into channels; for the islands, having been formed originally by masses of water-weeds and drift-wood, were but a foot or two above the water, and all were elongated, forming great ribbons in the stream.

Upon the right bank stretched the green prairies of the State of Entre-Rios, bounded on either side by the Uruguay and Paraná. Much flatter than the land upon the Uruguayan bank, it still was not a sea of level grass as is

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the State of Buenos Aires, but undulating, and dotted here and there with white estancia houses, all buried in great groves of peach trees and of figs. On the left bank on which we stood, and three leagues off, we could just see Fray Bentos, its houses dazzlingly white, buried in vegetation, and in the distance like a thousand little towns in Southern Italy and Spain, or even in Morocco, for the tower of the church might in the distance just as well have been a minaret.

The tug-boat slowed a little, and a canoe was slowly paddled out to pilot her into the little haven made by the brook that flowed down through the valley to the Uruguay.

Sticking out like a fishing-rod, over the stem of the canoe was a long cane, to sound with if it was required.

The group of horsemen on the bluff rode slowly down towards the river's edge to watch the evolutions of the tug, and to hold back the horses when they should be disembarked. By this time she had got so near that we could see the horses' heads looking out wildly from the sparred sides of the great decked lighters, and hear the thunderous noise their

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feet made tramping on the decks. Passing the bay, into which ran the stream, by about three hundred yards, the tug cast off one of the lighters she was towing, in a backwater. There it remained, the current slowly bearing it backwards, turning round upon itself. In the wild landscape, with ourselves upon our horses forming the only human element, the gigantic lighter with its freight of horses looked like the ark, as set forth in some old-fashioned book on Palestine. Slowly the tug crept in, the Indian-looking pilot squatted in his canoe sounding assiduously with his long cane. As the tug drew about six feet of water and the lighter not much more than three, the problem was to get the lighter near enough to the bank, so that when the hawser was cast off she would come in by her own way. Twice did the tug ground, and with furious shoutings and with all the crew staving on poles, was she got off again. At last the pilot found a little deeper channel, and coming to about some fifty feet away, lying a length or two above the spot where the stream entered the great river, she paid her hawser out, and as the lighter drifted shorewards, cast it off, and the great

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ark, with all its freight, grounded quite gently on the little sandy beach. The Italian captain of the tug, a Genoese, with his grey hair as curly as the wool on a sheep's back, wearing a pale pink shirt, neatly set off with yellow horseshoes, and a blue gauze necktie tied in a flowing bow, pushed off his dirty little boat, rowed by a negro sailor and a Neapolitan, who dipped their oars into the water without regard to one another, either as to time or stroke.

The captain stepped ashore, mopping his face with a yellow pocket-handkerchief, and in the jargon between Spanish and Italian that men of his sort all affect out in the River Plate, saluted us, and cursed the river for its sandbanks and its turns, and then having left it as accursed as the Styx or Periphlegethon, he doubly cursed the Custom House, which, as he said, was all composed of thieves, the sons of thieves, who would be certainly begetters of the same. Then he calmed down a little, and drawing out a long Virginia cigar, took out the straw with seriousness and great dexterity, and then allowed about a quarter of an inch of it to smoulder in a match, lighted it, and

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sending out a cloud of smoke, sat down upon the grass, and fell a-cursing, with all the ingenuity of his profession and his race, the country, the hot weather, and the saints.

This done, and having seen the current was slowly bearing down the other lighter past the sandy beach, with a last hearty curse upon God's mother and her Son, whose birth he hinted not obscurely was of the nature of a mystery, in which he placed no credence, got back into his boat, and went back to his tug, leaving us all amazed, both at his fluency and faith.

When he had gone and grappled with the other lighter which was slowly drifting down the stream, two or three men came forward in the lighter that was already in the little river's mouth, about a yard or so distant from the edge, and calling to us to be ready, for the horses had not eaten for sixteen hours at least, slowly let down the wooden landing-flap. At first the horses craned their necks and looked out on the grass, but did not venture to go down the wooden landing-stage; then a big roan, stepping out gingerly and snorting as he

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went, adventured, and when he stood upon the grass, neighed shrilly and then rolled. In a long string the others followed, the clattering of their unshod feet upon the wood sounding like distant thunder.

Byrne, the *Porteño*, stout and high-coloured, dressed in great thigh boots and baggy breeches, a black silk handkerchief tied loosely round his neck, a black felt hat upon his head, and a great silver watch-chain, with a snaffle-bridle in the middle of it, contrasting oddly with his broad pistol belt, with its old silver dollars for a fastening, came ashore, carrying his saddle on his back. Then followed Doherty, whose name, quite unpronounceable to men of Latin race, was softened in their speech to Duarte, making a good Castilian patronymic of it. He too was a *Porteño*,¹ although of Irish stock. Tall, dark, and dressed in semi-native clothes, he yet, like Byrne, always spoke Spanish when no foreigners were present, and in his English that softening of the consonants and broadening of the vowels was discernible that makes the speech of men such as himself have

¹ *Porteño*, literally a man born in the port of Buenos Aires, but is also applied to any one born in the province of Buenos Aires.

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in it something, as it were, caressing, strangely at variance with their character. Two or three peons of the usual Gaucho type came after them, all carrying saddles, and walking much as an alligator waddles on the sand, or as the Medes whom Xenophon describes, mincing upon their toes, in order not to blunt the rowels of their spurs.

Our men, Garcia the innkeeper of Fray Bentos, with Pablo Suarez, whose negro blood and crispy hair gave him a look as of a Roman emperor of the degenerate times, with Pancho Arrellano and Miguel Paralelo, the Gaucho dandy, swaying upon his horse with his toes just touching his heavy silver stirrups with a crown underneath them, Velez and El Pampita, an Indian who had been captured young on the south Pampa, were mounted ready to round the horses up.

They did not want much care, for they were eating ravenously, and all we had to do was to drive them a few hundred yards away to let the others land.

By this time the Italian captain in his tug had gently brought the other lighter to the beach, and from its side another string of horses

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came out on to the grass. They too all rolled, and, seeing the other band, by degrees mixed with it, so that four hundred horses soon were feeding ravenously on the sweet grass just at the little river's mouth that lay between its banks and the thick belt of wood.

Though it was early, still the sun was hot, and for an hour we held the horses back, keeping them from the water till they had eaten well.

The Italian tugmaster, having produced a bottle of trade gin (the Anchor brand), and having drunk our health, solemnly wiped the neck of the bottle with his grimy hand and passed it round to us. We also drank to his good health and voyage to the port, that he pronounced as if it were written "Bono Airi," adding, as it was war-time, "Avanti Savoia" to the toast. He grinned, and with a gesture of his thick dirty hand, adorned with two or three coppery-looking rings, as it were, embedded in the flesh, pronounced an all-embracing curse on the Tedeschi, and went aboard the tug.

When he had made the lighters fast, he turned down stream, saluting us with three

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shrill blasts upon the whistle, and left us and our horses thousands of miles away from steam and smoke, blaspheming skippers, and the noise and push of modern life.

Humming-birds poised themselves before the purple bunches of the ceiba¹ flowers, their tongues thrust into the calyx and their iridescent wings whirring so rapidly, you could see the motion, but not mark the movement, and from the yellow balls of the mimosas came a scent, heady and comforting.

Flocks of green parroquets flew shrieking over the clearing in which the horses fed, to their great nests, in which ten or a dozen seemed to harbour, and hung suspended from them by their claws, or crawled into the holes. Now and then a few locusts, wafted by the breeze, passed by upon their way to spread destruction in the plantations of young poplars and of orange trees in the green islands in the stream.

An air of peace gave a strange interest to this little corner of a world plunged into strife and woe. The herders nodded on their

¹ *Benbax ceiba*, a large tree with spongy, light wood, that has immense bunches of purple flowers.

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horses, who for their part hung down their heads, and now and then shifted their quarters so as to bring their heads into the shade. The innkeeper, Garcia, in his town clothes, and perched upon a tall grey horse, to use his own words, "sweated blood and water like our Lord" in the fierce glare of the ascending sun. Suarez and Paralelo pushed the ends of the red silk handkerchiefs they wore tied loosely round their necks, with two points like the wings of a great butterfly hanging upon their shoulders, under their hats, and smoked innumerable cigarettes, the frontiersman's specific against heat or cold. Of all the little company only the Pampa Indian showed no sign of being incommoded by the heat. When horses strayed he galloped up to turn them, now striking at the passing butterflies with his heavy-handled whip, or, letting himself fall down from the saddle almost to the ground, drew his brown finger on the dust for a few yards, and with a wriggle like a snake got back into his saddle with a yell.

The hours passed slowly, till at last the horses, having filled themselves with grass, stopped eating and looked towards the river,

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so we allowed them slowly to stream along towards a shallow inlet on the beach. There they stood drinking greedily, up to their knees, until at last three or four of the outermost began to swim.

Only their heads appeared above the water, and occasionally their backs emerging just as a porpoise comes to the surface in a tideway, gave them an amphibious air, that linked them somehow or another with the classics in that unclassic land.

Long did they swim and play, and then, coming out into the shallow water, drink again, stamping their feet and swishing their long tails, rise up and strike at one another with their feet.

As I sat on my horse upon a little knoll, coiling my lazo, which had got uncoiled by catching in a bush, I heard a voice in the soft, drawling accents of the inhabitants of Corrientes, say, "Pucha, Pingos."¹

Turning, I saw the speaker, a Gaucho of about thirty years of age, dressed all in black in the old style of thirty years ago. His silver

¹ *Pingo* in Argentina is a good horse. *Pucha* is a euphuism for another word.

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knife, two feet or more in length, stuck in his sash, stuck out on both sides of his body like a lateen.

Where he had come from I had no idea, for he appeared to have risen from the scrub behind me. "Yes," he said, "Putá, Pingos," giving the phrase in the more classic, if more unregenerate style, "how well they look, just like the garden in the plaza at Fray Bentos in the sun."

All shades were there, with every variegation and variety of colour, white, and fern noses, chestnuts with a stocking on one leg up to the stifle joint, horses with a ring of white right round their throats, or with a star as clear as if it had been painted on the hip, and "tuvianos," that is, brown, black, and white, a colour justly prized in Uruguay.

Turning half round and offering me a cigarette, the Correntino spoke again. "It is a paradise for all those pingos here in this rincón:¹ grass, water, everything that they can want, shade, and shelter from the wind and sun."

So it appeared to me—the swiftly flowing

¹ Elbow of a river.

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river with its green islands; the Pampas grass along the stream; the ruined buildings, half-buried in the orange trees run wild; grass, shade, and water: "Pucha, no . . . Puta, Pingos, where are they now?"

III

FIDELITY

My tall host knocked the ashes from his pipe, and crossing one leg over the other looked into the fire.

Outside, the wind howled in the trees, and the rain beat upon the window-panes. The firelight flickered on the grate, falling upon the polished furniture of the low-roofed, old-fashioned library, with its high Georgian overmantel, where in a deep recess there stood a clock, shaped like a cross, with eighteenth-century cupids carved in ivory fluttering round the base, and Time with a long scythe standing upon one side.

In the room hung the scent of an old country-house, compounded of so many samples that it is difficult to enumerate them all. Beeswax and potpourri of roses, damp, and

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the scent of foreign woods in the old cabinets, tobacco and wood smoke, with the all-pervading smell of age, were some of them. The result was not unpleasant, and seemed the complement of the well-bound Georgian books standing demure upon their shelves, the blackening family portraits, and the skins of red deer and of roe scattered about the room.

The conversation languished, and we both sat listening to the storm that seemed to fill the world with noises strange and unearthly, for the house was far from railways, and the avenues that lead to it were long and dark. The solitude and the wild night seemed to have recreated the old world, long lost, and changed, but still remembered in that district just where the Highlands and the Lowlands meet.

At such times and in such houses the country really seems country once again, and not the gardened, gamekeepered mixture of shooting ground and of fat fields tilled by machinery to which men now and then resort for sport, or to gather in their rents, with which the whole world is familiar to-day.

My host seemed to be struggling with himself to tell me something, and as I looked

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at him, tall, strong, and upright, his face all mottled by the weather, his homespun coat, patched on the shoulders with buckskin that once had been white, but now was fawn-coloured with wet and from the chafing of his gun, I felt the parturition of his speech would probably cost him a shrewd throe. So I said nothing, and he, after having filled his pipe, ramming the tobacco down with an old silver Indian seal, made as he told me in Kurachi, and brought home by a great-uncle fifty years ago, slowly began to speak, not looking at me, but as it were delivering his thoughts aloud, almost unconsciously, looking now and then at me as if he felt, rather than knew, that I was there. As he spoke, the tall, stuffed hen-harrier; the little Neapolitan shrine in tortoise-shell and coral, set thick with saints; the flying dragons from Ceylon, spread out like butterflies in a glazed case; the "poor's-box" on the shelf above the books with its four silver sides adorned with texts; the rows of blue books, and of Scott's Novels (the Roxburgh edition), together with the scent exuding from the Kingwood cabinet; the sprays of white Scotch rose, outlined against the window blinds; and

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the sporting prints and family tree, all neatly framed in oak, created the impression of being in a world remote, besquired and cut off from the century in which we live by more than fifty years. Upon the rug before the fire the sleeping spaniel whined uneasily, as if, though sleeping, it still scented game, and all the time the storm roared in the trees and whistled down the passages of the lone country house. One saw in fancy, deep in the recesses of the woods, the roe stand sheltering, and the capercailzie sitting on the branches of the firs, wet and dejected, like chickens on a roost, and little birds sent fluttering along, battling for life against the storm. Upon such nights, in districts such as that in which the gaunt old house was situated, there is a feeling of compassion for the wild things in the woods that, stealing over one, bridges the gulf between them and ourselves in a mysterious way. Their lot and sufferings, joys, loves, and the epitome of their brief lives, come home to us with something irresistible, making us feel that our superiority is an unreal thing, and that in essentials we are one.

My host went on : " Some time ago I

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walked up to the little moor that overlooks the Clyde, from which you see ships far off lying at the Tail of the Bank, the smoke of Greenock and Port Glasgow, the estuary itself, though miles away, looking like a sheet of frosted silver or dark-grey steel, according to the season, and in the distance the range of hills called Argyle's Bowling Green, with the deep gap that marks the entrance to the Holy Loch. Autumn had just begun to tinge the trees, birches were golden, and rowans red, the bents were brown and dry. A few bog asphodels still showed amongst the heather, and bilberries, dark as black currants, grew here and there amongst the carpet of green sphagnum and the stag's-head moss. The heather was all rusty brown, but still there was, as it were, a recollection of the summer in the air. Just the kind of day you feel inclined to sit down on the lee side of a dry-stone dyke, and smoke and look at some familiar self-sown birch that marks the flight of time, as you remember that it was but a year or two ago that it had first shot up above the grass.

“ I remember two or three plants of tall hemp-agrimony still had their flower heads

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withered on the stalk, giving them a look of wearing wigs, and clumps of ragwort still had a few bees buzzing about them, rather faintly, with a belated air. I saw all this—not that I am a botanist, for you know I can hardly tell the difference between the Cruciferæ and the Umbelliferæ, but because when you live in the country some of the common plants seem to obtrude themselves upon you, and you have got to notice them in spite of you. So I walked on till I came to a wrecked plantation of spruce and of Scotch fir. A hurricane had struck it, turning it over almost in rows, as it was planted. The trees had withered in most cases, and in the open spaces round their upturned roots hundreds of rabbits burrowed, and had marked the adjoining field with little paths, just like the lines outside a railway-station.

“ I saw all this, not because I looked at it, for if you look with the idea of seeing everything, commonly everything escapes you, but because the lovely afternoon induced a feeling of well-being and contentment, and everything seemed to fall into its right proportion, so that you saw first the harmonious whole, and

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then the salient points most worth the looking at.

“ I walked along feeling exhilarated with the autumn air and the fresh breeze that blew up from the Clyde. I remember thinking I had hardly ever felt greater content, and as I walked it seemed impossible the world could be so full of rank injustice, or that the lot of three-fourths of its population could really be so hard. A pack of grouse flew past, skimming above the heather, as a shoal of flying-fish skims just above the waves. I heard their quacking cries as they alighted on some stooks of oats, and noticed that the last bird to settle was an old hen, and that, even when all were down, I still could see her head, looking out warily above the yellow grain: Beyond the ruined wood there came the barking of a shepherd's dog, faint and subdued, and almost musical.

“ I sat so long, smoking and looking at the view, that when I turned to go the sun was sinking and our long, northern twilight almost setting in.

“ You know it,” said my host, and I, who often had read by its light in summer and the

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early autumn, nodded assent, wondering to myself what he was going to tell me, and he went on.

“ It has the property of making all things look a little ghostly, deepening the shadows and altering their values, so that all that you see seems to acquire an extra significance, not so much to the eye as to the mind. Slowly I retraced my steps, walking under the high wall of rough piled stones till it ends, at the copse of willows, on the north side of the little moor to which I had seen the pack of grouse fly after it had left the stooks. I crossed into it, and began to walk towards home, knee-deep in bent grass and dwarf willows, with here and there a patch of heather and a patch of bilberries. The softness of the ground so dulled my footsteps that I appeared to walk as lightly as a roe upon the spongy surface of the moor. As I passed through a slight depression in which the grass grew rankly, I heard a wild cry coming, as it seemed, from just beneath my feet. Then came a rustling in the grass, and a large, dark-grey bird sprang out, repeating the wild cry, and ran off swiftly, trailing a broken wing.

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“ It paused upon a little hillock fifty yards away, repeating its strange note, and looking round as if it sought for something that it was certain was at hand. High in the air the cry, wilder and shriller, was repeated, and a great grey bird that I saw was a whaup slowly descended in decreasing circles, and settled down beside its mate.

“ They seemed to talk, and then the wounded bird set off at a swift run, its fellow circling above its head and uttering its cry as if it guided it. I watched them disappear, feeling as if an iron belt was drawn tight round my heart, their cries growing fainter as the deepening shadows slowly closed upon the moor.”

My host stopped, knocked the ashes from his pipe, and turning to me, said :—

“ I watched them go to what of course must have been certain death for one of them, furious, with the feelings of a murderer towards the man whose thoughtless folly had been the cause of so much misery. Curse him ! I watched them, impotent to help, for as you know the curlew is perhaps the wildest of our native birds ; and even had I caught the

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wounded one to set its wing, it would have pined and died. One thing I could have done, had I but had a gun and had the light been better, I might have shot them both, and had I done so I would have buried them beside each other.

“That’s what I had upon my mind to tell you. I think the storm and the wild noises of the struggling trees outside have brought it back to me, although it happened years ago. Sometimes, when people talk about fidelity, saying it is not to be found upon the earth, I smile, for I have seen it with my own eyes, and manifest, out on that little moor.”

He filled his pipe, and sitting down in an old leather chair, much worn and rather greasy, silently gazed into the fire.

I, too, was silent, thinking upon the tragedy ; then feeling that something was expected of me, looked up and murmured, “Yes.”

IV

“ UNO DEI MILLE ”

A VEIL of mist, the colour of a spider's web, rose from the oily river. It met the mist that wrapped the palm-trees and the unsubstantial-looking houses painted in light blue and yellow ochre, as it descended from the hills: Now and then, through the pall of damp, as a light air was wafted up the river from the sea, the bright red earth upon the hills showed like a stain of blood; canoes, paddled by men who stood up, balancing themselves with a slight movement of the hips, slipped in and out of sight, now crossing just before the steamer's bows and then appearing underneath her stern in a mysterious way. From the long line of tin-roofed sheds a ceaseless stream of snuff-and-butter-coloured men trotted continuously, carrying bags of coffee to an elevator, which

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shot them headlong down the steamer's hold. Their naked feet pattered upon the warm, wet concrete of the dock side, as it were stealthily, with a sound almost alarming, so like their footfall seemed to that of a wild animal.

The flat-roofed city, buried in sheets of rain, that spouted from the eaves of the low houses on the unwary passers-by, was stirred unwontedly. Men, who as a general rule lounged at the corners of the streets, pressing their shoulders up against the houses as if they thought that only by their own self-sacrifice the walls were kept from falling, now walked up and down, regardless of the rain.

In the great oblong square, planted with cocoa-palms, in which the statue of Cabral stands up in cheap Carrara marble, looking as if he felt ashamed of his discovery, a sea of wet umbrellas surged to and fro, forging towards the Italian Consulate. Squat Genoese and swarthy Neapolitans, with sinewy Piedmontese, and men from every province of the peninsula, all had left their work. They all discoursed in the same tone of voice in which no doubt their ancestors talked in the Forum, even when Cicero was speaking, until the

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lictors forced them to keep silence, for their own eloquence is that which in all ages has had most charm for them. The reedy voices of the Brazilian coloured men sounded a mere twittering compared to their full-bodied tones. “ Viva l’ Italia ” pealed out from thousands of strong throats as the crowd streamed from the square and filled the narrow streets ; fireworks that fizzled miserably were shot off in the mist, the sticks falling upon the umbrellas of the crowd. A shift of wind cleared the mist off the river for a moment, leaving an Italian liner full in view. From all her spars floated the red and white and green, and on her decks and in the rigging, on bridges and on the rail, men, all with bundles in their hands, clustered like ants, and cheered incessantly. An answering cheer rose from the crowd ashore of “ Long live the Reservists ! Viva l’ Italia,” as the vessel slowly swung into the stream. From every house excited men rushed out and flung themselves and their belongings into boats, and scrambled up the vessel’s sides as she began to move. Brown hands were stretched down to them as they climbed on board. From every doorstep in the town women with hand-

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kerchiefs about their heads came out, and with the tears falling from their great, black eyes and running down their olive cheeks, waved and called out, “ Addio Giuseppe ; addio Gian Battista, abbasso gli Tedeschi,” and then turned back into their homes to weep. On every side Italians stood and shouted, and still, from railway station and from the river-side, hundreds poured out and gazed at the departing steamer with its teeming freight of men.

Italians from the coffee plantations of São Paulo, from the mines of Ouro Preto, from Goyaz, and from the far interior, all young and sun-burnt, the flower of those Italian workmen who have built the railways of Brazil, and by whose work the strong foundations of the prosperity of the Republic have been laid, were out, to turn their backs upon the land in which, for the first time, most of them had eaten a full meal. Factories stood idle, the coasting schooners all were left unmanned, and had the coffee harvest not been gathered in, it would have rotted on the hills: The Consulate was unapproachable, and round it throngs of men struggled to enter, all demanding to get home. No rain could damp their

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spirits, and those who, after waiting hours, came out with tickets, had a look in their eyes as if they just had won the chief prize in the lottery.

Their friends surrounded them, and strained them to their hearts, the water from the umbrellas of the crowd trickling in rivulets upon the embracer and the embraced.

Mulatto policemen cleared the path for carriages to pass, and, as they came, the gap filled up again as if by magic, till the next carriage passed. Suddenly a tremor ran through the crowd, moving it with a shiver like the body of a snake. All the umbrellas which had seemed to move by their own will, covering the crowd and hiding it from view, were shut down suddenly. A mist-dimmed sun shone out, watery, but potent, and in an instant gaining strength, it dried the streets and made a hot steam rise up from the crowd. Slouched hats were raised up on one side, and pocket handkerchiefs wrapped up in paper were unfolded and knotted loosely round men's necks, giving them a look as of domestic bandits as they broke out into a patriotic song, which ceased with a long drawn-out “ Viva,”

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as the strains of an approaching band were heard and the footsteps of men marching through the streets in military array.

The coloured policemen rode their horses through the throng, and the streets, which till then had seemed impassable, were suddenly left clear. Jangling and crashing out the Garibaldian hymn, the band debouched into the square, dressed in a uniform half-German, half-Brazilian, with truncated pickel-hauben on their heads, in which were stuck a plume of gaudy feathers, apparently at the discretion of the wearer, making them look like something in a comic opera ; a tall mulatto, playing on a drum with all the seriousness that only one of his colour and his race is able to impart to futile actions, swaggered along beside a jet-black negro playing on the flute. All the executants wore brass-handled swords of a kind never seen in Europe for a hundred years. Those who played the trombone and the ophicleide blew till their thick lips swelled, and seemed to cover up the mouthpieces. Still they blew on, the perspiration rolling down their cheeks, and a black boy or two brought up the rear, clashing the cymbals when it seemed good to

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them, quite irrespective of the rest. The noise was terrifying, and had it not been for the enthusiasm of the crowd, the motley band of coloured men, arrayed like popinjays, would have been ridiculous ; but the dense ranks of hot, perspiring men, all in the flower of youth, and every one of whom had given up his work to cross the ocean at his country's call, had something in them that turned laughter into tears. The sons of peasants, who had left their homes, driven out from Apulean plains or Lombard rice-fields by the pinch of poverty, they now were going back to shed their blood for the land that had denied them bread in their own homes. Twice did the band march round the town whilst the procession was getting ready for a start, and each time that it passed before the Consulate, the Consul came out on the steps, bare-headed, and saluted with the flag.

Dressed in white drill, tall, grey-haired, and with the washed-out look of one who has spent many years in a hot country, the Consul evidently had been a soldier in his youth. He stood and watched the people critically, with the appraising look of the old officer, so like

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to that a grazier puts on at a cattle market as he surveys the beasts. “ Good stuff,” he muttered to himself, and then drawing his hand across his eyes, as if he felt where most of the “ good stuff ” would lie in a few months, he went back to the house.

A cheer at the far corner of the square showed that the ranks were formed. A policeman on a scraggy horse, with a great rusty sabre banging at its side, rode slowly down the streets to clear the way, and once again the parti-coloured band passed by, playing the Garibaldian hymn. Rank upon rank of men tramped after it, their friends running beside them for a last embrace, and women rushing up with children for a farewell kiss. Their merry faces set with determination, and their shoulders well thrown back, three or four hundred men briskly stepped along, trying to imitate the way the Bersaglieri march in Italy. A shout went up of “ Long live the Reservists,” as a contingent, drawn from every class of the Italian colony, passed along the street. Dock-labourers and pale-faced clerks in well-cut clothes and unsubstantial boots walked side by side. Men burnt the colour

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of a brick by working at the harvest rubbed shoulders with Sicilian emigrants landed a month or two ago, but who now were going off to fight, as poor as when they left their native land, and dressed in the same clothes. Neapolitans, gesticulating as they marched, and putting out their tongues at the Brazilian negroes, chattered and joked. To them life was a farce, no matter that the setting of the stage on which they moved was narrow, the fare hard, and the remuneration small. If things were adverse they still laughed on, and if the world was kind they jeered at it and at themselves, disarming both the slings of fortune and her more dangerous smiles with a grimace.

As they marched on, they now and then sketched out in pantomime the fate of any German who might fall into their hands, so vividly that shouts of laughter greeted them, which they acknowledged by putting out their tongues. Square-shouldered Liguresi succeeded them, with Lombards, Sicilians, and men of the strange negroid-looking race from the Basilicata, almost as dark-skinned as the Brazilian loungers at the corners of the streets.

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They all passed on, laughing, and quite oblivious of what was in store for most of them—laughing and smoking, and, for the first time in their lives, the centre of a show. After them came another band; but this time of Italians, well-dressed, and playing on well-cared-for instruments. Behind them walked a little group of men, on whose appearance a hush fell on the crowd. Two of them wore uniforms, and between them, supported by silk handkerchiefs wrapped round his arms, there walked a man who was welcomed with a scream of joy. Frail, and with trembling footsteps, dressed in a faded old red shirt and knotted handkerchief, his parchment cheeks lit up with a faint flush as the Veteran of Marsala passed like a phantom of a glorious past. With him appeared to march the rest of his companions who set sail from Genoa to call into existence that Italy for which the young men all around him were prepared to sacrifice their lives.

To the excited crowd he typified all that their fathers had endured to drive the stranger from their land. The two Cairolis, Nino Bixio, and the heroic figure, wrapped in his poncho,

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who rides in glory on the Janiculum, visible from every point of Rome, seemed to march by the old man's side in the imagination of the crowd. Women rushed forward, carrying flowers, and strewed them on the scant grey locks of the old soldier, and children danced in front of him, like little Bacchanals. All hats were off as the old man was borne along, a phantom of himself, a symbol of a heroic past, and still a beacon, flickering but alight, to show the way towards the goal which in his youth had seemed impossible to reach:

Slowly the procession rolled along, surging against the houses as an incoming tide swirls up a river, till it reached the Consulate. It halted, and the old Garibaldian, drawing himself up, saluted the Italian colours. The Consul, bare-headed and with tears running down his cheeks, stood for a moment, the centre of all eyes, and then, advancing, tore the flag from off its staff, and, after kissing it, wrapped it round the frail shoulders of the veteran.

V

WITH THE NORTH-EAST WIND

A NORTH-EAST haar had hung the city with a pall of grey: It gave an air of hardness to the stone-built houses, blending them with the stone-paved streets, till you could scarce see where the houses ended and the street began. A thin grey dust hung in the air. It coloured everything, and people's faces all looked pinched with the first touch of autumn cold. The wind, boisterous and gusty, whisked the soot-grimed city leaves about in the high suburb at the foot of a long range of hills, making one think it would be easy to have done with life on such an uncongenial day. Tramways were packed with people of the working class, all of them of the alert, quick-witted type only to be seen in the great city on the Clyde, in all our Empire, and comparable

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alone to the dwellers in Chicago for dry vivacity:

By the air they wore of chastened pleasure, all those who knew them saw that they were intent upon a funeral. To serious-minded men such as are they, for all their quickness, nothing is so soul-filling, for it is of the nature of a fact that no one can deny. A wedding has its possibilities, for it may lead to children, or divorce, but funerals are in another category. At them the Scottish people is at its best, for never more than then does the deep underlying tenderness peep through the hardness of the rind. On foot and in the tramways, but most especially on foot, converged long lines of men and women, though fewer women, for the national prejudice that in years gone by thought it not decent for a wife to follow to the grave her husband's coffin, still holds a little in the north. Yet there was something in the crowd that showed it was to attend no common funeral, that they were "stepping west." No one wore black, except a minister or two, who looked a little like the belated rook you sometimes see amongst a flock of seagulls, in that vast ocean of grey tweed.

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They tramped along, the whistling north-east wind pinching their features, making their eyes run, and as they went, almost unconsciously they fell into procession, for beyond the tramway line, a country lane that had not quite put on the graces of a street, though straggling houses were dotted here and there along it, received the crowd and marshalled it, as it were mechanically, without volition of its own. Kept in between the walls, and blocked in front by the hearse and long procession of the mourning-coaches, the people slowly surged along. The greater portion of the crowd were townsmen, but there were miners washed and in their Sunday best. Their faces showed the blue marks of healed-up scars into which coal dust or gunpowder had become tattooed, scars gained in the battle of their lives down in the pits, remembrances of falls of rock or of occasions when the mine had "fired upon them."

Many had known Keir Hardie in his youth, had "wrocht wi' him out-by," at Blantyre, at Hamilton, in Ayrshire, and all of them had heard him speak a hundred times. Even to those who had not heard him, his name was

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as a household word. Miners predominated, but men of every trade were there. Many were members of that black-coated proletariat, whose narrow circumstances and daily struggle for appearances make their life harder to them than is the life of any working man before he has had to dye his hair. Women tramped, too, for the dead leader had been a champion of their sex. They all respected him, loving him with that half-contemptuous gratitude that women often show to men who make the "woman question" the object of their lives.

After the Scottish fashion at a funeral, greetings were freely passed, and Reid, who hadna' seen his friend Mackinder since the time of the Mid-Lanark fight, greeted him with "Ye mind when first Keir Hardie was puttin' up for Parliament," and wrung his hand, hardened in the mine, with one as hardened, and instantly began to recall elections of the past.

"Ye mind yon Wishaw meeting?"

"Aye, ou aye; ye mean when a' they Irish wouldna' hear John Ferguson. Man, he almost grat after the meeting about it."

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“ Aye, but they gied Hardie himself a maist respectful hearing . . . aye, ou aye.”

Others remembered him a boy, and others in his home at Cumnock, but all spoke of him with affection, holding him as something of their own, apart from other politicians, almost apart from men.

Old comrades who had been with him either at this election or that meeting, had helped or had intended to have helped at the crises of his life, fought their old battles over, as they tramped along, all shivering in the wind.

The procession reached a long dip in the road, and the head of it, full half a mile away, could be seen gathered round the hearse, outside the chapel of the crematorium, whose ominous tall chimney, through which the ashes, and perchance the souls of thousands have escaped towards some empyrean or another, towered up starkly. At last all had arrived, and the small open space was crowded, the hearse and carriages appearing stuck amongst the people, like raisins in a cake, so thick they pressed upon them. The chapel, differing from the ordinary chapel of the faiths as much as does a motor driver from a cabman,

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had an air as of modernity about it, which contrasted strangely with the ordinary looking crowd, the adjacent hills, the decent mourning coaches and the black-coated undertakers who bore the coffin up the steps. Outside, the wind whistled and swayed the soot-stained trees about; but inside the chapel the heat was stifling.

When all was duly done, and long exordiums passed upon the man who in his life had been the target for the abuse of press and pulpit, the coffin slid away to its appointed place. One thought one heard the roaring of the flames, and somehow missed the familiar lowering of the body . . . earth to earth . . . to which the centuries of use and wont have made us all familiar, though dust to dust in this case was the more appropriate.

In either case, the book is closed for ever, and the familiar face is seen no more.

So, standing just outside the chapel in the cold, waiting till all the usual greetings had been exchanged, I fell a-musing on the man whom I had known so well: I saw him as he was thirty years ago, outlined against a bing or standing in a quarry in some mining village,

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and heard his once familiar address of "Men." He used no other in those days, to the immense disgust of legislators and other worthy but unimaginative men whom he might chance to meet. About him seemed to stand a shadowy band, most of whom now are dead or lost to view, or have gone under in the fight.

John Ferguson was there, the old-time Irish leader, the friend of Davitt and of Butt. Tall and erect he stood, dressed in his long frock-coat, his roll of papers in one hand, and with the other stuck into his breast, with all the air of being the last Roman left alive. Tom Mann, with his black hair, his flashing eyes, and his tumultuous speech peppered with expletives. Beside him, Sandy Haddow, of Parkhead, massive and Doric in his speech, with a grey woollen comforter rolled round his neck, and hands like panels of a door. Champion, pale, slight, and interesting, still the artillery officer, in spite of Socialism. John Burns; and Small, the miners' agent, with his close brown beard and taste for literature. Smillie stood near, he of the seven elections, and then check-weigher at a pit, either at Cadzow or Larkhall. There, too, was silver-

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tongued Shaw Maxwell and Chisholm Robertson, looking out darkly on the world through tinted spectacles; with him Bruce Glasier, girt with a red sash and with an aureole of fair curly hair around his head, half poet and half revolutionary.

They were all young and ardent, and as I mused upon them and their fate, and upon those of them who have gone down into the oblivion that waits for those who live before their time, I shivered in the wind.

Had he, too, lived in vain, he whose scant ashes were no doubt by this time all collected in an urn, and did they really represent all that remained of him?

Standing amongst the band of shadowy comrades I had known, I saw him, simple and yet with something of the prophet in his air, and something of the seer. Effective and yet ineffectual, something there was about him that attracted little children to him, and I should think lost dogs. He made mistakes, but then those who make no mistakes seldom make anything. His life was one long battle, so it seemed to me that it was fitting that at his funeral the north-east wind should howl

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amongst the trees, tossing and twisting them as he himself was twisted and storm-tossed in his tempestuous passage through the world.

As the crowd moved away, and in the hearse and mourning-coaches the spavined horses limped slowly down the road, a gleam of sunshine, such as had shone too little in his life, lighted up everything.

The swaying trees and dark, grey houses of the ugly suburb of the town were all transfigured for a moment. The chapel door was closed, and from the chimney of the crematorium a faint blue smoke was issuing, which, by degrees, faded into the atmosphere, just as the soul, for all I know, may melt into the air.

When the last stragglers had gone, and bits of paper scurried uneasily along before the wind, the world seemed empty, with nothing friendly in it, but the shoulder of Ben Lomond peeping out shyly over the Kilpatrick Hills.

VI

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THE Triad came into my life as I walked underneath the arch by which the sentinels sit in Olympian state upon their rather long-legged chargers, receiving, as is their due, the silent homage of the passing nurserymaids. The soldier in the middle was straight back from the front. The mud of Flanders clung to his boots and clothes. It was "deeched" into his skin, and round his eyes had left a stain so dark, it looked as if he had been painted for a theatrical make-up. Upon his puttees it had dried so thickly that you could scarcely see the folds. He bore upon his back his knapsack, carried his rifle in his hand all done up in a case, which gave it, as it seemed to me, a look of hidden power, making it more terrible to think of than if it had shone brightly in the

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sun. His water-bottle and a pack of some kind hung at his sides, and as he walked kept time to every step. Under his elbow protruded the shaft of something, perhaps an entrenching tool of some sort, or perhaps some weapon strange to civilians accustomed to the use of stick or umbrella as their only arm. In himself he seemed a walking arsenal, carrying his weapons and his baggage on his back, after the fashion of a Roman legionary. The man himself, before the hand of discipline had fashioned him to number something or another, must have looked fresh and youthful, not very different from a thousand others that in time of peace one sees in early morning going to fulfil one of those avocations without which no State can possibly endure, and yet are practically unknown to those who live in the vast stucco hives either of Belgravia or Mayfair.

He may have been some five-and-twenty, and was a Londoner or a man from the home counties lying round about. His sunburnt face was yet not sunburnt as is the face of one accustomed to the weather all his life. Recent exposure had made his skin all feverish,

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and his blue eyes were fixed, as often are the eyes of sailors or frontiersmen after a long watch.

The girls on either side of him clung to his arm with pride, and with an air of evident affection, that left them quite unconscious of everything but having got the beloved object of their care safe home again. Upon the right side, holding fast to the warrior's arm, and now and then nestling close to his side, walked his sweetheart, a dark-haired girl, dressed in the miserable cheap finery our poorer countrywomen wear, instead of well-made plainer clothes that certainly would cost them less and set them off a hundredfold the more. Now and again she pointed out some feature of the town with pride, as when they climbed the steps under the column on which stands the statue of the Duke of York. The soldier, without looking, answered, "I know, Ethel, Dook of York," and hitched his pack a little higher on his back.

His sister, hanging on his left arm, never said anything, but walked along as in a dream; and he, knowing that she was there and understood, spoke little to her, except to murmur "Good old Gladys" now and then, and press

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her to his side. As they passed by the stunted monument, on which the crowd of little figures standing round a sledge commemorates the Franklin Expedition, in a chill Arctic way, the girl upon the right jerked her head towards it and said, "That's Sir John Franklin, George, he as laid down his life to find the North-West Passage, one of our 'eroes, you remember 'im." To which he answered, "Oh yes, Frenklin"; then looking over at the statue of Commander Scott, added, "'ee done his bit too," with an appreciative air. They gazed upon the Athenæum and the other clubs with that air of detachment that all Englishmen affect when they behold a building or a monument—taking it, as it seems to me, as something they have no concern with, just as if it stood in Petrograd or in Johannesburg.

The homing triad passed into Pall Mall, oblivious of the world, so lost in happiness that they appeared the only living people in the street. The sister, who had said so little, when she saw her brother shift his knapsack, asked him to let her carry it. He smiled, and knowing what she felt, handed his rifle to her,

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remarking, " 'Old it the right side up, old girl, or else it will go off."

And so they took their way through the enchanted streets, not feeling either the penetrating wind or the fine rain, for these are but material things, and they were wrapped apart from the whole world. Officers of all ranks passed by them, some young and smart, and others paunchy and middle-aged ; but they were non-existent to the soldier, who saw nothing but the girls. Most of the officers looked straight before them, with an indulgent air ; but two young men with red bands round their caps were scandalised, and muttering something as to the discipline of the New Army, drew themselves up stiffly and strutted off, like angry game-cocks when they eye each other in the ring.

The triad passed the Rag, and on the steps stood two old colonels, their faces burnt the colour of a brick, and their moustaches stiff as the bristles of a brush. They eyed the passing little show, and looking at each other broke into a smile. They knew that they would never walk oblivious of mankind, linked to a woman's arm ; but perhaps memories of

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what they had done stirred in their hearts, for both of them at the same moment ejaculated a modulated "Ha!" of sympathy. All this time I had walked behind the three young people, unconsciously, as I was going the same road, catching half phrases now and then, which I was half ashamed to hear.

They reached the corner of St. James's Square, and our paths separated. Mine took me to the London Library to change a book, and theirs led straight to Elysium, for five long days.

VII

HEREDITY

RIGHT along the frontier between Uruguay and Rio Grande, the southern province of Brazil, the Spanish and the Portuguese sit face to face, as they have sat for ages, looking at, but never understanding, one another, both in the Old and the New World.

In Tuy and Valenza, Monzon and Salvatierra, at Poncho Verde and Don Pedrito, Rivera and Santa Ana do Libramento, and far away above Cruz Alta, where the two clumps of wood that mark old camps of the two people are called O Matto Castelhana and O Matto Portuguez, the rivalry of centuries is either actual or at least commemorated on the map.

The border-line that once made different peoples of the dwellers at Floriston and

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Gretna, still prevails in the little castellated towns, which snarl at one another across the Minho, just as they did of old.

“Those people in Valenza would steal the sacrament,” says the street urchin playing on the steps of the half fortalice, half church that is the cathedral of Tuy on the Spanish side.

His fellow in Valenza spits towards Tuy and remarks, “From Spain come neither good marriages nor the wholesome winds.”

So on to Salvatierra and Monzon, or any other of the villages or towns upon the river, and in the current of the native speech there still remains some saying of the kind, with its sharp edges still unworn after six centuries of use. Great is the power of artificial barriers to restrain mankind. No proverb ever penned is more profound than that which sets out, “Fear guards the vineyard, not the fence around it.”

So Portuguese and Spaniards in their peninsula have fought and hated and fought and ridiculed each other after the fashion of children that have quarrelled over a broken toy. Blood and an almost common speech,

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for both speak one Romance when all is said, have both been impotent against the custom-house, the flag, the foolish dynasty, for few countries in the world have had more foolish kings than Spain and Portugal.

That this should be so in the Old World is natural enough, for the dead hand still rules, and custom and tradition have more strength than race and creed; but that the hatred should have been transplanted to America, and still continue, is a proof that folly never dies.

In the old towns on either side of the Minho the exterior life of the two peoples is the same.

In the stone-built, arcaded plazas women still gather round the fountain and fill their iron-hooped water-barrels through long tin pipes, shaped like the tin valences used in wine-stores. Donkeys stand at the doors, carrying charcoal in esparto baskets, whether in Portugal or Spain, and goats parade the streets driven by goatherds, wearing shapeless, thickly-napped felt hats and leather overalls.

The water-carrier in both countries calls out "agua-a-a," making it sound like Arabic,

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and long trains of mules bring brushwood for the baker's furnace (even as in Morocco), or great nets of close-chopped straw for horses' fodder.

At eventide the girls walk on the plaza, their mothers, aunts, or servants following them as closely as their shadows on a sunny afternoon. In quiet streets lovers on both sides of the river talk from a first-floor balcony to the street, or whisper through the window-bars on the ground floor. The little shops under the low arches of the arcaded streets have yellow flannel drawers for men and petticoats of many colours hanging close outside their doors, on whose steps sleep yellow dogs.

The jangling bells in the decaying lichen-grown old towers of the churches jangle and clang in the same key, and as appears without a touch of *odium theologicum*. The full bass voices boom from the choirs, in which the self-same organs in their walnut cases have the same rows of golden trumpets sticking out into the aisle.

One faith, one speech, one mode of daily life, the same sharp "green" wine, the same

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bread made of maize and rye, and the same heaps of red tomatoes and green peppers glistening in the sun in the same market-places, and yet a rivalry and a difference as far apart as east from west still separates them.

In both their countries the axles of the bullock-carts, with solid wheels and wattled hurdle sides, like those upon a Roman coin, still creak and whine to keep away the wolves.

In the soft landscape the maize fields wave in the rich hollows on both sides of the Minho.

The pine woods mantle the rocky hills that overhang the deep-sea lochs that burrow in both countries deep into the entrails of the land.

The women, with their many-coloured petticoats and handkerchiefs, chaffer at the same fairs to which their husbands ride their ponies in their straw cloaks.

At "romerias" the peasantry dance to the bagpipe and the drum the self-same dances, and both climb the self-same steep grey steps through the dark lanes, all overhung with gorse and broom, up to the Calvaries, where the three crosses take on the self-same growth

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of lichen and of moss. Yet the "boyero" who walks before the placid oxen, with their cream-coloured flanks and liquid eyes of onyx, feels he is different, right down to the last molecule of his being, from the man upon the other side.

So was it once, and perhaps is to-day, with those who dwell in Liddes or Bewcastle dales. Spaniard and Portuguese, as Scot and Englishman in older times, can never see one matter from the same point of view. The Portuguese will say that the Castilian is a rogue, and the Castilian returns the compliment. Neither have any reason to support their view, for who wants reason to support that which he feels is true.

It may be that the Spaniard is a little rougher and the Portuguese more cunning; but if it is the case or not, the antipathy remains, and has been taken to America.

From the Laguna de Merin to the Cuareim, that is to say, along a frontier of two hundred leagues, the self-same feeling rules upon both sides of the line. There, as in Portugal and Spain, although the country, whether in Uruguay or in Brazil, is little different, yet it

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has suffered something indefinable by being occupied by members of the two races so near and yet so different from one another.

Great rolling seas of waving grass, broken by a few stony hills, are the chief features of the landscape of the frontiers in both republics. Estancia houses, dazzlingly white, buried in peach and fig groves, dot the plains, looking like islands in the sea of grass. Great herds of cattle roam about, and men on horseback, galloping like clockwork, sail across the plains like ships upon a sea. Along the riverbanks grow strips of thorny trees, and as the frontier line trends northward palm-trees appear, and monkeys chatter in the woods. Herds of wild asses, shyer than antelopes, gaze at the passing horsemen, scour off when he approaches, and are lost into the haze. Stretches of purple borage, known as La Flor Morada, carpet the ground in spring and early summer, giving place later on to red verbena; and on the edges of the streams the tufts of the tall Pampa grass recall the feathers on a Pampa Indian's spear.

Bands of grave ostriches feed quietly upon the tops of hills, and stride away when fright-

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ened, down the wind, with wings stretched out to catch the breeze.

Clothes are identical, or almost so; the poncho and the loose trousers stuffed into high patent-leather boots, the hat kept in its place by a black ribbon with two tassels, are to be seen on both sides of the frontier. Only in Brazil a sword stuck through the girth replaces the long knife of Uruguay. Perhaps in that one item all the differences between the races manifests itself, for the sword is, as it were, a symbol, for no one ever saw one drawn or used in any way but as an ornament. It is, in fact, but a survival of old customs, which are cherished both by the Portuguese and the Brazilians as the apple of the eye.

The vast extent of the territory of Brazil, its inaccessibility, and the enormous distances to be travelled from the interior to the coast, and the sense of remoteness from the outer world, have kept alive a type of man not to be found in any other country where the Christian faith prevails. Risings of fanatics still are frequent; one is going on to-day in Paraná, and that of the celebrated Antonio

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Concelheiro, twenty years ago, shook the whole country to its core. Slavery existed in the memory of people still alive. Women in the remoter towns are still secluded almost as with the Moors. The men still retain something of the Middle Ages in their love of show. All in the province of Rio Grande are great horsemen, and all use silver trappings on a black horse, and all have horses bitted so as to turn round in the air, just as a hawk turns on the wing.

The sons of men who have been slaves abound in all the little frontier towns, and old grey-headed negroes, who have been slaves themselves, still hang about the great estates. Upon the other side, in Uruguay, the negro question was solved once and for all in the Independence Wars, for then the negroes were all formed into battalions by themselves and set in the forefront of the battle, to die for liberty in a country where they all were slaves the month before. War turned them into heroes, and sent them out to die.

When once their independence was assured, the Uruguayans fell into line like magic with the modern trend of thought. Liberty to

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them meant absolute equality, for throughout the land no snob is found to leave a slug's trail on the face of man by his subserviency.

Women were held free, that is, as free as it is possible for them to be in any Latin-peopled land. Across the line, even to-day, a man may stay a week in a Brazilian country house and never see a woman but a mulata girl or an old negro crone. Still he feels he is watched by eyes he never sees, listens to voices singing or laughing, and a sense of mystery prevails.

Spaniards and Portuguese in the New World have blended just as little as they have done at home. Upon the frontier all the wilder spirits of Brazil and Uruguay have congregated. There they pursue the life, but little altered, that their fathers led full fifty years ago. All carry arms, and use them on small provocation, for if an accident takes place the frontier shields the slayer, for to pursue him usually entails a national quarrel, and so the game goes on.

So Jango Chaves, feeling inclined for sport, or, as he might have said, to "brincar un bocadinho," saddled up his horse. He

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mounted, and, as his friends were looking on, ran it across the plaza of the town, and, turning like a seagull in its flight, came back to where his friends were standing, and stopped it with a jerk.

His silver harness jingled, and his heavy spurs, hanging loosely on his high-heeled boots, clanked like fetters, as his active little horse bounded into the air and threw the sand up in a shower.

The rider, sitting him like a statue, with the far-off look horsemen of every land assume when riding a good horse and when they know they are observed, slackened his hand and let him fall into a little measured trot, arching his neck and playing with the bit, under which hung a silver eagle on a hinge. Waving his hand towards his friends, Jango rode slowly through the town. He passed through sandy streets of flat-roofed, whitewashed houses, before whose doors stood hobbled horses nodding in the sun.

He rode past orange gardens, surrounded by brown walls of sun-baked bricks with the straw sticking in them, just as it had dried. In the waste the castor-oil bushes formed little

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jungles, out of which peered cats, exactly as a tiger peers out of a real jungle in the woods.

The sun poured down, and was reverberated back from the white houses, and on the great gaunt building, where the captain-general lived, floated the green-and-yellow flag of the republic, looking like a bandana handkerchief. He passed the negro rancheria, without which no such town as Santa Anna do Libramento is complete, and might have marked, had he not been too much used to see them, the naked negro children playing in the sand. Possibly, if he marked them, he referred to them as "cachorrinhos pretos," for the old leaven of the days of slavery is strongly rooted in Brazil. So he rode on, a slight and graceful figure, bending to each movement of his horse, his mobile, olive-coloured features looking like a bronze masque in the fierce downpour of the sun:

As he rode on, his whip, held by a thong and dangling from his fingers, swung against his horse's flanks, keeping time rhythmically to its pace. He crossed the rivulet that flows between the towns and came out on the little open plain that separates them. From

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habit, or because he felt himself amongst unfriendly or uncomprehended people, he touched his knife and his revolvers, hidden beneath his summer poncho, with his right hand, and with his bridle arm held high, ready for all eventualities, passed into just such another sandy street as he had left behind.

Save that all looked a little newer, and that the stores were better supplied with goods, and that there were no negro huts, the difference was slight between the towns. True that the green-and-yellow flag had given place to the barred blue-and-white of Uruguay. An armed policeman stood at the corners of the main thoroughfares, and water-carts went up and down at intervals. The garden in the plaza had a well-tended flower-garden.

A band was playing in the middle of it, and Jango could not fail to notice that Rivera was more prosperous than was his native town.

Whether that influenced him, or whether it was the glass of caña which he had at the first pulperia, is a moot point, or whether the old antipathy between the races brought by his ancestors from the peninsula; anyhow, he left his horse untied, and with the

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reins thrown down before it as he got off to have his drink. When he came out, a policeman called to him to hobble it or tie it up.

Without a word he gathered up his reins, sprang at a bound upon his horse, and, drawing his mother-of-pearl-handled pistol, fired at the policeman almost as he sprang. The shot threw up a shower of sand just in the policeman's face, and probably saved Jango's life. Drawing his pistol, the man fired back, but Jango, with a shout and pressure of his heels, was off like lightning, firing as he rode, and zigzagging across the street. The policeman's shot went wide, and Jango, turning in the saddle, fired again and missed.

By this time men with pistols in their hands stood at the doors of all the houses; but the Brazilian passed so rapidly, throwing himself alternately now on the near side, now on the off side of his horse, hanging by one foot across the croup and holding with the other to the mane, that he presented no mark for them to hit.

As he passed by the "jefatura" where the alcalde and his friends were sitting smoking

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just before the door, he fired with such good aim that a large piece of plaster just above their heads fell, covering them with dust.

Drawing his second pistol and still firing as he went, he dashed out of the town, in spite of shots from every side, his horse bounding like lightning as his great silver spurs ploughed deep into its sides. When he had crossed the little bit of neutral ground, and just as a patrol of cavalry appeared, ready to gallop after him, a band of men from his own town came out to meet him.

He stopped, and shouting out defiance to the Uruguayans, drew up his horse, and lit a cigarette. Then, safe beyond the frontier, trotted on gently to meet his friends, his horse shaking white foam from off its bit, and little rivulets of blood dripping down from its sides into the sand.

VIII

EL TANGO ARGENTINO

MOTOR-CARS swept up to the covered passage of the front door of the hotel, one of those international caravansaries that pass their clients through a sort of vulgarising process that blots out every type. It makes the Argentine, the French, the Englishman, and the American all alike before the power of wealth.

The cars surged up as silently as snow falls from a fir-tree in a thaw, and with the same soft swishing noise. Tall, liveried porters opened the doors (although, of course, each car was duly furnished with a footman) so nobly that any one of them would have graced any situation in the State.

The ladies stepped down delicately, showing a fleeting vision of a leg in a transparent stocking, just for an instant, through the

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slashing of their skirts. They knew that every man, their footman, driver, the giant watchers at the gate, and all who at the time were going into the hotel, saw and were moved by what they saw just for a moment ; but the fact did not trouble them at all. It rather pleased them, for the most virtuous feel a pleasurable emotion when they know that they excite. So it will be for ever, for thus and not by votes alone they show that they are to the full men's equals, let the law do its worst.

Inside the hotel, heated by steam, and with an atmosphere of scent and flesh that went straight to the head just as the fumes of whisky set a drinker's nerves agog, were seated all the finest flowers of the cosmopolitan society of the French capital.

Lesbos had sent its legions, and women looked at one another appreciatively, scanning each item of their neighbours' clothes, and with their colour heightening when by chance their eyes met those of another priestess of their sect.

Rich rastaquaoures, their hats too shiny, and their boots too tight, their coats fitting too closely, their sticks mounted with great

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gold knobs, walked about or sat at little tables, all talking strange varieties of French.

Americans, the men apparently all run out of the same mould, the women apt as monkeys to imitate all that they saw in dress, in fashion and in style, and more adaptable than any other women in the world from lack of all traditions, conversed in their high nasal tones. Spanish-Americans from every one of the Republics were well represented, all talking about money : of how Doña Fulana Perez had given fifteen hundred francs for her new hat, or Don Fulano had just scored a million on the Bourse.

Jews and more Jews, and Jewesses and still more Jewesses, were there, some of them married to Christians and turned Catholic, but betrayed by their Semitic type, although they talked of Lourdes and of the Holy Father with the best.

After the " five-o'clock," turned to a heavy meal of toast and buns, of Hugel loaf, of sandwiches, and of hot cake, the scented throng, restored by the refecton after the day's hard work of shopping, of driving here and there like souls in purgatory to call on people that they detested, and other labours of a like

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nature, slowly adjourned to a great hall in which a band was playing. As they walked through the passages, men pressed close up to women and murmured in their ears, telling them anecdotes that made them flush and giggle as they protested in an unprotesting style. Those were the days of the first advent of the Tango Argentino, the dance that since has circled the whole world, as it were, in a movement of the hips. Ladies pronounced it charming as they half closed their eyes and let a little shiver run across their lips. Men said it was the only dance that was worth dancing. It was so Spanish, so unconventional, and combined all the æsthetic movements of the figures on an Etruscan vase with the strange grace of the Hungarian gipsies . . . it was so, as one may say, so . . . as you may say . . . you know.

When all were seated, the band, Hungarians, of course,—oh, those dear gipsies!—struck out into a rhythm, half rag-time, half habanera, canaille, but sensuous, and hands involuntarily, even the most aristocratic hands—of ladies whose immediate progenitors had been pork-packers in Chicago, or gambusinos

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who had struck it rich in Zacatecas,—tapped delicately, but usually a little out of time, upon the backs of chairs.

A tall young man, looking as if he had got a holiday from a tailor's fashion plate, his hair sleek, black, and stuck down to his head with a cosmetic, his trousers so immaculately creased they seemed cut out of cardboard, led out a girl dressed in a skirt so tight that she could not have moved in it had it not been cut open to the knee.

Standing so close that one well-creased trouser leg disappeared in the tight skirt, he clasped her round the waist, holding her hand almost before her face. They twirled about, now bending low, now throwing out a leg, and then again revolving, all with a movement of the hips that seemed to blend the well-creased trouser and the half-open skirt into one in-harmonious whole. The music grew more furious and the steps multiplied, till with a bound the girl threw herself for an instant into the male dancer's arms, who put her back again upon the ground with as much care as if she had been a new-laid egg, and the pair bowed and disappeared.

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Discreet applause broke forth, and exclamations such as "wonderful," "what grace," "Vivent les Espagnoles," for the discriminating audience took no heed of independence days, of mere political changes and the like, and seemed to think that Buenos Aires was a part of Spain, never having heard of San Martin, Bolivar, Paez, and their fellow-liberators.

Paris, London, and New York were to that fashionable crowd the world, and anything outside—except, of course, the Hungarian gipsies and the Tango dancers—barbarous and beyond the pale.

After the Tango came "La Maxixe Brésilienne," rather more languorous and more befitting to the dwellers in the tropics than was its cousin from the plains. Again the discreet applause broke out, the audience murmuring "charming," that universal adjective that gives an air of being in a perpetual pastrycook's when ladies signify delight. Smiles and sly glances at their friends showed that the dancers' efforts at indecency had been appreciated.

Slowly the hall and tea-rooms of the great

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hotel emptied themselves, and in the corridors and passages the smell of scent still lingered, just as stale incense lingers in a church.

Motor-cars took away the ladies and their friends, and drivers, who had shivered in the cold whilst the crowd inside sweated in the central heating, exchanged the time of day with the liveried doorkeepers, one of them asking anxiously, "Dis, Anatole, as-tu vu mes vaches ?"

With the soft closing of a well-hung door the last car took its perfumed freight away, leaving upon the steps a group of men, who remained talking over, or, as they would say, undressing, all the ladies who had gone.

"Argentine Tango, eh ?" I thought, after my friends had left me all alone. Well, well, it has changed devilishly upon its passage overseas, even discounting the difference of the setting of the place where first I saw it danced so many years ago. So, sauntering down, I took a chair far back upon the terrace of the Café de la Paix, so that the sellers of *La Patrie*, and the men who have some strange new toy, or views of Paris in a long album

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like a broken concertina, should not tread upon my toes.

Over a Porto Blanc and a Brazilian cigarette, lulled by the noise of Paris and the raucous cries of the street-vendors, I fell into a doze.

Gradually the smell of petrol and of horse-dung, the two most potent perfumes in our modern life, seemed to be blown away. Dyed heads and faces scraped till they looked blue as a baboon's; young men who looked like girls, with painted faces and with mincing airs; the raddled women, ragged men, and hags huddled in knitted shawls, lame horses, and taxi-cab drivers sitting nodding on their boxes—all faded into space, and from the nothing that is the past arose another scene.

I saw myself with Witham and his brother, whose name I have forgotten, Eduardo Peña, Congreve, and Eustaquio Medina, on a small rancho in an elbow of the great River Yi. The rancho stood upon a little hill. A quarter of a mile or so away the dense and thorny monté of hard-wood trees that fringed the river seemed to roll up towards it like a sea. The house was built of yellow pine sent from the United States. The roof was shingled,

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and the rancho stood planked down upon the plain, looking exactly like a box. Some fifty yards away stood a thatched hut that served as kitchen, and on its floor the cattle herders used to sleep upon their horse-gear with their feet towards the fire.

The corrals for horses and for sheep were just a little farther off, and underneath a shed a horse stood saddled day in, day out, and perhaps does so yet, if the old rancho still resists the winds.

Four or five horses, saddled and bridled, stood tied to a great post, for we were just about to mount to ride a league or two to a Baile, at the house of Frutos Barragán. Just after sunset we set out, as the sweet scent that the grasses of the plains send forth after a long day of heat perfumed the evening air.

The night was clear and starry, and above our heads was hung the Southern Cross. So bright the stars shone out that one could see almost a mile away ; but yet all the perspective of the plains and woods was altered. Hillocks were sometimes undistinguishable, at other times loomed up like houses. Woods seemed to sway and heave, and by the sides of streams

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bunches of Pampa grass stood stark as sentinels, their feathery tufts looking like plumes upon an Indian's lance.

The horses shook their bridles with a clear, ringing sound as they stepped double, and their riders, swaying lightly in their seats, seemed to form part and parcel of the animals they rode.

Now and then little owls flew noiselessly beside us, circling above our heads, and then dropped noiselessly upon a bush. Eustaquio Medina, who knew the district as a sailor knows the seas where he was born, rode in the front of us. As his horse shied at a shadow on the grass or at the bones of some dead animal, he swung his whip round ceaselessly, until the moonlight playing on the silver-mounted stock seemed to transform it to an aureole that flickered about his head. Now and then somebody dismounted to tighten up his girth, his horse twisting and turning round uneasily the while, and, when he raised his foot towards the stirrup, starting off with a bound.

Time seemed to disappear and space be swallowed in the intoxicating gallop, so that

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when Eustaquio Medina paused for an instant to strike the crossing of a stream, we felt annoyed with him, although no hound that follows a hot scent could have gone truer on his line.

Dogs barking close at hand warned us our ride was almost over, and as we galloped up a rise Eustaquio Medina pulled up and turned to us.

“There is the house,” he said, “just at the bottom of the hollow, only five squares away,” and as we saw the flicker of the lights, he struck his palm upon his mouth after the Indian fashion, and raised a piercing cry. Easing his hand, he drove his spurs into his horse, who started with a bound into full speed, and as he galloped down the hill we followed him, all yelling furiously.

Just at the hitching-post we drew up with a jerk, our horses snorting as they edged off sideways from the black shadow that it cast upon the ground. Horses stood about everywhere, some tied and others hobbled, and from the house there came the strains of an accordion and the tinkling of guitars.

Asking permission to dismount, we hailed

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the owner of the house, a tall, old Gaucho, Frutos Barragán, as he stood waiting by the door, holding a maté in his hand. He bade us welcome, telling us to tie our horses up, not too far out of sight, for, as he said, "It is not good to give facilities to rogues, if they should chance to be about."

In the low, straw-thatched rancho, with its eaves blackened by the smoke, three or four iron bowls, filled with mare's fat, and with a cotton wick that needed constant trimming, stuck upon iron cattle-brands, were burning fitfully.

They cast deep shadows in the corners of the room, and when they flickered up occasionally the light fell on the dark and sun-tanned faces of the tall, wiry Gauchos and the light cotton dresses of the women as they sat with their chairs tilted up against the wall. Some thick-set Basques, an Englishman or two in riding breeches, and one or two Italians made up the company. The floor was earth, stamped hard till it shone like cement, and as the Gauchos walked upon it, their heavy spurs clinked with a noise like fetters as they trailed them on the ground.

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An old, blind Paraguayan played on the guitar, and a huge negro accompanied him on an accordion. Their united efforts produced a music which certainly was vigorous enough, and now and then, one or the other of them broke into a song, high-pitched and melancholy, which, if you listened to it long enough, forced you to try to imitate its wailing melody and its strange intervals.

Fumes of tobacco and rum hung in the air, and of a strong and heady wine from Catalonia, much favoured by the ladies, which they drank from a tumbler, passing it to one another, after the fashion of a grace-cup at a City dinner, with great gravity. At last the singing ceased, and the orchestra struck up a Tango, slow, marked, and rhythmical.

Men rose, and, taking off their spurs, walked gravely to the corner of the room where sat the women huddled together as if they sought protection from each other, and with a compliment led them out upon the floor. The flowing poncho and the loose chiripá, which served as trousers, swung about just as the tartans of a Highlander swing as he dances, giving an air of ease to all the movements of

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the Gauchos as they revolved, their partners' heads peeping above their shoulders, and their hips moving to and fro.

At times they parted, and set to one another gravely, and then the man, advancing, clasped his partner round the waist and seemed to push her backwards, with her eyes half-closed and an expression of beatitude. Gravity was the keynote of the scene, and though the movements of the dance were as significant as it was possible for the dancers to achieve, the effect was graceful, and the soft, gliding motion and the waving of the parti-coloured clothes, wild and original, in the dim, flickering light.

Rum flowed during the intervals. The dancers wiped the perspiration from their brows, the men with the silk handkerchiefs they wore about their necks, the women with their sleeves. Tangos, cielitos, and pericones succeeded one another, and still the atmosphere grew thicker, and the lights seemed to flicker through a haze, as the dust rose from the mud floor. Still the old Paraguayan and the negro kept on playing with the sweat running down their faces, smoking and drinking rum in their brief intervals of rest, and when the music

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ceased for a moment, the wild neighing of a horse tied in the moonlight to a post, sounded as if he called his master to come out and gallop home again.

The night wore on, and still the negro and the Paraguayan stuck at their instruments. Skirts swung and ponchos waved, whilst maté circulated amongst the older men as they stood grouped about the door.

Then came a lull, and as men whispered in their partners' ears, telling them, after the fashion of the Gauchos, that they were lovely, their hair like jet, their eyes bright as "las tres Marias," and all the compliments which in their case were stereotyped and handed down for generations, loud voices rose, and in an instant two Gauchos bounded out upon the floor.

Long silver-handled knives were in their hands, their ponchos wrapped round their left arms served them as bucklers, and as they crouched, like cats about to spring, they poured out blasphemies.

"Stop this!" cried Frutos Barragán; but even as he spoke, a knife-thrust planted in the stomach stretched one upon the floor. Blood gushed out from his mouth, his belly fell like

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a pricked bladder, and a dark stream of blood trickled upon the ground as he lay writhing in his death agony.

The iron bowls were overturned, and in the dark girls screamed and the men crowded to the door. When they emerged into the moonlight, leaving the dying man upon the floor, the murderer was gone; and as they looked at one another there came a voice shouting out, "Adios, Barragán! Thus does Vicente Castro pay his debts when a man tries to steal his girl," and the faint footfalls of an unshod horse galloping far out upon the plain.

I started, and the waiter standing by my side said, "Eighty centimes"; and down the boulevard echoed the harsh cry, "*La Patrie, achetez La Patrie,*" and the rolling of the cabs.

IX

IN A BACKWATER

“ THIS 'ere war, now,” said the farmer, in the slow voice that tells of life passed amongst comfortable surroundings into which haste has never once intruded, “ is a 'orrid business.”

He leaned upon a half-opened gate, keeping it swaying to and fro a little with his foot. His waistcoat was unbuttoned, showing his greasy braces and his checked blue shirt. His box-cloth gaiters, falling low down upon his high-lows, left a gap between them and his baggy riding-breeches, just below the knee. His flat-topped bowler hat was pushed back over the fringe of straggling grey hair upon his neck. His face was burned a brick-dust colour with the August sun, and now and then he mopped his forehead with a red handkerchief.

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His little holding, an oasis in the waste of modern scientific farming, was run in the old-fashioned way, often to be seen in the home counties, as if old methods linger longest where they are least expected, just as a hunted fox sometimes takes refuge in a rectory.

His ideas seemed to have become unsettled with constant reading of newspapers filled with accounts of horrors, and his speech, not fluent at the best of times, was slower and more halting than his wont.

He told how he had just lost his wife, and felt more than a little put about to get his dairy work done properly without her help.

“ When a man’s lost his wife it leaves him, somehow, as if he were like a ’orse hitched on one side of the wagon-pole, a-pullin’ by hisself. Now this ’ere war, comin’ as it does right on the top of my ’ome loss, sets me a-thinkin’, especially when I’m alone in the ’ouse of night.”

The park-like English landscape, with its hedgerow trees and its lush fields, that does not look like as if it really were the country, but seems a series of pleasure-grounds cut off into convenient squares, was at its time of greatest

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beauty and its greatest artificiality. Cows swollen with grass till they looked like balloons lay in the fields and chewed the cud. Geese cackled as they strayed upon the common, just as they appear to cackle in a thousand water-colours. The hum of bees was in the limes. Dragon-flies hawked swiftly over the oily waters of the two slow-flowing rivers that made the farm almost an island in a suburban Mesopotamia, scarce twenty miles away from Charing Cross. An air of peace and of contentment, of long well-being and security, was evident in everything. Trees flourished, though stag-headed, under which the Round-head troopers may have camped, or at the least, veterans from Marlborough's wars might have sat underneath their shade, and smoked as they retold their fights.

A one-armed signboard, weathered, and with the lettering almost illegible, pointed out the bridle-path to Ditchley, now little used, except by lovers on a Sunday afternoon, but where the feet of horses for generations in the past had trampled it, still showing clearly as it wound through the fields.

In the standing corn the horses yoked to

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the reaping machine stood resting, now and again shaking the tassels on their little netted ear-covers. They, too, came of a breed long used to peace and plenty, good food and treatment, and short hours of work. The kindly landscape and the settled life of centuries had formed the kind of man of which the farmer was a prototype, — slow-footed and slow-tongued, and with his mind as bowed as were his shoulders with hard work, by the continual pressure of the hierarchy of wealth and station, that had left him as much adscript to them as any of his ancestors had been bound to their glebes. He held the *Daily Mail*, his gospel and his *vade mecum*, crumpled in his hand as if he feared to open it again to read more details of the war. A simple soul, most likely just as oppressive to his labourers as his superiors had always showed themselves to him, he could not bear to read of violence, as all the tyranny that he had bent under had been imposed so subtly that he could never see more than the shadow of the hand that had oppressed him.

It pained him, above all things, to read about the wounded and dead horses lying in

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the corn, especially as he had "'eard the 'arvest over there in Belgium was going to be good." The whirr of the machines reaping the wheatfield sounded like the hum of some gigantic insect, and as the binder ranged the sheaves in rows it seemed as if the golden age had come upon the earth again, bringing with it peace and plenty, with perhaps slightly stouter nymphs than those who once followed the sickle-men in Arcady.

A man sat fishing in a punt just where the river broadened into a backwater edged with willow trees. At times he threw out ground-bait, and at times raised a stone bottle to his lips, keeping one eye the while watchfully turned upon his float. School children strayed along the road, as rosy and as flaxen-haired as those that Gregory the Great thought fitting to be angels, though they had never been baptized.

Now and again the farmer stepped into his field to watch the harvesting, and cast an eye of pride and of affection on his horses, and then, coming back to the gate, he drew the paper from his pocket and read its columns, much in the way an Arab reads a letter, murmuring

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the words aloud until their meaning penetrated to his brain:

Chewing a straw, and slowly rubbing off the grains of an ear of wheat into his hand, he gazed over his fields as if he feared to see in them some of the horrors that he read. Again he muttered, with a puzzled air, "'Orrible ! 'undreds of men and 'orses lying in the corn. It seems a sad thing to believe, doesn't it now ?" he said ; and as he spoke soldiers on motor-cycles hurtled down the road, leaving a trail of dust that perhaps looked like smoke to him after his reading in the *Daily Mail*.

"They tell me," he remarked, after a vigorous application of his blue handkerchief to his streaming face, "that these 'ere motor-cycles 'ave a gun fastened to them, over there in Belgium, where they are a-goin' on at it in such a way. The paper says, 'Ranks upon ranks of 'em is just mowed down like wheat.' . . . 'Orrid, I call it, if it's true, for now and then I think those chaps only puts that kind of thing into their papers to 'ave a sale for them." He looked about him as if, like Pilate, he was looking for an elusive truth not to be found on earth, and then walked down the road till he

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came to the backwater where the man was fishing in his punt. They looked at one another over a yard or two of muddy water, and asked for news about the war, in the way that people do from others who they must know are quite as ignorant as they are themselves. The fisherman "'ad given up readin' the war noos; it's all a pack of lies," and pointing to the water, said in a cautious voice, "Some people says they 'ears. I ain't so sure about it; but, anyhow, it's always best to be on the safe side." Then he addressed himself once more to the business of the day, and in the contemplation of his float no doubt became as much absorbed into the universal principle of nature as is an Indian sitting continually with his eyes turned on his diaphragm.

Men passing down the road, each with a paper in his hand, looked up and threw the farmer scraps of news, uncensored and spiced high with details which had never happened, so that in after years their children will most likely treasure as facts, which they have received from long-lost parents, the wildest fairy tales.

The slanting sun and lengthening shadows

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brought the farmer no relief of mind ; and still men, coming home from work on shaky bicycles, plied him with horrors as they passed by the gate, their knee-joints stiff with the labours of the day, seeming in want of oil. A thin, white mist began to creep along the backwater. Unmooring his punt, the fisherman came unwillingly to shore, and as he threw the fragments of his lunch into the water and gathered up his tackle, looked back upon the scene of his unfruitful labours with an air as of a man who has been overthrown by circumstances, but has preserved his honour and his faith inviolate.

Slinging his basket on his back, he trudged off homewards, and instantly the fish began to rise. A line of cows was driven towards the farm, their udders all so full of milk that they swayed to and fro, just as a man sways wrapped in a Spanish cloak, and as majestically. The dragon-flies had gone, and in their place ghost-moths flew here and there across the meadows, and from the fields sounded the corncrake's harsh, metallic note.

The whirring of the reaper ceased, and when the horses were unyoked the driver led

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them slowly from the field. As they passed by the farmer he looked lovingly towards them, and muttered to himself, "Dead 'orses and dead soldiers lying by 'undreds in the standing corn. . . . I wonder 'ow the folks out there in Belgium will 'ave a relish for their bread next year. This 'ere war's a 'orrid business, coming as it does, too, on the top of my own loss . . . dead 'orses in the corn. . . ."

He took the straw out of his mouth, and walking up to one of his own sleek-sided cart-horses, patted it lovingly, as if he wanted to make sure that it was still alive.

X

HIPPOMORPHOUS

ON the 12th of October 1524, Cortes left Mexico on his celebrated expedition to Honduras. The start from Mexico was made to the sound of music, and all the population of the newly conquered city turned out to escort him for a few miles upon his way.

The cavalcade must have been a curious spectacle enough. Cortes himself and his chief officers rode partly dressed in armour, after the fashion of the time. Then came the Spanish soldiers, mostly on foot and armed with lances, swords, and bucklers, though there was a troop of crossbowmen and arquebusiers to whom "after God" we owed the Conquest, as an old chronicler has said when speaking of the Conquest of Peru. In Mexico they did good service also, although it was the horsemen

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that in that conquest played the greater part. Then came a force of three thousand friendly Indians from Tlascala, and last of all a herd of swine was driven slowly in the rear, for at that time neither sheep nor cattle were known in the New World.

Guatimozin, the captive King of Mexico, graced his conquerors' triumphal march, and with the army went two falconers, Garci Caro and Alvaro Montañes, together with a band of music, some acrobats, a juggler, and a man "who vaulted well and played the Moorish pipe."

Cortes rode the black horse which he had ridden at the siege of Mexico. Fortune appeared to smile upon him. He had just added an enormous empire to the Spanish crown, and proved himself one of the most consummate generals of his age. Yet he was on the verge of the great misfortune of his life, which at the same time was to prove him still a finer leader than he had been, even in Mexico.

His black horse also was about to play the most extraordinary *rôle* that ever horse has played in the whole history of the world.

With varying fortunes, now climbing moun-

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tains, now floundering in swamps, and again passing rivers over which they had to throw bridges, the expedition came to an open country, well watered, and the home of countless herds of deer. Villagutierre, in his *History of the Conquest of the Province of Itza* (Madrid, 1701), calls it the country of the Maçotecas, which name Bernal Diaz del Castillo says means "deer" in the language of those infidels. Fresh meat was scarce, and all the Spanish horsemen of those days were experts with the lance. Instantly Cortes and all his mounted officers set out to chase the deer. The weather was extraordinarily hot, hotter, so Diaz says, than they had had it since they left Mexico. The deer were all so tame that the horsemen speared them as they chose (*los alancearon muy á su placer*), and soon the plain was strewed with dying animals just as it used to be when the Indians hunted buffalo thirty or forty years ago.

Diaz says that the reason for the tameness of the deer was that the Maçotecas (here he applies the word to the Indians themselves) worshipped them as gods. It appears that their Chief God had once appeared in the

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image of a stag, and told the Indians not to hunt his fellow-gods, or even frighten them. Little enough the Spaniards cared for any gods not strong enough to defend themselves, for the deity that they adored was the same God of Battles whom we adore to-day.

So they continued spearing the god-like beasts, regardless of the heat and that their horses were in poor condition owing to their long march. The horse of one Palacios Rubio, a relation of Cortes, fell dead, overcome with the great heat; the grease inside him melted, Villagutierre says. The black horse that was ridden by Cortes also was very ill, although he did not die—though it perhaps had been better that he should have died, for Villagutierre thinks “far less harm would have been done than happened afterwards, as will be seen by those who read the tale.” After the hunting all was over, the line of march led over stony hills, and through a pass that Villagutierre calls “el Paso del Alabastro,” and Diaz “La Sierra de los Pedernales” (flints). Here the horse that had been ill, staked itself in a fore-foot, and this, as Villagutierre says, was the real reason that Cortes left him behind. He

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adds, "It does not matter either way, whether he was left because his grease was melted with the sun, or that his foot was staked." This, of course, is true, and anyhow the horse was reserved for a greater destiny than ever fell to any of his race.

Cortes, in his fifth letter to the Emperor Charles V., says simply, "I was obliged to leave my black horse (*mi caballo morzillo*) with a splinter in his foot." He takes no notice of the melting of the grease. "The Chief promised to take care of him, but I do not know that he will succeed or what he will do with him."

He told the Chief that he would send to fetch the horse, for he was very fond of him, and prized him very much. The Chief, no doubt, received the strange and terrible animal with due respect, and Cortes went on upon his way. That is all that Cortes says about the matter, and the mist of history closed upon him and on his horse. Cortes died, worn-out and broken-hearted, at the white little town of Castilleja de la Cuesta, not far from Seville; but El Morzillo had a greater destiny in store. This happened in the year 1525, and nothing

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more was heard of either the Maçotecas or the horse, after that passage in the fifth letter of Cortes, till 1697. In that year the Franciscans set out upon the gospel trail to convert the Indians of Itza, attached to the expedition that Ursua led, for the interior of Yucatan had never been subdued. They reached Itza, having come down the River Tipu in canoes.

This river, Villagutierre informs us, is as large as any river in all Spain. Moreover, it is endowed with certain properties, its water being good and clear, so that in some respects it is superior to the water even of the Tagus. It is separated into one hundred and ninety channels (neither more nor less), and every one of these has its right Indian name, that every Indian knows. Upon its banks grows much sarsaparilla, and in its sand is gold.

Beyond all this it has a hidden virtue, which is that taken (fasting) it cures the dropsy, and makes both sick and sound people eat heartily. Besides this, after eating, when you have drunk its water you are inclined to eat again.

At midday it is cold, and warm at night, so warm that a steam rises from it, just as it does when a kettle boils on the fire. Other

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particularities it has, which though they are not so remarkable, yet are noteworthy.

Down this amazing river Ursua's expedition navigated for twelve days in their canoes till they came to a lake called Peten-Itza, in which there was an island known as Tayasal. All unknown to themselves, they had arrived close to the place where long ago Cortes had left his horse. Of this they were in ignorance; the circumstance had been long forgotten, and Cortes himself had become almost a hero of a bygone age even in Mexico.

Fathers Orbieta and Fuensalida, monks of the Franciscan order, chosen both for their zeal and for their knowledge of the Maya language, were all agog to mark new sheep. The Indians amongst whom they found themselves were "ignorant even of the knowledge of the true faith." Moreover, since the conquest they had had no dealings with Europeans, and were as primitive as they were at the time when Cortes had passed, more than a hundred years ago.

One of the Chiefs, a man known as Isquin, when he first saw a horse, "almost ran mad with joy and with astonishment. Especially

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the evolutions and the leaps it made into the air moved him to admiration, and going down upon all fours he leaped about and neighed." Then, tired with this practical manifestation of his joy and his astonishment, he asked the Spanish name of the mysterious animal. When he learned that it was caballo, he forthwith renounced his name, and from that day this silly infidel was known as Caballito. Then when the soul-cleansing water had been poured upon his head, he took the name of Pedro, and to his dying day all the world called him "Don Pedro Caballito, for he was born a Chief."

This curious and pathetic little circumstance, by means of which a brand was snatched red-hot from the eternal flames, lighted for those who have deserved hell-fire by never having heard of it, might, one would think, have shown the missionaries that the poor Indians were but children, easier to lead than drive.

It only fired their zeal, and yet all their solicitude to save the Indians' souls was unavailing, and the hard-hearted savages, dead to the advantages that baptism has ever brought with it, clave to their images.

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The good Franciscans made several more attempts to move the people's hearts by preaching ceaselessly. All failed, and then they went to several islands in the lake, in one of which Father Orbieta hardly had begun to preach, when, as Lopez Cogulludo¹ tells us, an Indian seized him by the throat and nearly strangled him, leaving him senseless on the ground.

At times, seated in church listening to what the Elizabethans called "a painful preacher," even the elect have felt an impulse to seize him by the throat. Still, it is usually restrained; but these poor savages, undisciplined in body and in mind, were perhaps to be excused, for the full flavour of a sermon had never reached them in their Eden by the lake. Moreover, after he was thus rudely cast from the pulpit to the ground, Father Fuensalida, nothing daunted by his fate, stepped forward and took up his parable. He preached to them this time in their own language, in which he was expert, with fervid eloquence and great knowledge of the Scriptures,² explaining to

¹ Lopez Cogulludo, *Historia de Yucatan*.

² Era gran Escriturario.

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them the holy mystery of the incarnation of the eternal Word.¹ The subject was well chosen for a first attempt upon their hearts ; but it, too, proved unfruitful, and the two friars were forced to re-embark.

As the canoe in which they sat moved from the island and launched out into the lake, the infidels who stood and watched them paddling were moved to fury, and, rushing to the edge, stoned them whole-heartedly till they were out of reach:

It is a wise precaution, and one that the “ conquistadores ” usually observed, to have the spiritual well supported by the secular arm when missionaries, instinct with zeal and not weighed down with too much common sense, preach for the first time to the infidel.

This first reverse was but an incident, and by degrees the friars, this time accompanied by soldiers, explored more of the islands in the lake. At last they came to one called Tayasal, which was so full of idols that they took twelve hours to burn and to destroy them all.

One island still remained to be explored,

¹ El sagrado misterio de la encarnacion de el eterno Verbo.

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and in it was a temple with an idol much revered by the Indians. At last they entered it, and on a platform about the height of a tall man they saw the figure of a horse rudely carved out of stone.

The horse was seated on the ground resting upon his quarters, his hind legs bent and his front feet stretched out. The barbarous infidels¹ adored the abominable and monstrous beast under the name of Tziunchan, God of the Thunder and the Lightning, and paid it reverence. Even the Spaniards, who, as a rule, were not much given to inquiring into the history of idols, but broke them instantly, *ad majorem Dei gloriam*, were interested and amazed. Little by little they learned the history of the hippomorphous god, which had been carefully preserved. It appeared that when Cortes had left his horse, so many years ago, the Indians, seeing he was ill, took him into a temple to take care of him. Thinking he was a reasoning animal,² they placed before him fruit and chickens, with the result that the poor beast—who, of course, was

¹ Los barbaros infieles.

² Entendiendo que era animal de razon.

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reasonable enough in his own way—eventually died.

The Indians, terrified and fearful that Cortes would take revenge upon them for the death of the horse that he had left for them to care for and to minister to all his wants, before they buried him, carved a rude statue in his likeness and placed it in a temple in the lake.

The devil, who, as Villagutierre observes, is never slack to take advantage when he can, seeing the blindness and the superstition (which was great) of those abominable idolaters, induced them by degrees to make a God of the graven image they had made. Their veneration grew with time, just as bad weeds grow up in corn, as Holy Writ sets forth for our example, and that abominable statue became the chiefest of their gods, though they had many others equally horrible.

As the first horses that they saw were ridden by the Spaniards in the chase of the tame deer, and many shots were fired, the Indians not unnaturally connected the explosions and the flames less with the rider than the horse. Thus in the course of years the evolution of the great god Tziunchan took place, and, as

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the missionaries said, these heathen steeped in ignorance adored the work of their own hands.

Father Orbieta, not stopping to reflect that all of us adore what we have made, but "filled with the spirit of the Lord and carried off with furious zeal for the honour of our God,¹" seized a great stone and in an instant cast the idol down, then with a hammer he broke it into bits.

When Father Orbieta had finished his work and thus destroyed one of the most curious monuments of the New World, which ought to have been preserved as carefully as if it had been carved by Praxiteles, "with the ineffable and holy joy that filled him, his face shone with a light so spiritual that it was something to praise God for and to view with delight." Most foolish actions usually inspire their perpetrators with delight, although their faces do not shine with spiritual joy when they have done them; so when one reads the folly of this muddle-headed friar, it sets one hoping that several of the stones went home upon his back as he sat paddling the canoe.

The Indians broke into lamentations, ex-

¹ Arrebatado de un furioso zelo de la honra de Dios.

HIPPOMORPHOUS

claiming, "Death to him, he has killed our God"; but were prevented from avenging his demise by the Spanish soldiers who prudently had accompanied the friar.

Thus was the mystery of the eternal Word made manifest amongst the Maçotecas, and a deity destroyed who for a hundred years and more had done no harm to any one on earth . . . a thing unusual amongst Gods.

XI

MUDEJAR

BROWN, severe, and wall-girt, the stubborn city still held out.

Its proud traditions made it impossible for Zaragoza to capitulate without a siege. As in the days of Sault, when the heroic maid, the *artillera*, as her countrymen call her with pride, when Palafox held up the blood and orange banner in which float the lions and the castles of Castille, the city answered shot for shot.

Fire spurted from the Moorish walls, built by the Beni Hud, who reigned in Zaragoza, when still Sohail poured its protecting rays upon the land. The bluish wreaths of smoke curled on the Ebro, running along the water and enveloping the Coso as if in a mist.

A dropping rifle-fire crackled out from the ramparts, and above the castle the red flag

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of the Intransigent-Republic shivered and fluttered in the breeze.

The Torre-Nueva sprang from the middle of the town, just as a palm tree rises from the desert sands. It was built at the time when Moorish artisans, infidel dogs who yet preserved the secrets of the East amongst the Christians (may dogs defile their graves), had spent their science and their love upon it.

Octagonal, and looking as if blown into the air by the magician's art, it leaned a little to one side, and, as the admiring inhabitants averred, drawing their right hands open over their left arms, laughed at its rival of Bologna and at every other tower on earth.

No finer specimen of the art known as Mudejar existed in all Spain. Galleries cut it here and there; and ajimeces, the little horse-shoe windows divided by a marble pillar, loved of the Moors, which tradition says they took from the rude openings in their tents of camel's hair, gave light to the inside. Stages of inclined planes led to the top, so gradual in their ascent that once a Queen of Spain had ridden up them to admire the view over the Sierras upon her palfrey, or her donkey, for all is one

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when treating of a queen, who of a certainty ennobles the animal she deigns to ride upon. Bold ajaracas, the patterns proper to the style of architecture, stood up in high relief upon its sides, and near the balustrade upon the top a band of bluish tiles relieved the brownness of the brickwork and sparkled in the sun. Sieges and time and storms, rain, wind, and snow had spared it; even the neglect of centuries had left it unimpaired—erect and elegant as a young Arab maiden carrying water from the well. Architects said that it inclined a little more each year, and talked about subsidences; but they were foreigners, unused to the things of Spain, and no one marked them; and the tower continued to be loved and prized and to fall into disrepair. On this occasion riflemen lined the galleries, pouring a hot fire upon the attacking forces of the Government.

Encamped upon the heights above Torero, the Governmental army held the banks of the canal that gives an air of Holland to that part of the adust and calcined landscape of Aragon.

The General's quarters overlooked the town, and from them he could see Santa

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Engracia, in whose crypt repose the bodies of the martyrs in an atmosphere of ice, standing alone upon its little plaza, fringed by a belt of stunted and ill-grown acacia trees. The great cathedral, with its domes, in which the shrine of the tutelary Virgin of the Pilar, the Pilarica of the country folk, glittering with jewels and with silver plate, is venerated as befits the abiding place on earth of the miraculous figure sent direct from heaven, towered into the sky.

Churches and towers and convents, old castellated houses with their overhanging eaves and coats-of-arms upon the doors, jewels of architecture, memorials of the past, formed as it were a jungle wrought in a warm brown stone. Beyond the city towered the mountains that hang over Huesca of the Bell. Through them the Aragon has cut its roaring passages towards Sobrarbe to the south. Northwards they circle Jaca, the virgin little city that beat off the Moors a thousand years ago, and still once every year commemorates her prowess outside the walls, where Moors and Christians fight again the unequal contest, into which St. James, mounted upon his milk-white

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charger, had plunged and thrown the weight of his right arm. The light was so intense and African that on the mountain sides each rock was visible, outlined as in a camera-lucida, and as the artillery played upon the tower the effects of every salvo showed up distinctly on the crumbling walls. All round the Government's encampment stood groups of peasantry who had been impressed together with their animals to bring provisions. Wrapped in their brown and white checked blankets, dressed in tight knee-breeches, short jackets, and grey stockings, and shod with alpargatas—the canvas, hemp-soled sandals that are fastened round the ankles with blue cords—they stood and smoked, stolid as Moors, and as unfathomable as the deep mysterious corries of their hills.

When the artillery thundered and the breaches in the walls grew daily more apparent and more ominous, the country people merely smiled, for they were sure the Pilarica would preserve the city; and even if she did not, all Governments, republican or clerical, were the same to them.

All their ambition was to live quietly, each

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in his village, which to him was the hub round which the world revolved.

So one would say, as they stood watching the progress of the siege: "Chiquio, the sciences advance a bestiality, the Government in the Madrids can hear each cannon-shot. The sound goes on those wires that stretch upon the posts we tie our donkeys to when we come into town. . . ."

Little by little the forces of the Government advanced, crossing the Ebro at the bridge which spans it in the middle of the great double promenade called the Coso, and by degrees drew near the walls.

The stubborn guerrilleros in the town contested every point of vantage, fighting like wolves, throwing themselves with knives and scythes stuck upright on long poles upon the troops.

So fought their grandfathers against the French, and so Strabo describes their ancestors, adding, "The Spaniard is a taciturn, dark man, usually dressed in black; he fights with a short sword, and always tries to come to close grips with our legionaries."

As happens in all civil wars, when brother

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finds himself opposed to brother, the strife was mortal, and he who fell received no mercy from the conqueror.

The riflemen upon the Torre Nueva poured in their fire, especially upon the Regiment of Pavia, whose Colonel, Don Luis Montoro, on several occasions gave orders to the artillerymen at any cost to spare the tower.

Officer after officer fell by his side, and soldiers in the ranks cursed audibly, covering the saints with filth, as runs the phrase in Spanish, and wondering why their Colonel did not dislodge the riflemen who made such havoc in their files. Discipline told at last, and all the Intransigents were forced inside the walls, leaving the moat with but a single plank to cross it by which to reach the town. Upon the plank the fire was concentrated from the walls, and the besiegers stood for a space appalled, sheltering themselves as best they could behind the trees and inequalities of the ground.

Montoro called for volunteers, and one by one three grizzled soldiers, who had grown grey in wars against the Moors, stepped forward and fell pierced with a dozen wounds.

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After a pause there was a movement in the ranks, and with a sword in his right hand, and in his left the colours of Castille, his brown stuff gown tucked up showing his hairy knees knotted and muscular, out stepped a friar, and strode towards the plank. Taking the sword between his teeth he crossed himself, and beckoning on the men, rushed forward in the thickest of the fire.

He crossed in safety, and then the regiment, with a hoarse shout of "Long live God," dashed on behind him, some carrying planks and others crossing upon bales of straw, which they had thrown into the moat. Under the walls they formed and rushed into the town, only to find each house a fortress and each street blocked by a barricade. From every window dark faces peered, and a continual fusillade was poured upon them, whilst from the house-tops the women showered down tiles:

Smoke filled the narrow streets, and from dark archways groups of desperate men came rushing, armed with knives, only to fall in heaps before the troops who, with fixed bayonets, steadily pushed on.

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A shift of wind cleared off the smoke and showed the crimson flag still floating from the citadel, ragged and torn by shots. Beyond the town appeared the mountains peeping out shyly through the smoke, as if they looked down on the follies of mankind with a contemptuous air.

Dead bodies strewed the streets, in attitudes half tragical, half ludicrous, some looking like mere bundles of old clothes, and some distorted with a stiff arm still pointing to the sky.

Right in the middle of a little square the friar lay shot through the forehead, his sword beside him, and with the flag clasped tightly to his breast.

His great brown eyes stared upwards, and as the soldiers passed him some of them crossed themselves, and an old sergeant spoke his epitaph: "This friar," he said, "was not of those fit only for the Lord; he would have made a soldier, and a good one; may God have pardoned him."

Driven into the middle plaza of the town, the Intransigents fought till the last, selling their lives for more than they were worth, and dying silently.

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The citadel was taken with a rush, and the red flag hauled down.

Bugles rang out from the other angle of the plaza ; the General and his staff rode slowly forward to meet the Regiment of Pavia as it debouched into the square.

Colonel Montoro halted, and then, saluting, advanced towards his chief. His General, turning to him, angrily exclaimed, " Tell me, why did you let those fellows in the tower do so much damage, when a few shots from the field guns would have soon finished them ? "

Montoro hesitated, and recovering his sword once more saluted as his horse fretted on the curb, snorting and sidling from the dead bodies that were strewed upon the ground.

" My General," he said, " not for all Spain and half the Indies would I have trained the cannon on the tower ; it is Mudejar of the purest architecture."

His General smiled at him a little grimly, and saying, " Well, after all, this is no time to ask accounts from any man," touched his horse with the spur and, followed by his staff, he disappeared into the town.

XII

A MINOR PROPHET

THE city sweltered in the August heat. No breath of air lifted the pall of haze that wrapped the streets, the houses, and the dark group of Græco-Roman buildings that stands up like a rock in the dull tide-way of the brick-built tenements that compose the town.

Bells pealed at intervals, summoning the fractioned faithful to their various centres of belief.

When they had ceased and all the congregations were assembled listening to the exhortations of their spiritual advisers, and were employed fumbling inside their purses, as they listened, for the destined "threepenny," that obolus which gives respectability to alms, the silence was complete. Whitey-brown paper bags, dropped overnight, just stirred

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occasionally as the air swelled their bellies, making them seem alive, or as alive as is 'a jelly-fish left stranded by the tide.

Just as the faithful were assembled in their conventicles adoring the same Deity, all filled with rancour against one another because their methods of interpretation of the Creator's will were different, so did the politicians and the cranks of every sort and sect turn out to push their methods of salvation for mankind. In groups they gathered round the various speakers who discoursed from chairs and carts and points of vantage on the streets.

Above the speakers' heads, banners, held up between two poles, called on the audiences to vote for Liberal or for Tory, for Poor Law Reform, for Social Purity, and for Temperance. Orators, varying from well-dressed and glibly-educated hacks from party centres, to red-faced working-men, held forth perspiring, and occasionally bedewing those who listened to them with saliva, after an emphatic burst.

It seemed so easy after listening to them to redress all wrongs, smooth out all wrinkles, and instate each citizen in his own shop where he could sell his sweated goods, with the best

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advantage to himself and with the greatest modicum of disadvantage to his neighbour, that one was left amazed at the dense apathy of those who did not fall in with the nostrums they had heard. Again, at other platforms, sleek men in broadcloth, who had never seen a plough except at Agricultural Exhibitions, nor had got on closer terms of friendship with a horse than to be bitten by him as they passed along a street, discoursed upon the land.

“ My friends, I say, the land is a fixed quantity, you can't increase it, and without it, it's impossible to live. 'Ow is it, then, that all the land of England is in so few hands ? ” He paused and mopped his face, and looking round, began again : “ Friends—you'll allow me to style you Friends, I know, Friends in the sycred cause of Liberty—the landed aristocracy is our enemy.

“ I am not out for confiscation, why should I ? I 'ave my 'ome purchased with the fruits of my own honest toil . . . ”

Before he could conclude his sentence, a dock labourer, dressed in his Sunday suit of shoddy serge, check shirt, and black silk handkerchief knotted loosely round his neck,

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looked up, and interjected : “ ’Ard work, too, mate, that ’ere talkin’ in the sun is, that built your ’ome. Beats coal whippin’.”

Just for an instant the orator was disconcerted as a laugh ran through the audience ; but habit, joined to a natural gift of public speaking, came to his aid, and he rejoined : “ Brother working-men, I say ditto to what has fallen from our friend ’ere upon my right. We all are working-men. Some of us, like our friend, work with their ’ands, and others with their ’eds. In either case, the Land is what we ’ave to get at as an article of prime necessity.”

Rapidly he sketched a state of things in which a happy population, drawn from the slums, but all instinct with agricultural knowledge, would be settled on the land, each on his little farm, and all devoted to intensive culture in the most modern form. Trees would be all cut down, because they only “ ’arbour ” birds that eat the corn. Hedges would all be extirpated, for it is known to every one that mice and rats and animals of every kind live under them, and that they only serve to shelter game. Each man would own

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a gun and be at liberty to kill a "rabbut" or a "'are"—"animals, as we say at college, *feery naturrey*, and placed by Providence upon the land."

These noble sentiments evoked applause, which was a little mitigated by an interjection from a man in gaiters, with a sunburnt face, of: "Mister, if every one is to have a gun and shoot, 'ow long will these 'ere 'ares and rabbuts last?"

A little farther on, as thinly covered by his indecently transparent veil of reciprocity as a bare-footed dancer in her Grecian clothes, or a tall ostrich under an inch of sand, and yet as confident as either of them that the essential is concealed, a staunch Protectionist discoursed. With copious notes, to which he turned at intervals, when he appealed to those statistics which can be made in any question to fit every side, he talked of loss of trade. "Friends, we must tax the foreigner. It is this way, you see, our working classes have to compete with other nations, all of which enjoy protective duties. I ask you, is it reasonable that we should let a foreign article come into England?"

Here a dour-looking Scotsman almost spat

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out the words: "Man, can ye no juist say Great Britain?" and received a bow and "Certainly, my friend, I am not here to wound the sentiments of any man . . . as I was saying, is it reasonable that goods should come to England . . . I mean Great Britain, duty free, and yet articles we manufacture have to pay heavy duties in any foreign port?" "'Ow about bread?" came from a voice upon the outskirts of the crowd.

The speaker reddened, and resumed: "My friend, man doth not live by bread alone; still, I understand the point. A little dooty upon corn, say five shillings in the quarter, would not hurt any one. We've got to do it. The foreigner is the enemy. I am a Christian; but yet, readin' as I often do the Sermon on the Mount, I never saw we had to lie down in the dust and let ourselves be trampled on.

"Who are to be the inheritors of the earth? Our Lord says, 'Blessed are the meek; they shall inherit it.'"

He paused, and was about to clinch his argument, when a tall Irishman, after expectorating judiciously upon a vacant space between two listeners, shot in: "Shure, then,

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the English are the meekest of the lot, for they have got the greater part of it."

At other gatherings Socialists held forth under the red flag. "That banner, comrades, which 'as braved a 'undred fights, and the mere sight of which makes the Capitalistic blood-sucker tremble as he feels the time approach when Lybor shall come into its inheritance and the Proletariat shyke off its chaine and join 'ands all the world over, despizin' ryce and creed and all the artificial obstructions that a designin' Priest-'ood and a blood-stained Plutocracy 'ave placed between them to distract their attention from the great cause of Socialism, the great cause that mykes us comrades . . . 'ere, keep off my 'oof, you blighter, with your ammunition wagons. . . ."

Religionists of various sects, all with long hair and dressed in shabby black, the Book either before them on a campaigning lectern or tucked beneath one arm, called upon Christian men to dip their hands into the precious blood and drink from the eternal fountain of pure water that is to be found in the Apocalypse. "Come to 'Im, come to 'Im, I say, my friends, come straight; oh, it is

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joyful to belong to Jesus. Don't stop for anything, come to 'Im now like little children. . . . Let us sing a 'ymn. You know it, most of you ; but brother 'ere," and as he spoke he turned towards a pale-faced youth who held a bag to take the offertory, that sacrament that makes the whole world kin, " will lead it for you."

The acolyte cleared his throat raucously, and to a popular air struck up the refrain of " Let us jump joyful on the road." Flat-breasted girls and pale-faced boys took up the strain, and as it floated through the heavy air, reverberating from the pile of public buildings, gradually all the crowd joined in ; shyly at first and then whole-heartedly, and by degrees the vulgar tune and doggerel verses took on an air of power and dignity, and when the hymn was finished, the tears stood in the eyes of grimy-looking women and of red-faced men. Then, with his bag, the pale-faced hymn-leader went through the crowd, reaping a plenteous harvest, all in copper, from those whose hearts had felt, but for a moment, the full force of sympathy.

Suffragist ladies discussed upon " the

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Question," shocking their hearers as they touched on prostitution and divorce, and making even stolid policemen, who stood sweating in their thick blue uniforms, turn their eyes upon the ground.

After them, Suffragette girls bounded upon the cart, consigning fathers, brothers, and the whole male section of mankind straight to perdition as they held forth upon the Vote, that all-heel of the female politician, who thinks by means of it to wipe out all those disabilities imposed upon her by an unreasonable Nature and a male Deity, who must have worked alone up in the Empyrean without the humanising influence of a wife.

Little by little the various groups dissolved, the speakers and their friends forcing their "literatoor" upon the passers-by, who generally appeared to look into the air a foot or two above their heads, as they went homewards through the streets.

The Anarchists were the last to leave, a faithful few still congregating around a youth in a red necktie who denounced the other speakers with impartiality, averring that they were "humbugs every one of them," and, for

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his part, he believed only in dynamite, by means of which he hoped some day to be able to devote "all the blood-suckers to destruction, and thus to bring about the reign of brotherhood."

The little knot of the elect applauded loudly, and the youth, catching the policeman's eye fixed on him, descended hurriedly from off the chair on which he had been perorating, remarking that "it was time to be going home to have a bit of dinner, as he was due to speak at Salford in the evening."

Slowly the square was emptied, the last group or two of people disappearing into the mouths of the incoming streets just as a Roman crowd must have been swallowed up in the vomitoria of an amphitheatre, after a show of gladiators.

Torn newspapers and ends of cigarettes were the sole result of all the rhetoric that had been poured out so liberally upon the assembled thousands in the square.

Two or three street boys in their shirt-sleeves, bare-footed and bare-headed, their trousers held up by a piece of string, played about listlessly, after the fashion of their kind

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on Sunday in a manufacturing town, when the life of the streets is dead, and when men's minds are fixed either upon the mysteries of the faith or upon beer, things in which children have but little share.

The usual Sabbath gloom was creeping on the town and dinner-time approaching, when from a corner of the square appeared a man advancing rapidly. He glanced about inquiringly, and for a moment a look of disappointment crossed his face. Mounting the steps that lead up to the smoke-coated Areopagus, he stopped just for an instant, as if to draw his breath and gather his ideas. Decently dressed in shabby black, his trousers frayed a little above the heels of his elastic-sided boots, his soft felt hat that covered long but scanty hair just touched with grey, he had an air as of a plaster figure set in the middle of a pond, as he stood silhouetted against the background of the buildings, forlorn yet resolute.

The urchins, who had gathered round him, had a look upon their faces as of experienced critics at a play; that look of expectation and subconscious irony which characterises all their kind at public spectacles.

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Their appearance, although calculated to appal a speaker broken to the platform business, did not influence the man who stood upon the steps. Taking off his battered hat, he placed it and his umbrella carefully upon the ground. A light, as of the interior fire that burned in the frail tenement of flesh so fiercely that it illuminated his whole being, shone in his mild blue eyes. Clearing his throat, and after running his nervous hands through his thin hair, he pitched his voice well forward, as if the deserted square had been packed full of people prepared to hang upon his words. His voice, a little hoarse and broken during his first sentences, gradually grew clearer, developing a strength quite incommensurate with the source from which it came.

“My friends,” he said, causing the boys to grin and waking up the dozing policeman, “I have a doctrine to proclaim. Love only rules the world. The Greek word *caritas* in the New Testament should have been rendered *love*. Love suffereth long. Love is not puffed up; love beareth all things. That is what the Apostle really meant to say. Often within this very square I have stood listening to the

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speeches, and have weighed them in my mind. It is not for me to criticise, only to advocate my own belief. Friends . . .”

As his voice had gathered strength, two or three working-men, attracted by the sight of a man speaking to the air, surrounded but by the street boys and the nodding policeman on his beat, had gathered round about. Dressed in their Sunday clothes; well washed, and with the look as of restraint that freedom from their accustomed toil often imparts to them on Sunday, they listened stolidly, with that toleration that accepts all doctrines, from that of highest Toryism down to Anarchy, and acts on none of them. The speaker, spurred on by the unwonted sight of listeners, for several draggled women had drawn near, and an ice-cream seller had brought his donkey-cart up to the nearest curb-stone, once more launched into his discourse.

“ Friends, when I hear the acerbity of the address of some; when I hear doctrines setting forth the rights but leaving out the duties of the working class; when I hear men defend the sweater and run down the sweated, calling them thriftless, idle, and intemperate, when

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often they are but unfortunate, I ask myself, what has become of Love? Who sees more clearly than I do myself what the poor have to suffer? Do I not live amongst them and share their difficulties? Who can divine better than one who has imagination—and in that respect I thank my stars I have not been left quite unendowed—what are the difficulties of those high placed by fortune, who yet have got to strive to keep their place?

“Sweaters and sweated, the poor, the rich, men, women, children, all mankind, suffer from want of Love. I am not here to say that natural laws will ever cease to operate, or that there will not be great inequalities, if not of fortune, yet of endowments, to the end of Time. What the Great Power who sent us here intended, only He can tell. One thing He placed within the grasp of every one, capacity to love. Think, friends, what England might become under the reign of universal love. The murky fumes that now defile the landscape, the manufactories in which our thousands toil for others, the rivers vile with refuse, the knotted bodies and the faces scarcely human in their abject struggle for their daily bread,

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would disappear. Bradford and Halifax and Leeds would once again be fair and clean. The ferns would grow once more in Shipley Glen, and in the valleys about Sheffield the scissor-grinders would ply their trade upon streams bright and sparkling, as they were of yore. In Halifax, the Roman road, now black with coal-dust and with mud, would shine as well-defined as it does where now and then it crops out from the ling upon the moors, just as the Romans left it polished by their caligulæ. Why, do you ask me? Because all sordid motives would be gone, and of their superfluity the rich would give to those less blessed by Providence. The poor would grudge no one the gifts of fortune, and thus the need for grinding toil would disappear, as the struggle and the strain for daily bread would fade into the past.

“Picture to yourselves, my friends, an England once more green and merry, with the air fresh and not polluted by the smoke of foetid towns.

“’Tis pleasant, friends, on a spring morning to hear the village bells calling to church, even although they do not call you to attend. It

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heals the soul to see the honeysuckle and the eglantine and smell the new-mown hay. . . .

“Then comes a chill when on your vision rises the England of the manufacturing town, dark, dreary, and befouled with smoke. How different it might be in the perpetual May morning I have sketched for you.

“Love suffereth all things, endureth all things, createth all things. . . .”

He paused, and, looking round, saw he was all alone. The boys had stolen away, and the last workman's sturdy back could be just seen as it was vanishing towards the public-house.

The speaker sighed, and wiped the perspiration from his forehead with a soiled handkerchief.

Then, picking up his hat and his umbrella, a far-off look came into his blue eyes as he walked homewards almost jauntily, conscious that the inner fire had got the better of the fleshly tenement, and that his work was done.

XIII

EL MASGAD

THE camp was pitched upon the north bank of the Wad Nefis, not far from Tamoshlacht. Above it towered the Atlas, looking like a wall, with scarce a peak to break its grim monotony. A fringe of garden lands enclosed the sanctuary, in which the great Sherif lived in patriarchal style; half saint, half warrior, but wholly a merchant at the bottom, as are so many Arabs; all his surroundings enjoyed peculiar sanctity.

In the long avenue of cypresses the birds lived safely, for no one dared to frighten them, much less to fire a shot. His baraka, that is the grace abounding, that distils from out the clothes, the person and each action of men such as the Sherif, who claim descent in apostolic continuity from the Blessed One,

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Mohammed, Allah's own messenger, protected everything. Of a mean presence, like the man who stood upon the Areopagus and beckoned with his hand, before he cast the spell of his keen, humoristic speech upon the Greeks, the holy one was of a middle stature. His face was marked with smallpox. His clothes were dirty, and his haik he sometimes mended with a thorn, doubling it, and thrusting one end through a slit to form a safety-pin. His shoes were never new, his turban like an old bath towel; yet in his belt he wore a dagger with a gold hilt, for he was placed so far above the law, by virtue of his blood, that though the Koran especially enjoins the faithful not to wear gold, all that he did was good.

Though he drank nothing but pure water, or, for that matter, lapped it like a camel, clearing the scum off with his fingers if on a journey, he might have drunk champagne or brandy, or mixed the two of them, for the Arabs are the most logical of men, and to them such a man as the Sherif is holy, not from anything he does, but because Allah has ordained it. An attitude of mind as good as

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any other, and one that, after all, makes a man tolerant of human frailties.

Allah gives courage, virtue, eloquence, or skill in horsemanship. He gives or he withholds them for his good pleasure ; what he has written he has written, and therefore he who is without these gifts is not held blamable. If he should chance to be a saint, that is a true descendant, in the male line, from him who answered nobly when his foolish followers asked him if his young wife, Ayesha, should sit at his right hand in paradise, " By Allah, not she ; but old Kadijah, she who when all men mocked me, cherished and loved, she shall sit at my right hand," that is enough for them.

So the Sherif was honoured, partly because he had great jars stuffed with gold coin, the produce of his olive yards, and also of the tribute that the faithful brought him ; partly because of his descent ; and perhaps, more than all, on account of his great store of Arab lore on every subject upon earth. His fame was great, extending right through the Sus, the Draa, and down to Tazaûelt, where it met the opposing current of the grace of Bashir-el-Biruk, Sherif of the Wad-Nun. He liked to talk to

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Europeans, partly to show his learning, and partly to hear about the devilries they had invented to complicate their lives.

So when the evening prayer was called, and all was silent in his house, the faithful duly prostrate on their faces before Allah, who seems to take as little heed of them as he does of the other warring sects, each with its doctrine of damnation for their brethren outside the pale, the Sherif, who seldom prayed, knowing that even if he did so he could neither make nor yet unmake himself in Allah's sight, called for his mule, and with two Arabs running by his side set out towards the unbeliever's camp.

Though the Sherif paid no attention to it, the scene he rode through was like fairyland. The moonbeams falling on the domes of house and mosque and sanctuary lit up the green and yellow tiles, making them sparkle like enamels. Long shadows of the cypresses cast great bands of darkness upon the red sand of the avenue. The croaking of the frogs sounded metallic, and by degrees resolved itself into a continuous tinkle, soothing and musical, in the Atlas night. Camels lay ruminating, their

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monstrous packs upon their backs. As the Sherif passed by them on his mule they snarled and bubbled, and a faint odour as of a menagerie, mingled with that of tar, with which the Arabs cure their girth and saddle galls, floated towards him, although no doubt custom had made it so familiar that he never heeded it.

From the Arab huts that gather around every sanctuary, their owners living on the baraka, a high-pitched voice to the accompaniment of a two-stringed guitar played with a piece of stiff palmetto leaf, and the monotonous Arab drum, that if you listen to it long enough invades the soul, blots from the mind the memory of towns, and makes the hearer long to cast his hat into the sea and join the dwellers in the tents, blended so inextricably with the shrill cricket's note and the vast orchestra of the insects that were praising Allah on that night, each after his own fashion, that it was difficult to say where the voice ended and the insects' hum began.

Still, in despite of all, the singing Arab, croaking of the frogs, and the shrill pæans of the insects, the night seemed calm and silent, for all the voices were attuned so well to the

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surroundings that the serenity of the whole scene was unimpaired.

The tents lay in the moonlight like gigantic mushrooms; the rows of bottles cut in blue cloth with which the Arabs ornament them stood out upon the canvas as if in high relief. The first light dew was falling, frosting the canvas as a piece of ice condenses air upon a glass. In a long line before the tents stood the pack animals munching their corn placed on a cloth upon the ground.

A dark-grey horse, still with his saddle on for fear of the night air, was tied near to the door of the chief tent, well in his owner's eye. Now and again he pawed the ground, looked up, and neighed, straining upon the hobbles that confined his feet fast to the picket line.

On a camp chair his owner sat and smoked, and now and then half got up from his seat when the horse plunged or any of the mules stepped on their shackles and nearly fell upon the ground.

As the Sherif approached he rose to welcome him, listening to all the reiterated compliments and inquiries that no self-respecting Arab ever omits when he may chance to meet a friend.

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A good address, like mercy, is twice blest, both in the giver and in the recipient of it; but chiefly it is beneficial to the giver, for in addition to the pleasure that he gives, he earns his own respect. Well did both understand this aspect of the question, and so the compliments stretched out into perspectives quite unknown in Europe, until the host, taking his visitor by the hand, led him inside the tent. "Ambassador," said the Sherif, although he knew his friend was but a Consul, "my heart yearned towards thee, so I have come to talk with thee of many things, because I know that thou art wise, not only in the learning of thy people, but in that of our own."

The Consul, not knowing what the real import of the visit might portend, so to speak felt his adversary's blade, telling him he was welcome, and that at all times his tent and house were at the disposition of his friend. Clapping his hands he called for tea, and when it came, the little flowered and gold-rimmed glasses, set neatly in a row, the red tin box with two compartments, one for the tea and one for the blocks of sugar, the whole surrounding the small dome-shaped pewter teapot, all placed

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in order on the heavy copper tray, he waved the equipage towards the Sherif, tacitly recognising his superiority in the art of tea-making. Seated beside each other on a mattress they drank the sacramental three cups of tea, and then, after the Consul had lit his cigarette, the Sherif having refused one with a gesture of his hand and a half-murmured "Haram"—that is, "It is prohibited"—they then began to talk.

Much had they got to say about the price of barley and the drought ; of tribal fights ; of where our Lord the Sultan was, and if he had reduced the rebels in the hills,—matters that constitute the small talk of the tents, just as the weather and the fashionable divorce figure in drawing-rooms. Knowing what was expected of him, the Consul touched on European politics, upon inventions, the progress that the French had made upon the southern frontier of Algeria ; and as he thus unpacked his news with due prolixity, the Sherif now and again interjected one or another of those pious phrases, such as "Allah is merciful," or "God's ways are wonderful," which at the same time show the interjector's piety, and give the man

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who is discoursing time to collect himself, and to prepare another phrase.

After a little conversation languished, and the two men who knew each other well sat listlessly, the Consul smoking and the Sherif passing the beads of a cheap wooden rosary between the fingers of his right hand, whilst with his left he waved a cotton pocket handkerchief to keep away the flies.

Looking up at his companion, "Consul," he said, for he had now dropped the Ambassador with which he first had greeted him, "you know us well, you speak our tongue; even you know Shillah, the language of the accursed Berbers, and have translated Sidi Hammo into the speech of Nazarenes—I beg your pardon—of the Rumi," for he had seen a flush rise on the Consul's cheek.

"You like our country, and have lived in it for more than twenty years. I do not speak to you about our law, for every man cleaves to his own, but of our daily life. Tell me now, which of the two makes a man happier, the law of Sidna Aissa, or that of our Prophet, God's own Messenger?"

He stopped and waited courteously, playing

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with his naked toes, just as a European plays with his fingers in the intervals of speech.

The Consul sent a veritable solfatara of tobacco smoke out of his mouth and nostrils, and laying down his cigarette returned no answer for a little while.

Perchance his thoughts were wandering towards the cities brilliant with light—the homes of science and of art. Cities of vain endeavour in which men pass their lives thinking of the condition of their poorer brethren, but never making any move to get down off their backs. He thought of London and of Paris and New York, the dwelling-places both of law and order, and the abodes of noise. He pondered on their material advancement : their tubes that burrow underneath the ground, in which run railways carrying their thousands all the day and far into the night ; upon their hospitals, their charitable institutions, their legislative assemblies, and their museums, with their picture-galleries, their theatres—on the vast sums bestowed to forward arts and sciences, and on the poor who shiver in their streets and cower under railway arches in the dark winter nights.

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As he sat with his cigarette smouldering beside him in a little brazen pan, the night breeze brought the heavy scent of orange blossoms, for it was spring, and all the gardens of the sanctuary each had its orange grove. Never had they smelt sweeter, and never had the croaking of the frogs seemed more melodious, or the cricket's chirp more soothing to the soul.

A death's-head moth whirred through the tent, poising itself, just as a humming-bird hangs stationary probing the petals of a flower. The gentle murmur of its wings brought back the Consul's mind from its excursus in the regions of reality, or unreality, for all is one according to the point of view.

"Sherif," he said, "what you have asked me I will answer to the best of my ability.

"Man's destiny is so precarious that neither your law nor our own appear to me to influence it, or at the best but slightly.

"One of your learned Talebs, or our men of science, as they call themselves, with the due modesty of conscious worth, is passing down a street, and from a house-top slips a tile and falls upon his head. There he lies huddled up, an ugly bundle of old clothes, inert and

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shapeless, whilst his immortal soul leaves his poor mortal body, without which all its divinity is incomplete; then perhaps after an hour comes back again, and the man staggering to his feet begins to talk about God's attributes, or about carrying a line of railroad along a precipice."

The Sherif, who had been listening with the respect that every well-bred Arab gives to the man who has possession of the word, said, "It was so written. The man could not have died or never could have come to life again had it not been Allah's will."

His friend smiled grimly and rejoined, "That is so; but as Allah never manifests his will, except in action, just as we act towards a swarm of ants, annihilating some and sparing others as we pass, it does not matter very much what Allah thinks about, as it regards ourselves."

"When I was young," slowly said the Sherif, "whilst in the slave trade far away beyond the desert, I met the pagan tribes.

"They had no God . . . like Christians. . . . Pardon me, I know you know our phrase: nothing but images of wood.

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“ Those infidels, who, by the way, were just as apt at a good bargain as if their fathers all had bowed themselves in Christian temple or in mosque, when they received no answer to their prayers, would pull their accursed images down from their shrines, paint them jet black, and hang them from a nail.

“ Heathens they were, ignorant even of the name of God, finding their heaven and their hell here upon earth, just like the animals, but . . . sometimes I have thought not quite bereft of reason, for they had not the difficulties you have about the will of Allah and the way in which he works.

“ They made their gods themselves, just as we do,” and as he spoke he lowered his voice and peered out of the tent door ; “ but wiser than ourselves they kept a tight hand on them, and made their will, as far as possible, coincide with their own.

“ It is the hour of prayer. . . .

“ How pleasantly the time passes away conversing with one’s friends ” ; and as he spoke he stood erect, turning towards Mecca, as mechanically as the needle turns towards the pole.

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His whole appearance altered and his mean presence suffered a subtle change. With eyes fixed upon space, and hands uplifted, he testified to the existence of the one God, the Compassionate, the Merciful, the Bounteous, the Generous One, who alone giveth victory.

Then, sinking down, he laid his forehead on the ground, bringing his palms together. Three times he bowed himself, and then rising again upon his feet recited the confession of his faith.

The instant he had done he sat him down again; but gravely and with the air of one who has performed an action, half courteous, half obligatory, but refreshing to the soul.

The Consul, who well knew his ways, and knew that probably he seldom prayed at home, and that the prayers he had just seen most likely were a sort of affirmation of his neutral attitude before a stranger, yet was interested.

Then, when the conversation was renewed, he said to him, "Prayer seems to me, Sherif, to be the one great difference between the animals and man.

"As to the rest, we live and die, drink, eat, and propagate our species, just as they do;

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but no one ever heard of any animal who had addressed himself to God."

A smile flitted across the pock-marked features of the descendant of the Prophet, and looking gravely at his friend,—

"Consul," he said, "Allah to you has given many things. He has endowed you with your fertile brains, that have searched into forces which had remained unknown in nature since the sons of Adam first trod the surface of the earth. All that you touch you turn to gold, and as our saying goes, 'Gold builds a bridge across the sea.'

"Ships, aeroplanes, cannons of monstrous size, and little instruments by which you see minutest specks as if they were great rocks; all these you have and yet you doubt His power.

"To us, the Arabs, we who came from the lands of fire in the Hejaz and Hadramut. We who for centuries have remained unchanged, driving our camels as our fathers drove them, eating and drinking as our fathers ate and drank, and living face to face with God. . . . Consu', you should not smile, for do we not live closer to Him than you do, under the stars

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at night, out in the sun by day, our lives almost as simple as the lives of animals? To us He has vouchsafed gifts that He either has withheld from you, or that you have neglected in your pride.

“ Thus we still keep our faith. . . . Faith in the God who set the planets in their courses, bridled the tides, and caused the palm to grow beside the river so that the traveller may rest beneath its shade, and resting, praise His name.

“ You ask me, who ever heard of any animal that addressed himself to God. He in His infinite power . . . be sure of it . . . is He not merciful and compassionate, wonderful in His ways, harder to follow than the track that a gazelle leaves in the desert sands; it cannot be that He could have denied them access to His ear?

“ Did not the lizard, Consul . . ., Hamed el Angri, the runner, the man who never can rest long in any place, but must be ever tightening his belt and pulling up his slippers at the heel to make ready for the road . . ., did he not tell you of El Hokaitsallah, the little lizard who, being late upon the day when

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Allah took away speech from all the animals, ran on the beam in the great mosque at Mecca, and dumbly scratched his prayer ? ”

The Consul nodded. “ Hamed el Angri,” he said, “ no doubt is still upon the road, by whose side he will die one day of hunger or of thirst. . . . Yes ; he told me of it, and I wrote it in a book. . . . ”

“ Write this, then,” the Sherif went on, “ Allah in his compassion, and in case the animals, bereft of speech, that is in Arabic, for each has his own tongue, should not be certain of the direction of the Kiblah, has given the power to a poor insect which we call El Masgad to pray for all of them. With its head turned to Mecca, as certainly as if he had the needle of the mariners, he prays at El Magreb.

“ All day he sits erect and watches for his prey. At eventide, just at the hour of El Magreb, when from the ‘ alminares ’ of the Mosques the muezzin calls upon the faithful for their prayers, he adds his testimony.

“ Consu’, Allah rejects no prayer, however humble, and that the little creature knows. He knows that Allah does not answer every prayer ;

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but yet the prayer remains ; it is not blotted out, and perhaps some day it may fructify, for it is written in the book.

“ Therefore El Masgad prays each night for all the animals, yet being but a little thing and simple, it has not strength to testify at all the hours laid down in Mecca by our Lord Mohammed, he of the even teeth, the curling hair, and the grave smile, that never left his face after he had communed with Allah in the cave.”

The Consul dropped his smoked-out cigarette, and, stretching over to his friend, held out his hand to him.

“ Sherif,” he said, “ maybe El Masgad prays for you and me, as well as for its kind ? ”

The answer came : “ Consu’, doubt not ; it is a little animal of God, . . . we too are in His hand. . . . ”

XIV

FEAST DAY IN SANTA MARIA MAYOR

THE great Capilla, the largest in the Jesuit Reductions of Paraguay, was built round a huge square, almost a quarter of a mile across.

Upon three sides ran the low, continuous line of houses, like a "row" in a Scotch mining village or a phalanstery designed by Prudhon or St. Simon in their treatises; but by the grace of a kind providence never carried out, either in bricks or stone.

Each dwelling-place was of the same design and size as all the rest. Rough tiles made in the Jesuit times, but now weathered and broken, showing the rafters tied with raw hide in many places, formed the long roof, that looked a little like the pent-house of a tennis court.

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A deep verandah ran in front, stretching from one end to the other of the square, supported on great balks of wood, which, after more than two hundred years and the assaults of weather and the all-devouring ants, still showed the adze marks where they had been dressed. The timber was so hard that you could scarcely drive a nail into it, despite the flight of time since it was first set up. Rings fixed about six feet from the ground were screwed into the pillars of the verandah, before every door, to fasten horses to, exactly as they are in an old Spanish town.

Against the wall of almost every house, just by the door, was set a chair or two of heavy wood, with the seat formed by strips of hide, on which the hair had formerly been left, but long ago rubbed off by use, or eaten by the ants.

The owner of the house sat with the back of the strong chair tilted against the wall, dressed in a loose and pleated shirt, with a high turned-down collar open at the throat, and spotless white duck trousers, that looked the whiter by their contrast with his brown, naked feet.

His home-made palm-tree hat was placed

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upon the ground beside him, and his cloak of coarse red baize was thrown back from his shoulders, as he sat smoking a cigarette rolled in a maize leaf, for in the Jesuit capillas only women smoked cigars.

At every angle of the square a sandy trail led out, either to the river or the woods, the little patches planted with mandioca, or to the maze of paths that, like the points outside a junction, eventually joined in one main trail, that ran from Itapua on the Paraná, up to Asuncion.

The church, built of wood cut in the neighbouring forest, had two tall towers, and followed in its plan the pattern of all the churches in the New World built by the Jesuits, from California down to the smallest mission in the south. It filled the fourth side of the square, and on each side of it there rose two feathery palms, known as the tallest in the Missions, which served as landmarks for travellers coming to the place, if they had missed their road. So large and well-proportioned was the church, it seemed impossible that it had been constructed solely by the Indians themselves, under the direction of the missionaries.

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The overhanging porch and flight of steps that ran down to the grassy sward in the middle of the town gave it an air as of a cathedral reared to nature in the wilds, for the thick jungle flowed up behind it and almost touched its walls.

Bells of great size, either cast upon the spot or brought at vast expense from Spain, hung in the towers. On this, the feast day of the Blessed Virgin, the special patron of the settlement, they jangled ceaselessly, the Indians taking turns to haul upon the dried lianas that served instead of ropes. Though they pulled vigorously, the bells sounded a little muffled, as if they strove in vain against the vigorous nature that rendered any work of man puny and insignificant in the Paraguayan wilds.

Inside, the fane was dark, the images of saints were dusty, their paint was cracked, their gilding tarnished, making them look a little like the figures in a New Zealand pah, as they loomed through the darkness of the aisle. On the neglected altar, for at that time priests were a rarity in the Reductions, the Indians had placed great bunches of red flowers, and now and then a humming-bird flitted in through

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the glassless windows and hung poised above them; then darted out again, with a soft, whirring sound. Over the whole capilla, in which at one time several thousand Indians had lived, but now reduced to seventy or eighty at the most, there hung an air of desolation. It seemed as if man, in his long protracted struggle with the forces of the woods, had been defeated, and had accepted his defeat, content to vegetate, forgotten by the world, in the vast sea of green.

On this particular day, the annual festival of the Blessed Virgin, there was an air of animation, for from far and near, from Jesuit capilla, from straw-thatched huts lost in the clearings of the primeval forest, from the few cattle ranches that then existed, and from the little town of Itapua, fifty miles away, the scanty population had turned out to attend the festival.

Upon the forest tracks, from earliest dawn, long lines of white-clad women, barefooted, with their black hair cut square across the forehead and hanging down their backs, had marched as silently as ghosts. All of them smoked great, green cigars, and as they

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marched along, their leader carrying a torch, till the sun rose and jaguars went back to their lairs, they never talked ; but if a woman in the rear of the long line wished to converse with any comrade in the front she trotted forward till she reached her friend and whispered in her ear. When they arrived at the crossing of the little river they bathed, or, at the least, washed carefully, and gathering a bunch of flowers, stuck them into their hair. They crossed the stream, and on arriving at the plaza they set the baskets, which they had carried on their heads, upon the ground, and sitting down beside them on the grass, spread out their merchandise. Oranges and bread, called "chipa," made from mandioca flour and cheese, with vegetables and various homely sweetmeats, ground nuts, rolls of sugar done up in plaintain leaves, and known as "rapadura," were the chief staples of their trade. Those who had asses let them loose to feed ; and if upon the forest trails the women had been silent, once in the safety of the town no flight of parrots in a maize field could have chattered louder than they did as they sat waiting by their wares. Soon the square filled, and men arriv-

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ing tied their horses in the shade, slackening their broad hide girths, and piling up before them heaps of the leaves of the palm called "Pindó" in Guarani, till they were cool enough to eat their corn. Bands of boys, for in those days most of the men had been killed off in the past war, came trooping in, accompanied by crowds of women and of girls, who carried all their belongings, for there were thirteen women to a man, and the youngest boy was at a premium amongst the Indian women, who in the villages, where hardly any men were left, fought for male stragglers like unchained tigresses. A few old men came riding in on some of the few native horses left, for almost all the active, little, undersized breed of Paraguay had been exhausted in the war. They, too, had bands of women trotting by their sides, all of them anxious to unsaddle, to take the horses down to bathe, or to perform any small office that the men required of them. All of them smoked continuously, and each of them was ready with a fresh cigarette as soon as the old man or boy whom they accompanied finished the stump he held between his lips. The women

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all were dressed in the long Indian shirt called a "tupoi," cut rather low upon the breast, and edged with coarse black cotton lace, which every Paraguayan woman wore. Their hair was as black as a crow's back, and quite as shiny, and their white teeth so strong that they could tear the ears of corn out of a maize cob like a horse munching at his corn.

Then a few Correntino gauchos next appeared, dressed in their national costume of loose black merino trousers, stuffed into long boots, whose fronts were all embroidered in red silk. Their silver spurs, whose rowels were as large as saucers, just dangled off their heels, only retained in place by a flat chain, that met upon the instep, clasped with a lion's head. Long hair and brown vicuña ponchos, soft black felt hats, and red silk handkerchiefs tied loosely round their necks marked them as strangers, though they spoke Guarani.

They sat upon their silver-mounted saddles, with their toes resting in their bell-shaped stirrups, swaying so easily with every movement that the word riding somehow or other seemed inapplicable to men who, like the centaurs, formed one body with the horse.

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As they drew near the plaza they raised their hands and touched their horses with the spur, and, rushing like a whirlwind right to the middle of the square, drew up so suddenly that their horses seemed to have turned to statues for a moment, and then at a slow trot, that made their silver trappings jingle as they went, slowly rode off into the shade.

The plaza filled up imperceptibly, and the short grass was covered by a white-clad throng of Indians. The heat increased, and all the time the bells rang out, pulled vigorously by relays of Indians, and at a given signal the people turned and trooped towards the church, all carrying flowers in their hands.

As there was no one to sing Mass, and as the organ long had been neglected, the congregation listened to some prayers, read from a book of Hours by an old Indian, who pronounced the Latin, of which most likely he did not understand a word, as if it had been Guarani. They sang "Las Flores á Maria" all in unison, but keeping such good time that at a little distance from the church it sounded like waves breaking on a beach after a summer storm.

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In the neglected church, where no priest ministered or clergy prayed, where all the stoops of holy water had for years been dry, and where the Mass had been well-nigh forgotten as a whole, the spirit lingered, and it quickeneth upon that feast day in the Paraguayan missions, that simple congregation were as uplifted by it as if the sacrifice had duly been fulfilled with candles, incense, and the pomp and ceremony of Holy Mother Church upon the Seven Hills.

As every one except the Correntinos went barefooted, the exit of the congregation made no noise except the sound of naked feet, slapping a little on the wooden steps, and so the people silently once again filled the plaza, where a high wooden arch had been erected in the middle, for the sport of running at the ring.

The vegetable sellers had now removed from the middle of the square, taking all their wares under the long verandah, and several pedlars had set up their booths and retailed cheap European trifles such as no one in the world but a Paraguayan Indian could possibly require. Razors that would not cut, and little looking-glasses in pewter frames made in

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Thuringia, cheap clocks that human ingenuity was powerless to repair when they had run their course of six months' intermittent ticking, and gaudy pictures representing saints who had ascended to the empyrean, as it appeared, with the clothes that they had worn in life, and all bald-headed, as befits a saint, were set out side by side with handkerchiefs of the best China silk. Sales were concluded after long-continued chaffering—that higgling of the market dear to old-time economists, for no one would have bought the smallest article, even below cost price, had it been offered to him at the price the seller originally asked.

Enrique Clerici, from Itapua, had transported all his pulperia bodily for the occasion of the feast. It had not wanted more than a small wagon to contain his stock-in-trade. Two or three dozen bottles of square-faced gin of the Anchor brand, a dozen of heady red wine from Catalonia, a pile of sardine boxes, sweet biscuits, raisins from Malaga, esparto baskets full of figs, and sundry pecks of apricots dried in the sun and cut into the shape of ears, and hence called "orejones," completed all his store. He himself, tall and

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sunburnt, stood dressed in riding-boots and a broad hat, with his revolver in his belt, beside a pile of empty bottles, which he had always ready, to hurl at customers if there should be any attempt either at cheating or to rush his wares. He spoke the curious lingo, half-Spanish, half-Italian, that so many of his countrymen use in the River Plate; and all his conversation ran upon Garibaldi, with whom he had campaigned in youth, upon Italia Irredenta, and on the time when anarchy should sanctify mankind by blood, as he said, and bring about the reign of universal brotherhood.

He did a roaring trade, despite the competition of a native Paraguayan, who had brought three demi-johns of Caña, for men prefer the imported article the whole world over, though it is vile, to native manufactures, even when cheap and good.

Just about twelve o'clock, when the sun almost burned a hole into one's head, the band got ready in the church porch, playing upon old instruments, some of which may have survived from Jesuit times, or, at the least, been copied in the place, as the originals decayed.

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Sackbuts and psalteries and shawms were there, with serpents, gigantic clarionets, and curiously twisted oboes, and drums, whose canvas all hung slack and gave a muffled sound when they were beaten, and little fifes, ear-piercing and devilish, were represented in that band. It banged and crashed "La Palomita," that tune of evil-sounding omen, for to its strains prisoners were always ushered out to execution in the times of Lopez, and as it played the players slowly walked down the steps.

Behind them followed the alcalde, an aged Indian, dressed in long cotton drawers, that at the knees were split into a fringe that hung down to his ankles, a spotless shirt much pleated, and a red cloak of fine merino cloth. In his right hand he carried a long cane with a silver head—his badge of office. Walking up to the door of his own house, by which was set a table covered with glasses and with home-made cakes, he gave the signal for the running at the ring.

The Correntino gauchos, two or three Paraguayans, and a German married to a Paraguayan wife, were all who entered for the

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sport. The band struck up, and a young Paraguayan started the first course. Gripping his stirrups tightly between his naked toes, and seated on an old "recao," surmounted by a sheepskin, he spurred his horse, a wall-eyed skewbald, with his great iron spurs, tied to his bare insteps with thin strips of hide. The skewbald, only half-tamed, reared once or twice and bounded off, switching its ragged tail, which had been half-eaten off by cows. The people yelled, a "mosqueador!"—that is, a "fly-flapper," a grave fault in a horse in the eyes of Spanish Americans—as the Paraguayan steered the skewbald with the reins held high in his left hand, carrying the other just above the level of his eyes, armed with a piece of cane about a foot in length.

As he approached the arch, in which the ring dangled from a string, his horse, either frightened by the shouting of the crowd or by the arch itself, swerved and plunged violently, carrying its rider through the thickest of the people, who separated like a flock of sheep when a dog runs through it, cursing him volubly. The German came the next, dressed in his Sunday clothes, a slop-made suit of shoddy

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cloth, riding a horse that all his spurring could not get into full speed. The rider's round, fair face was burned a brick-dust colour, and as he spurred and plied his whip, made out of solid tapir hide, the sweat ran down in streams upon his coat. So intent was he on flogging, that as he neared the ring he dropped his piece of cane, and his horse, stopping suddenly just underneath the arch, would have unseated him had he not clasped it round the neck. Shouts of delight greeted this feat of horsemanship, and one tall Correntino, taking his cigarette out of his mouth, said to his fellow sitting next to him upon his horse, "The very animals themselves despise the gringos. See how that little white-nosed brute that he was riding knew that he was a 'maturango,' and nearly had him off."

Next came Hijinio Rojas, a Paraguayan of the better classes, sallow and Indian looking, dressed in clothes bought in Asuncion, his trousers tucked into his riding-boots. His small black hat, with the brim flattened up against his head by the wind caused by the fury of the gallop of his active little roan with four white feet, was kept upon his head by a

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black ribbon knotted underneath his chin. As he neared the arch his horse stepped double several times and fly-jumped; but that did not disturb him in the least, and, aiming well he touched the ring, making it fly into the air. A shout went up, partly in Spanish, partly in Guarani, from the assembled people, and Rojas, reining in his horse, stopped him in a few bounds, so sharply, that his unshod feet cut up the turf of the green plaza as a skate cuts the ice. He turned and trotted gently to the arch, and then, putting his horse to its top speed, stopped it again beside the other riders, amid the "Vivas" of the crowd. Then came the turn of the four Correntinos, who rode good horses from their native province, had silver horse-gear and huge silver spurs, that dangled from their heels. They were all gauchos, born, as the saying goes, "amongst the animals." A dun with fiery eyes and a black stripe right down his back, and with black markings on both hocks, a chestnut skewbald, a "doradillo," and a horse of that strange mealy bay with a fern-coloured muzzle, that the gauchos call a "Pangaré," carried them just as if their will and that of those who

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rode them were identical. Without a signal, visible at least to any but themselves, their horses started at full speed, reaching occasionally at the bit, then dropping it again and bridling so easy that one could ride them with a thread drawn from a spider's web. Their riders sat up easily, not riding as a European rides, with his eyes fixed upon each movement of his horse, but, as it were, divining them as soon as they were made. Each of them took the ring, and all of them checked their horses, as it were, by their volition, rather than the bit, making the silver horse-gear rattle and their great silver spurs jingle upon their feet. Each waited for the other at the far side of the arch, and then turning in a line they started with a shout, and as they passed right through the middle of the square at a wild gallop, they swung down sideways from their saddles and dragged their hands upon the ground. Swinging up, apparently without an effort, back into their seats, when they arrived at the point from where they had first started, they reined up suddenly, making their horses plunge and rear, and then by a light signal on the reins stand quietly in line, tossing the foam

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into the air. Hijinio Rojas and the four centaurs all received a prize, and the alcalde, pouring out wineglasses full of gin, handed them to the riders, who, with a compliment or two as to the order of their drinking, emptied them solemnly.

No other runners having come forward to compete, for in those days horses were scarce throughout the Paraguayan Missions, the sports were over, and the perspiring crowd went off to breakfast at tables spread under the long verandahs, and silence fell upon the square.

The long, hot hours during the middle of the day were passed in sleeping. Some lay face downwards in the shade. Others swung in white cotton hammocks, keeping them in perpetual motion, till they fell asleep, by pushing with a naked toe upon the ground. At last the sun, the enemy, as the Arabs call him, slowly declined, and white-robed women, with their "tupois" slipping half off their necks, began to come out into the verandahs, slack and perspiring after the midday struggle with the heat.

Then bands of girls sauntered down to the

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river, from whence soon came the sound of merry laughter as they splashed about and bathed.

The Correntinos rode down to a pool and washed their horses, throwing the water on them with their two hands, as the animals stood nervously shrinking from each splash, until they were quite wet through and running down, when they stood quietly, with their tails tucked in between their legs.

Night came on, as it does in those latitudes, no twilight intervening, and from the rows of houses came the faint lights of wicks burning in bowls of grease, whilst from beneath the orange trees was heard the tinkling of guitars.

Enormous bats soared about noiselessly, and white-dressed couples lingered about the corners of the streets, and men stood talking, pressed closely up against the wooden gratings of the windows, to women hidden inside the room. The air was heavy with the languorous murmur of the tropic night, and gradually the lights one by one were extinguished, and the tinkling of the guitars was stilled. The moon came out, serene and glorious, showing

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each stone upon the sandy trails as clearly as at midday. Saddling their horses, the four Correntinos silently struck the trail to Itapua, and bands of women moved off along the forest tracks towards their homes, walking in Indian file. Hijinio Rojas, who had saddled up to put the Correntinos on the right road, emerged into the moonlit plaza, his shadow outlined so sharply on the grass it seemed it had been drawn, and then, entering a side street, disappeared into the night. The shrill neighing of his horse appeared as if it bade farewell to its companions, now far away upon the Itapua trail. Noises that rise at night from forests in the tropics sound mysteriously, deep in the woods. It seemed as if a population silent by day was active and on foot, and from the underwood a thick white mist arose, shrouding the sleeping town.

Little by little, just as a rising tide covers a reef of rocks, it submerged everything in its white, clinging folds. The houses disappeared, leaving the plaza seething like a lake, and then the church was swallowed up, the towers struggling, as it were, a little, just as a wreath of seaweed on a rock appears to fight against

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the tide. Then they too disappeared, and the conquering mist enveloped everything. All that was left above the sea of billowing white were the two topmost tufts of the tall, feathery palms.

XV

BOPICUÁ

THE great corral at Bopicuá was full of horses. Greys, browns, bays, blacks, duns, chestnuts, roans (both blue and red), skewbalds and piebalds, with claybanks, calicos, buckskins, and a hundred shades and markings, unknown in Europe, but each with its proper name in Uruguay and Argentina, jostled each other, forming a kaleidoscopic mass.

A thick dust rose from the corral and hung above their heads. Sometimes the horses stood all huddled up, gazing with wide distended eyes and nostrils towards a group of men that lounged about the gate. At other times that panic fear that seizes upon horses when they are crushed together in large numbers, set them a-galloping. Through the dust-cloud their footfalls sounded muffled,

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and they themselves appeared like phantoms in a mist. When they had circled round a little they stopped, and those outside the throng, craning their heads down nearly to the ground, snorted, and then ran back, arching their necks and carrying their tails like flags. Outside the great corral was set Parodi's camp, below some China trees, and formed of corrugated iron and hides, stuck on short uprights, so that the hides and iron almost came down upon the ground, in gipsy fashion. Upon the branches of the trees were hung saddles, bridles, halters, hobbles, lazos, and boleadoras, and underneath were spread out saddle-cloths to dry. Pieces of meat swung from the low gables of the hut, and under the low eaves was placed a "catre," the canvas scissor-bedstead of Spain and of her colonies in the New World. Upon the catre was a heap of ponchos, airing in the sun, their bright and startling colours looking almost dingy in the fierce light of a March afternoon in Uruguay. Close to the camp stood several bullock-carts, their poles supported on a crutch, and their reed-covered tilts giving them an air of huts on wheels.

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Men sat about on bullocks' skulls, around a smouldering fire, whilst the "maté" circulated round from man to man, after the fashion of a loving-cup. Parodi, the stiff-jointed son of Italian parents, a gaucho as to clothes and speech, but still half-European in his lack of comprehension of the ways of a wild horse. Arena, the capataz from Entre-Rios, thin, slight, and nervous, a man who had, as he said, in his youth known how to read and even guide the pen; but now "things of this world had turned him quite unlettered, and made him more familiar with the lazo and the spurs." The mulatto Pablo Suarez, active and cat-like, a great race-rider and horse-tamer, short and deep-chested, with eyes like those of a black cat, and toes, prehensile as a monkey's, that clutched the stirrup when a wild colt began to buck, so that it could not touch its flanks. They and Miguel Paralelo, tall, dark, and handsome, the owner of some property, but drawn by the excitement of a cowboy's life to work for wages, so that he could enjoy the risk of venturing his neck each day on a "baguál,"¹ with other peons as

¹ Wild horse.

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El Correntino and Venancio Baez, were grouped around the fire. With them were seated Martin el Madrileño, a Spanish horse-coper, who had experienced the charm of gaucho life, together with Silvestre Ayres, a Brazilian, slight and olive-coloured, well-educated, but better known as a dead pistol-shot than as man of books. They waited for their turn at maté, or ate great chunks of meat from a roast cooked upon a spit, over a fire of bones. Most of the men were tall and sinewy, with that air of taciturnity and self-equilibrium that their isolated lives and Indian blood so often stamp upon the faces of those centaurs of the plains. The camp, set on a little hill, dominated the country for miles on every side. Just underneath it, horses and more horses grazed. Towards the west it stretched out to the woods that fringe the Uruguay, which, with its countless islands, flowed between great tracks of forest, and formed the frontier with the Argentine.

Between the camp and the corrals smouldered a fire of bones and ñandubay, and by it, leaning up against a rail, were set the branding-irons that had turned the horses in the corral

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into the property of the British Government. All round the herd enclosed, ran horses neighing, seeking their companions, who were to graze no more at Bopicuá, but be sent off by train and ship to the battlefields of Europe to die and suffer, for they knew not what, leaving their pastures and their innocent comradeship with one another till the judgment day. Then, I am sure, for God must have some human feeling after all, things will be explained to them, light come into their semi-darkness, and they will feed in prairies where the grass fades not, and springs are never dry, freed from the saddle, and with no cruel spur to urge them on they know not where or why.

For weeks we had been choosing out the doomed five hundred. Riding, inspecting, and examining from dawn till evening, till it appeared that not a single equine imperfection could have escaped our eyes. The gauchos, who all think that they alone know anything about a horse, were all struck dumb with sheer amazement. It seemed to them astonishing to take such pains to select horses that for the most part would be killed in a few months.

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“These men,” they said, “certainly all are doctors at the job. They know even the least defect, can tell what a horse thinks about and why. Still, none of them can ride a horse if he but shakes his ears. In their bag surely there is a cat shut up of some kind or another. If not, why do they bother so much in the matter, when all that is required is something that can carry one into the thickest of the fight?”

The sun began to slant a little, and we had still three leagues to drive the horses to the pasture where they had to pass the night for the last time in freedom, before they were entrained. Our horses stood outside of the corral, tied to the posts, some saddled with the “recado,”¹ its heads adorned with silver, some with the English saddle, that out of England has such a strange, unserviceable look, much like a saucepan on a horse’s back. Just as we were about to mount, a man appeared, driving a point of horses, which, he said, “to leave would be a crime against the sacrament.” “These are all pingos,” he exclaimed, “fit for the saddle of the Lord on High, all of them

¹ Argentine saddle.

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are bitted in the Brazilian style, can turn upon a spread-out saddle-cloth, and all of them can gallop round a bullock's head upon the ground, so that the rider can keep his hand upon it all the time." The speaker by his accent was a Brazilian. His face was olive-coloured, his hair had the suspicion of a kink. His horse, a cream-colour, with black tail and mane, was evidently only half-tamed, and snorted loudly as it bounded here and there, making its silver harness jingle and the rider's poncho flutter in the air. Although time pressed, the man's address was so persuasive, his appearance so much in character with his great silver spurs just hanging from his heel, his jacket turned up underneath his elbow by the handle of his knife, and, to speak truth, the horses looked so good and in such high condition that we determined to examine them, and told their owner to drive them into a corral.

Once again we commenced the work that we had done so many times of mounting and examining. Once more we fought, trying to explain the mysteries of red tape to unsophisticated minds, and once again our "domadores" sprang lightly, barebacked, upon the horses

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they had never seen before, with varying results. Some of the Brazilian's horses bucked like antelopes, El Correntino and the others of our men sitting them barebacked as easily as an ordinary man rides over a small fence. To all our queries why they did not saddle up we got one answer, "To ride with the recado is but a pastime only fit for boys." So they went on, pulling the horses up in three short bounds, nostrils aflame and tails and manes tossed wildly in the air, only a yard or two from the corral. Then, slipping off, gave their opinion that the particular "bayo," "zaino," or "gateao" was just the thing to mount a lancer on, and that the speaker thought he could account for a good tale of Boches if he were over there in the Great War. This same great war, which they called "barbarous," taking a secret pleasure in the fact that it showed Europeans not a whit more civilised than they themselves, appeared to them something in the way of a great pastime from which they were debarred.

Most of them, when they sold a horse, looked at him and remarked, "Pobrecito, you will go to the Great War," just as a man looks

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at his son who is about to go, with feelings of mixed admiration and regret.

After we had examined all the Brazilian's "Tropilla" so carefully that he said, "By Satan's death, your graces know far more about my horses than I myself, and all I wonder is that you do not ask me if all of them have not complied with all the duties of the Church," we found that about twenty of them were fit for the Great War. Calling upon Parodi and the capataz of Bopicuá, who all the time had remained seated round the smouldering fire and drinking maté, to prepare the branding-irons, the peons led them off, our head man calling out "Artilleria" or "Caballeria," according to their size. After the branding, either on the hip for cavalry and on the neck for the artillery, a peon cut their manes off, making them as ugly as a mule, as their late owner said, and we were once more ready for the road, after the payment had been made. This took a little time, either because the Brazilian could not count, or perhaps because of his great caution, for he would not take payment except horse by horse. So, driving out the horses one by one,

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we placed a roll of dollars in his hand as each one passed the gate. Even then each roll of dollars had to be counted separately, for time is what men have the most at their disposal in places such as Bopicuá.

Two hours of sunset still remained, with three long leagues to cover, for in those latitudes there is no twilight, night succeeding day, just as films follow one another in a cinematograph. At last it all was over, and we were free to mount. Such sort of drives are of the nature of a sport in South America, and so the Brazilian drove off the horses that we had rejected, half a mile away, leaving them with a negro boy to herd, remarking that the rejected were as good or better than those that we had bought, and after cinching up his horse, prepared to ride with us. Before we started, a young man rode up, dressed like an exaggerated gaucho, in loose black trousers, poncho, and a "golilla"¹ round his neck, a lazo hanging from the saddle, a pair of boleadoras peeping beneath his "cojinillo,"² and a long silver knife stuck in his belt. It seemed

¹ *Golilla*, which originally meant a ruff, is now used for a handkerchief round the neck.

² *Cojinillo*, part of the recado.

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he was the son of an estanciero who was studying law in Buenos Aires, but had returned for his vacation, and hearing of our drive had come to ride with us and help us in our task. No one on such occasions is to be despised, so, thanking him for his good intentions, to which he answered that he was a "partizan of the Allies, lover of liberty and truth, and was well on in all his studies, especially in International Law," we mounted, the gauchos floating almost imperceptibly, without an effort, to their seats, the European with that air of escalading a ship's side that differentiates us from man less civilised.

During the operations with the Brazilian, the horses had been let out of the corral to feed, and now were being held back *en pastoreo*, as it is called in Uruguay, that is to say, watched at a little distance by mounted men. Nothing remained but to drive out of the corral the horses bought from the Brazilian, and let them join the larger herd. Out they came like a string of wild geese, neighing and looking round, and then instinctively made towards the others that were feeding, and were swallowed up amongst them. Slowly we rode

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towards the herd, sending on several well-mounted men upon its flanks, and with precaution—for of all living animals tame horses most easily take fright upon the march and separate—we got them into motion, on a well-marked trail that led towards the gate of Bopicuá.

At first they moved a little sullenly, and as if surprised. Then the contagion of emotion that spreads so rapidly amongst animals upon the march seemed to inspire them, and the whole herd broke into a light trot. That is the moment that a stampede may happen, and accordingly we pulled our horses to a walk, whilst the men riding on the flanks forged slowly to the front, ready for anything that might occur. Gradually the trot slowed down, and we saw as it were a sea of manes and tails in front of us, emerging from a cloud of dust, from which shrill neighings and loud snortings rose. They reached a hollow, in which were several pools, and stopped to drink, all crowding into the shallow water, where they stood pawing up the mud and drinking greedily. Time pressed, and as we knew that there was water in the pasture where they were to sleep, we

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drove them back upon the trail, the water dripping from their muzzles and their tails, and the black mud clinging to the hair upon their fetlocks, and in drops upon their backs. Again they broke into a trot, but this time, as they had got into control, we did not check them, for there was still a mile to reach the gate.

Passing some smaller mud-holes, the body of a horse lay near to one of them, horribly swollen, and with its stiff legs hoisted a little in the air by the distension of its flanks. The passing horses edged away from it in terror, and a young roan snorted and darted like an arrow from the herd. Quick as was the dart he made, quicker still El Correntino wheeled his horse on its hind legs and rushed to turn him back. With his whip whirling round his head he rode to head the truant, who, with tail floating in the air, had got a start of him of about fifty yards. We pressed instinctively upon the horses; but not so closely as to frighten them, though still enough to be able to stop another of them from cutting out. The Correntino on a half-tamed grey, which he rode with a raw-hide thong bound round

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its lower jaw, for it was still unbitted, swaying with every movement in his saddle, which he hardly seemed to grip, so perfect was his balance, rode at a slight angle to the runaway and gained at every stride. His hat blew back and kept in place by a black ribbon underneath his chin, framed his head like an aureole. The red silk handkerchief tied loosely round his neck fluttered beneath it, and as he dashed along, his lazo coiled upon his horse's croup, rising and falling with each bound, his eyes fixed on the flying roan, he might have served a sculptor as the model for a centaur, so much did he and the wild colt he rode seem indivisible.

In a few seconds, which to us seemed minutes, for we feared the infection might have spread to the whole "caballada," the Correntino headed and turned the roan, who came back at three-quarter speed, craning his neck out first to one side, then to the other, as if he still thought that a way lay open for escape.

By this time we had reached the gates of Bopicuá, and still seven miles lay between us and our camping-ground, with a fast-declining

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sun. As the horses passed the gate we counted them, an operation of some difficulty when time presses and the count is large. Nothing is easier than to miss animals, that is to say, for Europeans, however practised, but the lynx-eyed gauchos never are at fault. "Where is the little brown horse with a white face, and a bit broken out of his near fore-foot?" they will say, and ten to one that horse is missing, for what they do not know about the appearance of a horse would not fill many books. Only a drove road lay between Bopicuá and the great pasture, at whose far-away extremity the horses were to sleep. When the last animal had passed and the great gates swung to, the young law student rode up to my side, and, looking at the "great tropilla," as he called it, said, "*Morituri te salutant.* This is the last time they will feed in Bopicuá." We turned a moment, and the falling sun lit up the undulating plain, gilding the cottony tufts of the long grasses, falling upon the dark-green leaves of the low trees around Parodi's camp, glinting across the belt of wood that fringed the Uruguay, and striking full upon a white estancia house in

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Entre-Rios, making it appear quite close at hand, although four leagues away.

Two or three hundred yards from the great gateway stood a little native hut, as unsophisticated, but for a telephone, as were the gaucho's huts in Uruguay, as I remember them full thirty years ago. A wooden barrel on a sledge for bringing water had been left close to the door, at which the occupant sat drinking maté, tapping with a long knife upon his boot. Under a straw-thatched shelter stood a saddled horse, and a small boy upon a pony slowly drove up a flock of sheep. A blue, fine smoke that rose from a few smouldering logs and bones, blended so completely with the air that one was not quite sure if it was really smoke or the reflection of the distant Uruguay against the atmosphere.

Not far off lay the bones of a dead horse, with bits of hide adhering to them, shrivelled into mere parchment by the sun. All this I saw as in a camera-lucida, seated a little sideways on my horse, and thinking sadly that I, too, had looked my last on Bopicuá. It is not given to all men after a break of years to come back to the scenes of youth, and still

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find in them the same zest as of old. To return again to all the cares of life called civilised, with all its littlenesses, its newspapers all full of nothing, its sordid aims disguised under high-sounding nicknames, its hideous riches and its sordid poverty, its want of human sympathy, and, above all, its barbarous war brought on it by the folly of its rulers, was not just at that moment an alluring thought, as I felt the little "malacara"¹ that I rode twitching his bridle, striving to be off. When I had touched him with the spur he bounded forward and soon overtook the caballada, and the place which for so many months had been part of my life sank out of sight, just as an island in the Tropics fades from view as the ship leaves it, as it were, hull down.

When we had passed into the great enclosure of La Pileta, and still four or five miles remained to go, we pressed the caballada into a long trot, certain that the danger of a stampede was past. Wonderful and sad it was to ride behind so many horses, trampling knee-high through the wild grasses of the

¹ *Malacara*, literally Badface, is the name used for a white-faced horse. In old days in England such a horse was called Baldfaced.

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Camp, snorting and biting at each other, and all unconscious that they would never more career across the plains. Strange and affecting, too, to see how those who had known each other all kept together in the midst of the great herd, resenting all attempts of their companions to separate them:

A "tropilla"¹ that we had bought from a Frenchman called Leon, composed of five brown horses, had ranged itself around its bell mare, a fine chestnut, like a bodyguard. They fought off any of the other horses who came near her, and seemed to look at her both with affection and with pride.

Two little bright bay horses, with white legs and noses, that were brothers, and what in Uruguay are known as "seguidores," that is, one followed the other wherever it might go, ran on the outskirts of the herd. When either of them stopped to eat, its companion turned its head and neighed to it, when it came galloping up. Arena, our head man, riding beside me on a skewbald, looked at them, and, after dashing forward to turn a runaway, wheeled round his horse almost in

¹ Little troop.

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the air and stopped it in a bound, so suddenly that for an instant they stood poised like an equestrian statue, looked at the "seguidores," and remarked, "Patron, I hope one shell will kill them both in the Great War if they have got to die." I did not answer, except to curse the Boches with all the intensity the Spanish tongue commands. The young law-student added his testimony, and we rode on in silence.

A passing sleeve of locusts almost obscured the declining sun. Some flew against our faces, reminding me of the fight Cortes had with the Indians not far from Vera Cruz, which, Bernal Diaz says, was obstructed for a moment by a flight of locusts that came so thickly that many lost their lives by the neglect to raise their bucklers against what they thought were locusts, and in reality were arrows that the Indians shot. The effect was curious as the insects flew against the horses, some clinging to their manes, and others making them bob up and down their heads, just as a man does in a driving shower of hail. We reached a narrow causeway that formed the passage through a marsh. On it the horses

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crowded, making us hold our breath for fear that they would push each other off into the mud, which had no bottom, upon either side. When we emerged and cantered up a little hill, a lake lay at the bottom of it, and beyond it was a wood, close to a railway siding. The evening now was closing in, but there was still a good half-hour of light. As often happens in South America just before sundown, the wind dropped to a dead calm, and passing little clouds of locusts, feeling the night approach, dropped into the long grass just as a flying-fish drops into the waves, with a harsh whirring of their gauzy wings.

The horses smelt the water at the bottom of the hill, and the whole five hundred broke into a gallop, manes flying, tails raised high, and we, feeling somehow the gallop was the last, raced madly by their side until within a hundred yards or so of the great lake. They rushed into the water and all drank greedily, the setting sun falling upon their many-coloured backs, and giving the whole herd the look of a vast tulip field. We kept away so as to let them drink their fill, and then, leading our horses to the margin of the lake, dismounted,

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and, taking out their bits, let them drink, with the air of one accomplishing a rite, no matter if they raised their heads a dozen times and then began again.

Slowly Arena, El Correntino, Paralelo, Suarez, and the rest drove out the herd to pasture in the deep lush grass. The rest of us rode up some rising ground towards the wood. There we drew up, and looking back towards the plain on which the horses seemed to have dwindled to the size of sheep in the half-light, some one, I think it was Arena, or perhaps Pablo Suarez, spoke their elegy: "Eat well," he said; "there is no grass like that of La Pileta, to where you go across the sea. The grass in Europe all must smell of blood."

THE END



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