

HENTY GEORGE ALFRED

THE TREASURE OF THE
INCAS: A STORY OF
ADVENTURE IN PERU

George Henty

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Story of Adventure in Peru**

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CHAPTER I HOW IT CAME ABOUT

Two men were sitting in the smoking-room of a London club. The room was almost empty, and as they occupied arm-chairs in one corner of it, they were able to talk freely without fear of being overheard. One of them was a man of sixty, the other some five or six and twenty.

"I must do something," the younger man said, "for I have been kicking my heels about London since my ship was paid off two years ago. At first, of course, it didn't matter, for I have enough to live upon; but recently I have been fool enough to fall in love with a girl whose parents would never dream of allowing her to marry a half-pay lieutenant of the navy with no chance in the world of getting employed again, for I have no interest whatever."

"It is an awkward case certainly, Prendergast," the other said; "and upon my word, though I sympathize with you, I cannot blame Fortescue. He is not what you might call a genial man, but there is no doubt that he was a splendid lawyer and a wonderful worker. For ten years he earned more than any man at the bar. I know that he was twice offered the solicitor-generalship, but as he was making two or three times the official salary, he would not take it. I believe he would have gone on working till now had he not suddenly come in for a very fine estate, owing to the death, in the course of two or three years, of four men who stood between him and it. Besides, I fancy he got hints that in the general opinion of the bar he had had a wonderfully good innings, and it was about time that younger men had a share in it. What his savings were I do not know, but they must be very large. His three sons are all at the bar, and are rising men, so there was no occasion for him to go on piling up money for them. But, as I say, he has always had the reputation of being a hard man, and it is practically certain that he would never allow his daughter to marry a man whom he would regard as next door to a pauper. Now, what are you thinking of doing?"

"Well, sir, Miss Fortescue has agreed to wait for me for two years, and of course I am eager to do something, but the question is what? I can sail a ship, but even could I get the command of a merchantman, it would not improve my position in the eyes of the parents of the lady in question. Now, you have been knocking about all over the world, I do wish you would give me your advice. Where is there money to be got? I am equally ready to go to the North Pole or the Equator, to enter the service of an Indian prince, or to start in search of a treasure hidden by the old bucaners."

"You talk Spanish, don't you?"

"Yes; all my service has been in the Mediterranean. We were two years off the coast of Spain, and in and out of its ports, and as time hung heavily on our hands, I got up the language partly to amuse myself and partly to be able to talk fluently with my partners at a ball."

The elder man did not speak for a minute or two.

"You have not thought of South America?" he said at last.

"No, Mr. Barnett; I don't know that I have ever thought of one place more than another."

The other was again silent.

"I don't think you could do better anywhere," he said slowly. "It is a land with great possibilities; at any rate it is a land where you could be understood, and of course it would be folly to go anywhere without a knowledge of the language. I was, as you know, five years out there, and came home when the war broke out between Chili and the Spaniards. I have been more in Peru than in Chili, and as

Peru was still in the hands of the Spanish, it would have been impossible for me to go there again as long as the war lasted. Knocking about as I did, I heard a great deal from the natives (I mean the Indians). I gathered from them a number of their traditions, and I am convinced that they know of any number of gold mines that were formerly worked, but were blocked up when the Spaniards invaded the country, and have been kept secret ever since.

"The natives have never spoken on the subject at all to the Spaniards. If they had, they would have been flogged until they revealed all they knew—that is to say, they would have been flogged to death, for no tortures will wring from an Indian anything he knows about gold. They look upon that metal as the source of all the misfortunes that have fallen upon their race. With an Englishman whom they knew and trusted, and who, as they also knew, had no wish whatever to discover gold mines, they were a little less reticent. I never asked them any questions on a subject in which I had not a shadow of interest, but I certainly had some curiosity, not of a pecuniary kind, because the matter had always been a riddle as to the hiding-place of the Incas' treasures. And from what I learned I should say it is absolutely certain that a great portion of these escaped the search of their Spanish tyrants.

"Whether the men who were employed in the work all died without revealing the secret, or whether it had been trusted to a chosen few, I know not; but the natives believe that there are still a few among them to whom the secret has been passed down from father to son. Anyhow, all had heard vague traditions. Some said that part of the treasure was carried hundreds of miles inland and given over to a tribe of fierce savages, in a country into which no European can enter. Another tradition is that a portion of it was carried off by sea in a great canoe, which was never heard of again and was believed to have been lost. I am not for a moment supposing, Prendergast, that if you went out there you would have the most remote chance of discovering what the Spaniards, ever since they landed there, have been in vain trying to find, and I certainly should not think of recommending a mad-brained adventure, but undoubtedly there are many rich gold mines yet to be found. There are openings for trade, too; and I can give you introductions to merchants both in Chili and Peru. It is not a thing I should recommend to everyone, far from it; but if you want to combine adventure with a chance, however small, of making money, I don't know that you can do better than go to South America. You are fitted for no calling here; your income, counting your half-pay, would suffice to keep you out there, and a couple of years of such a life would do you no harm."

"It is just what I should like," the young man said enthusiastically; "though I don't know how I should set to work if I did find a mine."

"You would have to bring home specimens, with particulars of the width of the lode. Of course you would crush pieces up and wash them yourself, or get your Indian to wash them; that would give you an approximate idea of the percentage of gold. If it were rich, I could introduce you to men who would advance money for working it, giving you a share of the profits. They would send out a mining expert with you. He would verify your report, and then you would take up the concession. I don't know whether there have been any changes in the regulations, but there is no difficulty in learning how to proceed from one or other of the men to whom I will give you introductions. The thing would not be worth thinking of were it not that the man who always went with me as guide and muleteer is an Indian, and has, I am convinced, a knowledge of some of these places. He was with me all the time I was out there. I saved his life when a puma sprang upon him, and he more than once hinted that he could make me a rich man, but I had no inclination that way, my income being sufficient for all my wants. Still, on the chance that he is alive—and he was about thirty when he was with me fifteen years ago, so it is probable that he is still to the fore—I will give you a letter to him telling him that you are a dear friend of mine, and that I trust to him to do any service he can for you just as he would have done for myself. Had it not been for that I should never have mentioned the matter to you. These old mines are the dream of every Peruvian. They have been searching for them ever since the conquest of the country, and as they have failed, it is absurd to think that an Englishman would have the slightest chance of lighting upon a mine, still less of finding any of the Incas' treasures. But with the Indian's

aid it is just possible that you may find something, though I should advise you most strongly not to build in any way upon the chance. I consider that you cannot possibly win Miss Fortescue; that being so, two years of knocking about will not make your position worse, and by the time you come back, you may have ceased to struggle against fate. It will afford you a remote—but distinctly remote—opportunity of bettering your position, will give you something else to think about besides that young lady's charms, and you may even come to recognize that life is, after all, possible without her. You may shake your head, lad; but you know children cry for the moon sometimes, yet afterwards come to understand that it would not be a desirable plaything."

"Well, at any rate, Mr. Barnett, I am extremely obliged for your suggestion and for your offer of introductions. It is just the life that I should enjoy thoroughly. As you say, the chance that anything will come of it is extremely small, but at least there is a possibility, and I take it as a drowning man catches at a straw."

"By the way, you mustn't think only of gold; silver is, after all, the chief source of the riches of Peru, and there are numbers of extraordinarily rich mines. It is calculated that three hundred millions have been produced since the first occupation by the Spaniards. Quicksilver is also very abundant; copper and lead are found too, but there is not much to be done with them at present, owing to the cost of carriage. There is good shooting in the mountains on the eastern side of the Andes, and you will find plenty of sport there."

They talked over the matter for some time before they separated, and Harry Prendergast became quite excited over it. On his return to his rooms he was astonished to find the candles alight and a strong smell of tobacco pervading the place. A lad of about sixteen leapt from the easy-chair in which he had been sitting, with his feet on another.

"Hullo, Harry, I didn't expect you back so soon! The maid said you were dining out, and I suppose that generally means one o'clock before you are back."

"Well, what brings you here, Bert? I thought I had got you off my hands for a year at least."

"I thought so, myself," the lad said coolly; "but circumstances have been too strong for me. We were running down the Channel the night before last, when a craft that was beating up ran smack into us. I don't know that it was his fault more than ours; the night was dark, and it was very thick, and we did not see each other until she was within a length of us. Luck was against us; if she had been a few seconds quicker we should have caught her broadside, but as it was she rammed us, knocking a hole in our side as big as a house, and we had just time to jump on board her. Our old craft went down two minutes after the skipper, who was of course the last man, left her. The other fellow had stove his bow in. Luckily we were only about a couple of miles off Dungeness, and though she leaked like a sieve, we were able to run her into the bay, where she settled down in two and a half fathoms of water. As soon as it was light we landed and tramped to Dover. A hoy was starting for the river that evening, and most of us came up in her, arriving at the Pool about three hours ago. It is a bad job, Harry, and I am horribly put out about it. Of course nothing could be saved, and there is all the new kit you bought for me down at the bottom. I sha'n't bother you again; I have quite made up my mind that I shall ship before the mast this time, and a five-pound note will buy me a good enough outfit for that."

"We need not talk about that now, Bertie. You are certainly an unlucky beggar; this is the second time you have been wrecked."

"It is a frightful nuisance," the boy said. "It is the kit I am thinking of, otherwise I should not mind. I didn't care for the skipper. He seemed all right and decent enough before we started, but I soon heard from fellows who had sailed with him before that he was a tartar; and what was worse, they said he was in the habit of being drunk two nights out of three. However, that has nothing to do with it. I am really awfully sorry, Harry. You have been a thundering good elder brother. I hated to think that you had to shell out last time, and I have quite made up my mind that you sha'n't do it again."

"Well, it cannot be helped; it is no fault of yours; still, of course, it is a nuisance. Thank God that no harm has come to you, that is the principal thing. Now, sit down and go on with your pipe, you young monkey. I did not think you had taken to smoking."

"One has to," the lad said, "everyone else does it; and there is no doubt that, when you have got the middle watch on cold nights with foul winds, it is a comfort."

"Well, go on smoking," his brother said. "I will light up too. Now shut your mouth altogether. I want to think."

They were silent for fully ten minutes, then Harry said;

"I told you about that business of mine with Miss Fortescue."

Bertie grinned all over his face, which, as he sat, was not visible to his brother. Then with preternatural gravity he turned towards him.

"Yes, you told me about it; an uncomfortable business wasn't it?—surly old father, lovely daughter, and so on."

"I will pull your ear for you, you young scamp," Harry said wrathfully, "if you make fun of it; and I have a good mind not to say what I was going to."

"Say it, Harry, don't mind my feelings," the lad said. "You can't say I did not stand it well when I was here last week, and gave you no end of sympathy. Go ahead, old fellow; I dare say I shall be taken bad some day, and then I shall be able to make allowances for you."

"I'll have nothing more to say to you, you young imp."

"Don't say that, Harry," the lad said in a tone of alarm. "You know how sympathizing I am, and I know what a comfort it is for you to unburden yourself; but I do think that it won't be necessary to go into personal descriptions, you know, or to tell me what you said to her or she said to you, because you told me all that ten days ago, also what her tyrannical old father said. But really seriously I am awfully sorry about it all, and if there is anything that I can possibly do for you I shall be only too pleased. I don't see that it would be any advantage for me to go and give the old gentleman my opinion of him; but if you think it would, and can coach me in some of his sore points, we might see how we could work upon them."

"I always thought you were a young ass, Bertie," Harry said sternly, "but I have not realized before how utterly assified you are."

"All right, Harry!" the lad said cheerfully; "hit me as hard as you like, under the circumstances I feel that I cannot kick."

Harry said nothing for another five minutes.

"This is a serious matter," he said at last, "and I don't want any tomfoolery."

"All right, Harry! I will be as serious as a judge."

"I am thinking of going away for two years."

The lad turned half round in his chair and had a good look at his brother.

"Where are you going to?" seeing by Harry's rather gloomy face that he was quite in earnest.

"I believe I am going to Peru."

"What are you going there for, Harry?" the lad said quietly.

"I told you," the other went on, "that Mr. Fortescue said that he had no personal objection to me, but that if I was in a position to give his daughter a home equal to that which I wanted her to leave, he would be content."

Bertie nodded.

"This seemed to me hopeless," Harry went on. "I told you that she was willing to wait for two years, but that she couldn't promise much longer than that, for her father had set his mind on her making a good match; he has certainly put a tremendous pressure upon her. When I was talking at the club this evening to Mr. Barnett—you know that he is our oldest friend and is one of our trustees—I told him about it, and said that though I was ready to do anything and go anywhere I could not see my way at all to making a big fortune straight away. He agreed with me. After talking it over he

said he knew of but one way by which such a thing would be at all possible, but the betting would be twenty thousand to one against it. Of course I said that if there was even a possibility I would try it. Well, you know he was in Peru for some years. He says that the natives have all sorts of legends about rich mines that were hidden when the Spaniards came first, and that it is certain that, tremendous as was the amount of loot they got, a great part of the Incas' treasure was hidden away. Once or twice there had been great finds—in one case two million and a half dollars. It is believed that the secret is still known to certain Indians. When he went out there he had a muleteer, whose life he saved when he was attacked by some beast or other, and this man as much as hinted that he knew of a place where treasure might be concealed; but as Barnett was interested in beasts and plants and that sort of thing, and had a comfortable fortune, he never troubled himself about it one way or another. Well, he offered to give me a letter to this man, and he regarded it as just possible that the fellow, who seems to be a descendant of some of the people who were members of the Incas' court at the time the Spaniards came, may have some knowledge of the rich mines that were then closed down, and that he may be able to show them to me, from his feeling of gratitude to Barnett. It is but one chance in a million, and as I can see no other possibility of making a fortune in two years, I am going to try it."

"Of course you will," the lad said excitedly, "and I should think that you would take me with you."

"I certainly had not dreamt of doing so, Bertie. But if I have to keep on getting fresh outfits for you, the idea has come into my mind during the last half-hour that I could not do better."

"Harry, you are sure to be disappointed lots of times before you hit on a treasure, and then if you were all by yourself you would get down in the mouth. Now, I should be able to keep you going, pat you on the back when you felt sick, help you to fight Indians and wild beasts, and be useful in all sorts of ways."

"That is like your impudence, Bertie," the other laughed. "Seriously, I know I shall be a fool to take you, and if I really thought I had any chance to speak of I should not do so; but though I am going to try, I don't expect for a moment that I shall succeed. I feel that really it would be a comfort to have someone with me upon whom I could rely in such a life as I should have to lead. It certainly would be lonely work for one man. The only doubt in my mind is whether it will be fair to you—you have got your profession."

"But I can go back to it if nothing good turns up, Harry. I can visit the firm and tell them that I am going to travel with you for a bit, and hope that on my return they will take me back again and let me finish my apprenticeship. I should think they would be rather glad, for they always build and never buy ships, and it will take them six months to replace the *Stella*. Besides, it will do me a lot of good. I shall pick up Spanish—at least, I suppose that is the language they speak out there—and shall learn no end of things. As you know, we trade with the west coast of America, so I should be a lot more useful to the firm when I come back than I am now."

"Well, I will think it over, and let you know in the morning. I must certainly consult Mr. Barnett, for he is your trustee as well as mine. If we go I shall work my way out. It will be a big expense, anyhow, and I don't mean, if possible, to draw upon my capital beyond three or four hundred pounds. I believe living is cheap out there, and if I buy three or four mules I shall then have to pay only the wages for the muleteers, and the expenses of living. Of course I shall arrange for my income and half-pay to be sent out to some firm at Lima. Now, you had better go off to bed, and don't buoy yourself up with the belief that you are going, for I have by no means decided upon taking you yet."

"You will decide to take me, Harry," the lad said confidently, and then added with a laugh: "the fact that you should have adopted a plan like this is quite sufficient to show that you want somebody to look after you."

Harry Prendergast did not get much sleep that night. He blamed himself for having mentioned the matter at all to Bertie, and yet the more he thought over it the more he felt that it would be very pleasant to have his brother with him. The lad was full of fun and mischief, but he knew that he had

plenty of sound sense, and would be a capital companion, and the fact that he had been three years at sea, and was accustomed to turn his hand to anything, was all in his favour. If nothing came of it he would only have lost a couple of years, and, as the boy himself had said, the time would not have been altogether wasted. Bertie was down before him in the morning. He looked anxiously at his brother as he came in.

"Well, Harry?"

"Well, I have thought it over in every light. But in the first place, Bertie, if you go with me you will have to remember that I am your commanding officer. I am ten years older than you, and besides I am a lieutenant in the King's Navy, while you are only a midshipman in the merchant service. Now, I shall expect as ready obedience from you as if I were captain of my own ship and you one of my men; that is absolutely essential."

"Of course, Harry, it could not be otherwise."

"Very well, then; in the next place I shall abide by what Mr. Barnett says. He is your guardian as well as trustee, and has a perfect right to put a veto upon any wild expedition of this sort. Lastly, I should hope, although I don't say that this is absolutely necessary, that you may get your employer's promise to take you back again in order that you may complete your time."

"Thank you very much, Harry!" the lad said gratefully. "The first condition you may rely upon being performed, and I think the third will be all right, for I know that I have always been favourably reported upon. Old Prosser told me so himself when he said that I should have a rise in my pay this voyage. As to Mr. Barnett, of course I can't say, but I should think, as it was he who put you up to this, he must see that it would be good for you to have someone to take care of you."

"I think he is much more likely to say that I shall have quite enough to do to take care of myself, without having the bother of looking after you. However, I will go and see him this morning. You had better call upon your employers."

"Don't you think I had better go to Mr. Barnett with you, Harry?"

"Not as you are now anyhow, Bertie. Your appearance is positively disgraceful. You evidently had on your worst suit of clothes when you were wrecked, and I can see that they have not been improved by the experience. Why, there is a split right down one sleeve, and a big rent in your trousers!"

"I got them climbing on board, for I had no time to pick and choose, with the *Stella* sinking under my feet."

"Well, you may as well go as you are, but you had better borrow a needle and thread from the landlady and mend up the holes. You really cannot walk through the city in that state. I will see about getting you some more clothes when we get back, for I cannot have you coming here in these in broad daylight. Here are three guineas; get yourself a suit of pilot cloth at some outfitter's at the East End. It will be useful to you anyhow, whether you go with me or ship again here."

"There is a good deal in what you say, Harry," Mr. Barnett said when Prendergast asked his opinion as to his taking his brother with him. "Two years would not make any material difference in his career as a sailor; it simply means that he will be so much older when he passes as mate. There is no harm in that. Two or three and twenty is quite young enough for a young fellow to become an officer, and I don't think that many captains care about having lads who have just got their certificate. They have not the same sense of responsibility or the same power of managing. Then, too, Bertie will certainly have a good deal of knocking about if he spends a couple of years in South America, and the knowledge he will gain of Spanish will add to his value with any firm trading on that coast. As far as you are concerned, I think it would be a great advantage to have him with you. In a long expedition, such as you propose, it is a gain to have a companion with you. It makes the work more pleasant, and two men can laugh over hardships and disagreeables that one alone would grumble at; but apart from this, it is very important in case of illness."

"A lonely man laid up with fever, or accidental injury, fares badly indeed if he is at a distance from any town where he can obtain medical attendance, and surrounded only by ignorant natives. I was myself at one time down with fever for six weeks in a native hut, and during that time I would have given pretty nearly all that I was worth for the sight of a white face and the sound of an English voice. As to the fact that it is possible that the lad might catch fever, or be killed in an affray with natives, that must, of course, be faced; but as a sailor he runs the risk of shipwreck, or of being washed overboard, or killed by a falling spar. Everything considered, I think the idea of his going with you is a good one. I don't suppose that many guardians would be of the same opinion, but I have been so many years knocking about in one part of the world or another, that I don't look at things in the same light as men who have never been out of England."

"I am glad you see it in that way, sir. I own that it would be a great satisfaction to have him with me. He certainly would be a cheery companion, and I should say that he is as hard as nails, and can stand as much fatigue and hardship as myself. Besides, there is no doubt that in case of any trouble two men are better than one."

"I cannot advance any money out of the thousand pounds that will come to him when he is of age. By your father's will it was ordered that, in the event of his own death before that time, the interest was to accumulate. Your father foresaw that, like you, probably Bertie would take to the sea, and as the amount would be fully two thousand pounds by the time he comes of age, it would enable him to buy a share in any ship that he might, when he passed his last examination, command; but I will myself draw a cheque for a hundred pounds, which will help towards meeting expenses. I feel myself to some extent responsible for this expedition. I somewhat regret now having ever spoken to you on the subject, for I cannot conceal from myself that the chance of your making a discovery, where the Spaniards, with all their power of putting pressure on the natives for the past two or three hundred years, have failed, is so slight as to be scarcely worth consideration."

"I tell you frankly that I broached the subject chiefly because I thought it was much better for you to be doing something than kicking your heels about London, and mooning over this affair with Miss Fortescue. There is nothing worse for a young man than living in London with just enough to keep him comfortably without the necessity of working. Therefore I thought you would be far better travelling and hunting for treasure in Peru, than staying here. Even if you fail, as I feel is almost certain, in the object for which you go out, you will have plenty to occupy your thoughts, and not be dwelling continually upon an attachment which in all probability will not turn out satisfactorily. I do not suppose that you are likely to forget Miss Fortescue, but by the time you return you will have accustomed yourself to the thought that it is useless to cry for the moon, and that, after all, life may be very endurable even if she does not share it. Therefore I propounded this Peruvian adventure, feeling sure that, whatever came of it, it would be a benefit to you."

"No doubt it will, sir. I see myself the chance of success is small indeed, but there is none at all in any other way. It is just the sort of thing I should like, and I quite feel myself that it would be good for me to have plenty to think about; and now that you have consented to Bertie's going with me, I feel more eager than before to undertake the expedition. The place is in rather a disturbed state, isn't it?"

"If you are going to wait until Peru ceases to be in a disturbed state, Harry, you may wait another hundred years. The Spanish rule was bad, but Peru was then a pleasant place to live in compared with what it is now. It is a sort of cock-pit, where a succession of ambitious rascals struggle for the spoils, and the moment one gets the better of his rivals fresh intrigues are set on foot, and fresh rebellions break out. There are good Peruvians—men who have estates and live upon them, and who are good masters. But as to the politicians, there is no principle whatever at stake. It is simply a question of who shall have the handling of the national revenue, and divide it and the innumerable posts among his adherents. But these struggles will not affect you largely. In one respect they will even be an advantage. Bent upon their own factious aims, the combatants have no time to concern themselves with the doings of an English traveller, whose object out there is ostensibly to botanize and shoot."

Were one of them to obtain the undisputed control of affairs he might meddle in all sorts of ways; but, as it is, after you have once got pretty well beyond the area of their operations, you can regard their doings with indifference, knowing that the longer they go on fighting the fewer scoundrels there will be in the land.

"But even were they to think that it was mining, and not science or sport that took you out there, they would scarcely interfere with you. It is admitted by all the factions that Peru needs capital for her development, and at present that can best be got from this country. The discovery of a fresh mine means employment to a large number of people, and the increase of the revenues by a royalty or taxation. English explorers who have gone out have never had any reason to complain of interference on the part of the authorities. You will find the average better class of Peruvians a charming people, and extremely hospitable. The ladies are pretty enough to turn the head of anyone whose affections are not already engaged. The men are kindly and courteous in the extreme. However, you would have little to do with these.

"In the mountains you would largely depend upon your rifle for food, and on what you could get in the scattered native villages. The Indians have no love for the Peruvians. They find their condition no better off under them than it was under the Spaniards. Once they find out that you are English they will do all in their power for you. It is to Cochrane and the English officers with him that they owe the overthrow and expulsion of their Spanish tyrants, and they are vastly more grateful than either the Chilians or Peruvians have shown themselves to be."

On returning to their lodgings Harry met his brother, who had been into the city.

"Old Prosser was very civil," said Bertie. "He said that as their ships were chiefly in the South American trade it would be a great advantage for me to learn to speak Spanish well. They had not yet thought anything about whether they should order another ship to replace the *Stella*; at any rate, at present they had no vacancy, and would gladly give me permission to travel in South America, and would find me a berth to finish my apprenticeship when I returned. More than that, they said that as I had always been so favourably reported upon they would put me on as a supernumerary in the *Para*, which will sail in a fortnight for Callao. I should not draw pay, but I should be in their service, and the time would count, which would be a great pull, and I should get my passage for nothing."

"That is capital. Of course I will take a passage in her too."

"And what does Mr. Barnett say?"

"Rather to my surprise, Bertie, he did not disapprove of the plan at all. He thought it would be a good thing for me to have you with me in case of illness or anything of that sort. Then no doubt he thought to some extent it would keep you out of mischief."

"I don't believe he thought anything of the sort. Did he say so?"

"Well, no, he didn't; but I have no doubt he felt it in some way a sort of relief."

"That is all very fine. I know, when I have been down to his place in the country between voyages, I have always been as well behaved as if I had been a model mid."

"Well, I have heard some tales of your doings, Bertie, that didn't seem quite in accord with the character you give yourself."

"Oh, of course I had a few larks! You cannot expect a fellow who has been away from England for a year to walk about as soberly as if he were a Methodist parson!"

"No, I should not expect that, Bertie. But, on the other hand, I should hardly have expected that he would, for example, risk breaking his neck by climbing up to the top of the steeple and fastening a straw-hat on the head of the weathercock."

"It gave it a very ornamental appearance; and that weathercock was never before watched so regularly by the people of the village as it was from that time till the hat was blown away in a gale."

"That I can quite believe. Still, Mr. Barnett told me that the rector lodged a complaint about it."

"He might complain as much as he liked; there is no law in the land, as far as I know, that makes the fixing of a straw-hat upon a weathercock a penal offence. It did no end of good in the village, gave them something to talk about, and woke them up wonderfully."

"And there were other things too, I think," his brother went on.

"Oh, well, you need not go into them now! they are an old story. Besides, I fancy I have heard of various tricks played by Mr. Midshipman Harry Prendergast, and, as I heard them from your lips, I cannot doubt but that they were strictly veracious. Well, this is jolly now. When are we going to begin to get our outfit?"

"We will lose no time about that. But really there is not much to get—a couple of good rifles and two brace of pistols, with a good store of ammunition, those clothes you have just bought, and two or three suits of duck for the voyage. I shan't get any special kit until we arrive there, and can take the advice of people at Lima whether we had better travel in European clothes or in those worn by the Peruvians. Of course saddles and bridles and all that sort of thing we can buy there, and we shall want a small tent to use when we get into out-of-the-way places. I shall take three hundred pounds in gold. I have no doubt we can exchange it into silver profitably; besides, it is much more handy for carrying about. I shall go down this afternoon and see Prosser and secure a berth."

"I think you will have to arrange that with the captain. Very few of our ships have accommodation for passengers, but the captains are allowed to take one or two if they like."

"All right! At any rate I must go to the office first. They can refer me to the skipper if they like; that would be better than my going to him direct."

CHAPTER II

THE START

Harry Prendergast went down to Leadenhall Street and saw the managing owner of the *Para*. As Bertie had anticipated, Mr. Prosser, after hearing Harry's statement that he wished to take a passage to Callao in the vessel advertised to start in a week's time, and that he was much obliged to them for giving Bertie a berth as supernumerary midshipman, said:

"We shall certainly have pleasure in putting your brother's name on the ship's books. He has already explained to me his desire to go out with you; we have had every reason to be satisfied with him since he entered our service, and he had better draw pay as usual, as his service during the voyage will then count towards his time. As for yourself, we do not book passengers, it is more bother than it is worth; but we have no objection to our masters taking one or two. The addition of a mouth or so practically makes very little difference in the amount of ships' stores consumed. The masters pay us a small sum a head and make their own terms with the passengers they take. In that way we are saved all complaints as to food and other matters. Of course a passenger would put on board for himself a stock of such wines, spirits, and little luxuries as he may choose.

"You will find Captain Peters down at the docks. The last cargo has been discharged, and they are giving an overhaul to the rigging and making a few repairs; he is not a man to leave his ship if he can help it while work is going on there."

Harry at once went down.

"Well, sir," the captain said, when he had told him that he wished to take a passage to Callao, and that the owners had referred him to him, "I had fully made up my mind that I would not take passengers again. On my last voyage they were always grumbling at the food, expecting to be treated as if they were in a first-class hotel."

"I am not likely to grumble, Captain; I have been knocking about the King's service since I was fourteen."

"Oh, you are a royal navy man, are you, sir?"

"I am; I am a lieutenant."

"That makes a difference; and I have no doubt we can arrange the matter to our satisfaction."

"I may tell you," Harry said, "that I have a younger brother coming out with me. He is an apprentice nearly out of his time, and was on board the *Stella* when she was sunk in the Channel. Your owners have kindly arranged that he shall go out with you as a supernumerary; that is one reason why I wish to go in your ship."

The Master thought for a minute or two. "Well, Mr. Prendergast," he said, "I like having one of you naval gentlemen on board; if anything goes wrong it is a comfort to have your advice. If we have bad weather round the Horn, could I rely upon you to give me a helping hand should I need it? I don't mean that you should keep watch or anything of that sort, but that you should, as it were, stand by me. I have a new first mate, and there is no saying how he may turn out. No doubt the firm would make every enquiry. Still, such enquiries don't mean much; a master doesn't like to damn a man by refusing to give him a good character. I dare say he is all right. Still, I should certainly feel very much more comfortable if I had a naval officer with me. Now, sir, I pay the firm twelve pounds for each passenger I take as his share of the cabin stores; you pay me that, and I will ask for nothing for your passage. I cannot say fairer than that."

"You cannot indeed, Captain, and I feel very much obliged to you for the offer—very much obliged. It will suit me admirably, and in case of any emergency you may rely upon my aid; and if you have a spell of bad weather I shall be quite willing to take a watch, for I know that in the long heavy gales you meet with going round the Horn the officers get terribly overtaxed."

"And how about your brother?" the captain said; "as he is to be a supernumerary, I suppose that only means that the firm are willing that he shall put in his time for his rating. I have never had a supernumerary on board, but I suppose he is to be regarded as a passenger rather than one of the ship's complement."

"No, Captain, he is to be on the pay-sheet; and I think he had much better be put into a watch. He would find the time hang very heavy on his hands if he had nothing to do, and I know he is anxious to learn his profession thoroughly. As he is to be paid, there is no reason why he should not work."

"Very well; if you think so we will say nothing more about it. I thought perhaps you would like to have him aft with you."

"I am much obliged to you, but I think the other way will be best; and I am sure he would feel more comfortable with the other apprentices than as a passenger."

"Are you going out for long, may I ask you, Mr. Prendergast?"

"For a couple of years or so. I am going to wander about and do some shooting and exploring and that sort of thing, and I am taking him with me as companion. I speak Spanish fairly well myself, and shall teach him on the voyage, if you will allow me to do so. A knowledge of that language will be an advantage to him when he comes back into Prosser & Co.'s service."

"A great advantage," the captain agreed. "Most of us speak a little Spanish, but I have often thought that it would pay the company to send a man who could talk the lingo well in each ship. They could call him supercargo, and I am sure he would pay his wages three or four times over by being able to bargain and arrange with the Chilians and Peruvians. In ports like Callao, where there is a British consul, things are all right, but in the little ports we are fleeced right and left. Boatmen and shopkeepers charge us two or three times as much as they do their own countrymen, and I am sure that we could get better bargains in hides and other produce if we had someone who could knock down their prices."

"When do you sail, Captain?"

"This day week. It will be high tide about eight, and we shall start to warp out of dock a good half-hour earlier, so you can either come on board the night before or about seven in the morning."

"Very well, sir; we shall be here in good time. I shall bring my things on board with me; it is of no use sending them on before, as they will not be bulky and can be stored away in my cabin."

"This will be your state-room," the captain said, opening a door. "I have the one aft, and the first mate has the one opposite to you. The others are empty, so you can stow any baggage that you have in one of them; the second and third officers and the apprentices are in the deck-house cabins."

"In that case, Captain, I will send the wine and spirits on board the day before. Of course I shall get them out of bond; I might have difficulty in doing that so early in the morning. You will perhaps be good enough to order them to be stowed in one of the empty cabins."

"That will be the best plan," the captain said.

"When do the apprentices come on board?"

"The morning before we sail. There is always plenty to be done in getting the last stores on board."

"All right! my brother will be here. Good-morning, Captain, and thank you!"

The following morning at eleven Harry Prendergast was standing in front of the entrance to the British Museum. A young lady came up. "It is very imprudent of you, Harry," she said, after the first greeting, "to ask me to meet you."

"I could not help it, dear; it was absolutely necessary that I should see you."

"But it is of no use, Harry."

"I consider that it is of particular use, Hilda."

"But you know, Harry, when you had that very unpleasant talk with my father, I was called in, and said that I had promised to wait two years for you. When he found that I would not give way, he

promised that he would not press me, on the understanding that we were not to meet again except in public, and I all but promised."

"Quite so, dear; but it appears to me that this is surely a public place."

"No, no, Harry; what he meant was that I was not to meet you except at parties."

"Well, I should have asked you to meet me to-day even if I had had to storm your father's house to see you. I am going away, dear, and he could scarcely say much if he came along and found us talking here. You see, it was not likely that I should stumble across a fortune in the streets of London. I have talked the matter over with Barnett—you know our trustee, you have met him once or twice—and we came to the conclusion that the only possible chance of my being able to satisfy your father as to my means, was for me to go to Peru and try to discover a gold mine there or hidden treasure. Such discoveries have been made, and may be made again; and he has supplied me with a letter to an Indian, who may possibly be able to help me."

"To Peru, Harry! Why, they are always fighting there."

"Yes, they do a good deal of squabbling, but the people in general have little to do with it; and certainly I am not going out to take any part in their revolutions. There is not a shadow of doubt that a number of gold mines worked by the old people were never discovered by the Spaniards, and it is also certain that a great portion of the treasures of the Incas is still lying hid. Barnett saved the life of a muleteer out there, and from what he said he believed that the man did know something about one of these lost mines, and might possibly let me into the secret. It is just an off chance, but it is the only chance I can see. You promised your father that you would never marry without his consent, and he would never give it unless I were a rich man. If nothing comes of this adventure I shall be no worse off than I am at present. If I am fortunate enough to discover a rich mine or a hidden treasure, I shall be in a position to satisfy his demand. I am going to take Bertie with me; he will be a cheerful companion, and even now he is a powerful young fellow. At any rate, if I get sick or anything of that sort, it would be an immense advantage to have him with me."

"I don't like the idea of your going, Harry," she said tearfully. "No, dear; and if I had the chance of seeing you sometimes, and of some day obtaining your father's consent to the marriage, all the gold mines in Peru would offer no temptation to me. As it is, I can see nothing else for it. In some respects it is better; if I were to stay here I should only be meeting you frequently at dances and dinners, never able to talk to you privately, and feeling always that you could never be mine. It would be a constant torture. Here is a possibility—a very remote one, I admit, but still a possibility—and even if it fails I shall have the satisfaction of knowing that I have done all that a man could do to win you."

"I think it is best that you should go somewhere, Harry, but Peru seems to be a horrible place."

"Barnett speaks of it in high terms. You know he was four or five years out there. He describes the people as being delightful, and he has nothing to say against the climate."

"I will not try to dissuade you," she said bravely after a pause. "At present I am hopeless, but I shall have something to hope and pray for while you are away. We will say good-bye now, dear. I have come to meet you this once, but I will not do so again, another meeting would but give us fresh pain. I am very glad to know that your brother is going with you. I shall not have to imagine that you are ill in some out-of-the-way place without a friend near you; and in spite of the dangers you may have to run, I would rather think of you as bravely doing your best than eating your heart out here in London. I shall not tell my father that we have met here; you had better write to him and say that you are leaving London at once, and that you hope in two years to return and claim me in accordance with his promise. I am sure he will be glad to know that you have gone, and that we shall not be constantly meeting. He will be kinder to me than he has been of late, for as he will think it quite impossible that you can make a fortune in two years he will be inclined to dismiss you altogether from his mind."

For another half-hour they talked together, and then they parted with renewed protestations on her part that nothing should induce her to break her promise to wait for him for two years. He had given her the address of one of the merchants to whom Mr. Barnett had promised him a letter

of introduction, so that she might from time to time write, for the voyage would take at least four months and as much more would be required for his first letter to come back. He walked moodily home after parting with her.

"Hullo, Harry! nothing wrong with you, I hope? why, you look as grave as an owl."

"I feel grave, Bertie. I have just said good-bye to Hilda; and though I kept up my spirits and made the best of this expedition of ours, I cannot but feel how improbable it is that we shall meet again—that is to say, in our present relations; for if I fail I certainly shall not return home for some years; it would be only fair to her that I should not do so. I know that she would keep on as long as there was any hope, but I should not care to think that she was wasting her life. I was an ass to believe it could ever be otherwise, and I feel that the best thing for us both would have been for me to go away as soon as I found that I was getting fond of her."

"Well, of course I cannot understand it, Harry, and it seems to me that one girl is very like another; she may be a bit prettier than the average, but I suppose that comes to all the same thing in another twenty years. I can understand a man getting awfully fond of his ship, especially when she is a clipper. However, some day I may feel different; besides, how could you tell that her father would turn out such a crusty old beggar?"

"I suppose I did not think about it one way or the other, Bertie," Harry said quietly. "However, the mischief is done, and even if there was no chance whatever of making money I should go now for my own sake as well as hers. Well, it is of no use talking more about it; we will go out now and buy the rifles. I shan't get them new, one can pick up guns just as good at half the price, and as I know something about rifles I am not likely to be taken in. Of course I have got my pistols and only have a brace to buy for you. You will have time on the voyage to practise with them; if you did not do that you would be as likely to shoot me as a hostile Indian."

"Oh, that is bosh!" the boy said; "still, I certainly should like to be a good shot."

After getting the rifles and pistols, Harry went into the city and ordered six dozen of wine and three dozen of brandy to be sent on board out of bond; he also ordered a bag of twenty pounds of raw coffee, a chest of tea, and a couple of dozen bottles of pickles and sauces, to be sent down to the docks on the day before the *Para* sailed. Another suit of seafaring clothes and a stock of underclothing was ordered for Bertie. Harry spent the intervening time before the vessel sailed in looking up his friends and saying good-bye to them, and drove down to the docks at the appointed time, his brother having joined the ship on the previous day.

The *Para* was a barque-rigged ship of some eight hundred tons. At present she did not show to advantage, her deck being littered with stores of all kinds that had come on board late. The deck planks where they could be seen were almost black, the sails had been partly loosed from the gaskets, and to an eye accustomed to the neatness and order of a man-of-war her appearance was by no means favourable; but her sides shone with fresh paint, and, looking at her lines from the wharf, Harry thought she would be both fast and a good sea-boat. She was not heavily laden, and stood boldly up in the water. Nodding to Bertie, who was working hard among the men, he went up on to the poop, from which Captain Peters was shouting orders.

"Glad to see you, sir," the captain said; "she looks rather in a litter at present, doesn't she? We shall get her all ataunto before we get down to the Nore. These confounded people won't send their stores on board till the last moment. If I were an owner I should tell all shippers that no goods would be received within five or six hours of the ship's time for sailing; that would give us a fair chance, instead of starting all in a muddle, just at the time, too, when more than any other one wants to have the decks free for making short tacks down these narrow reaches. I believe half the wrecks on the sands at the mouth of the river are due to the confusion in which the ships start. How can a crew be lively in getting the yards over when they have to go about decks lumbered up like this, and half of them are only just recovering from their bout of drink the day before?"

Up to the last moment everyone on board was hard at work, and when the order was given to throw off the hawsers the deck was already comparatively clear. Half an hour later the vessel passed out through the dock gates, with two boats towing ahead so as to take her well out into the river; the rest of the crew were employed in letting the sails drop. As soon as she gathered way the men in the boats were called in, the boats themselves being towed behind in case they might again be required.

The passage from the Pool to the mouth of the river was in those days the most dangerous portion of the voyage. There were no tugs to seize the ships and carry them down to the open water, while the channels below the Nore were badly buoyed and lighted, and it was no uncommon thing for twenty vessels to get upon the sands in the course of a single tide.

The wind was light, and being northerly helped them well on their way, and it was only in one or two reaches that the *Para* was unable to lay her course. She overtook many craft that had been far ahead of her, and answered the helm quickly.

"She is both fast and handy, I see," Harry Prendergast, who had been watching her movements with interest, remarked.

"Yes; there are not many craft out of London can show her their heels when the wind is free. She does not look quite so well into the wind as I should wish; still, I think she is as good as most of them."

"I suppose you will get down to Gravesend before the tide turns?"

"Yes, we shall anchor there. The wind is not strong enough for us to stem the tide, which runs like a sluice there. Once past the Nore one can do better, but there is no fighting the tide here unless one has a steady breeze aft. I never feel really comfortable till we are fairly round the South Foreland; after that it is plain sailing enough. Though there are a few shoals in the Channel, one can give them a wide berth; fogs are the things we have to fear there."

"Yes. I have never been down the river, having always joined my ships either at Portsmouth or Plymouth, so I know very little about it; but I know from men who have been on board vessels commissioned at Chatham or Sheerness that they are thankful indeed when they once get round the Goodwins and head west."

"Well, Mr. Prendergast, I am against these new-fangled steamboats—I suppose every true sailor is; but when the *Marjory* began to run between London and Gravesend eighteen years ago—in '15 I think it was—folks did say that it would not be long before sailing craft would be driven off the sea. I did not believe that then, and I don't believe it now; but I do say that I hope before long there will be a lot of small steamers on the Thames, to tow vessels down till they are off the North Foreland. It would be a blessing and a comfort to us master mariners. Once there we have the choice of going outside the Goodwins, or taking a short cut inside if the wind is aft. Why, sir, it would add years to our lives and shorten voyages by weeks. There we are, now, sometimes lying off the Nore, five hundred sail, waiting for the wind to shift out of the east, and when we do get under weigh we have always to keep the lead going. One never knows when one may bump upon the sands. Some masters will grope their way along in the dark, but for my part I always anchor. There are few enough buoys and beacons in daytime, but I consider that it is tempting Providence to try and go down in a dark night. The owners are sensible men and they know that it is not worth while running risks just to save a day or two when you have got a four months' voyage before you. Once past Dover I am ready to hold on with anyone, but between the Nore and the North Foreland I pick my way as carefully as a woman going across a muddy street."

"You are quite right, Captain; I thoroughly agree with you. More ships get ashore going down to the mouth of the Thames than in any other part of the world; and, as you say, if all sailing ships might be taken down by a steamer, it would be the making of the port of London."

"Your brother is a smart young chap, Mr. Prendergast. I was watching him yesterday, and he is working away now as if he liked work. He has the makings of a first-rate sailor. I hold that a man will never become a first-class seaman unless he likes work for its own sake. There are three sorts of hands. There is the fellow who shirks his work whenever he has a chance; there is the man who does

his work, but who does it because he has to do it, and always looks glad when a job is over; and there is the lad who jumps to his work, chucks himself right into it, and puts his last ounce of strength on a rope. That is the fellow who will make a good officer, and who, if needs be, can set an example to the men when they have to go aloft to reef a sail in a stiff gale. So, as I understand, Mr. Prendergast, he is going to leave the sea for a bit. It seems a pity too."

"He will be none the worse for it, Captain. A year or so knocking about among the mountains of Peru will do more good to him than an equal time on board ship. It will sharpen him up, and give him habits of reliance and confidence. He will be all the better for it afterwards, even putting aside the advantage it will be to him to pick up Spanish."

"Yes, it may do him good," the captain agreed, "if it does not take away his liking for the sea."

"I don't think it will do that. If the first voyage or two don't sicken a lad, I think it is pretty certain he is cut out for the sea. Of course it is a very hard life at first, especially if the officers are a rough lot, but when a boy gets to know his duty things go more easily with him; he is accustomed to the surroundings, and takes to the food, which you know is not always of the best, with a good appetite. Bertie has had three years of it now, and when he has come home I have never heard a grumble from him; and he is not likely to meet with such luxuries while we are knocking about as to make him turn up his nose at salt junk."

The tide was already turning when they reached Gravesend. As soon as the anchor was down the steward came up to say that dinner was ready.

"I am not at all sorry," Harry said as he went below with the captain. "I ate a good breakfast before I started at half-past six, and I went below and had a biscuit and bottle of beer at eleven, but I feel as hungry as a hunter now. There is nothing like a sea appetite. I have been nearly two years on shore, and I never enjoyed a meal as I do at sea."

The crew had been busy ever since they left the dock, and the deck had now been scrubbed and made tidy, and presented a very different appearance from that which met Harry's eye as he came on board.

Johnson, the first mate, also dined with the skipper. He was a tall, powerfully-built man. He was singularly taciturn, and took no share in the conversation unless directly asked. He seemed, however, to be able to appreciate a joke, but never laughed audibly, contenting himself with drawing his lips apart and showing his teeth.

The wind was light and baffling, so that they did not round the South Foreland until the seventh day after leaving dock. After that it was favourable and steady, and they ran without any change until they approached the line; then there was a fortnight of calm. At last they got the wind again, and made a rapid run until within five hundred miles of Cape Horn. The captain was in high glee.

"We have done capitally so far, Mr. Prendergast. I don't think I ever made so rapid a run. If she goes on like this we shall reach Callao within three months of starting."

"I don't think the weather will continue like this," the mate said.

This was the first original observation he had made since he had sailed, and Harry and the captain looked at him in surprise.

"You think there is going to be a change, Mr. Johnson?" the captain said, after a short pause to recover from his astonishment.

The mate nodded.

"Glass falling, sky hazy."

"Is the glass falling? I am ashamed to say I have not looked at it for the past twenty-four hours. It has stuck so long at the same point that I have quite ceased to look at it two or three times a day as I usually do."

"It has not fallen much, but it is sinking."

The captain got up from the table, and went to look at the glass.

"You are right, it has fallen a good eighth; but that may mean a change of wind. Did you notice any change, Mr. Prendergast?"

"No, I can't say that I did. I looked up, as a sailor always does, when I was on deck this morning, but it was clear enough then, and I have not noticed it particularly since."

But when they went up on deck half an hour later both agreed that the mate was right. The change overhead was slight, but away to the west a dull reddish mist seemed to obscure the horizon.

"We will get the upper sails off at once, Mr. Johnson. These storms come so suddenly off the coast that it is as well to lose no time in shortening sail when one sees any indication of such a change."

The mate at once gave the necessary orders. The sailors started up with looks of surprise.

"Look sharp, men!" the mate said. "We shall have wind, and plenty of it. It will be here before long."

The men, who were by no means sorry for a spell of work after going so long without shifting sail or tack, worked hard, and the white sheets of canvas were soon snugly furled. By this time all the sailors who had been to sea for any time recognized the utility of their work. The low bank had risen and extended the whole width of the western horizon.

"What do you think, Mr. Prendergast? Have we got enough off her?"

"I don't know about your storms here, Captain; but if it were in the Levant I should get every stitch of canvas off her excepting closely-reefed topsails, a storm jib, and fore stay-sail. The first burst over, one can always shake out more canvas. However, you know these seas, and I do not."

"I think you are right. These pamperos, as we call them, are not to be trifled with."

"In that case there is no time to be lost, Captain, and with your permission I will lend a hand."

"All hands take in sail!" the captain shouted.

The mate led the way up the starboard shrouds, while Harry, throwing off his coat, mounted those to port, closely followed by Bertie. Five minutes' hard work, and the *Para* was stripped for the struggle.

"That is a good job done," the skipper said to Harry as he reached the deck.

"A very good job, sir. The wind may come, but we are prepared for it; there is nothing like being ready in time."

"She is in good trim for it," said the captain, "not above two-thirds laden, and as the wind is off the land, there is nothing to worry us except the Falklands. I shall go outside them. Of course that will lengthen the voyage, but with this westerly wind I should not care about being between them and the mainland. You think the same, Mr. Prendergast?"

"I do, sir; they are a scattered group, and it would not be pleasant to have them under lee."

It had grown sensibly darker, but the line of mist had not risen higher. Harry remarked upon this.

"I almost doubt whether it is coming after all," he said.

The captain shook his head.

"It does not spread over the sky," he said, "because it is largely dust blown off the land. After the first burst you will see that we shall have a bright blue sky and a roaring wind, just as one gets it sometimes in an easterly gale in the Channel. We shall have it in another five minutes, I fancy. I don't think it will be very strong, or we should have had it here before this."

It was not long before a dull, moaning sound was heard, the brown-red fog changed its appearance, swirls of vapour seemed to dash out in front of it, and the whole swelled and heaved as if it were being pushed forward by some tremendous pressure in its rear.

The ship's head was pointing nearly east, the canvas hung down motionless, and there was not a breath of wind.

"Hold on all!" the captain shouted. Half a minute later the billowy clouds swept across the vessel, and a sudden darkness overspread them. Then there was a glow of white light, a line of foam approached as fleet as a race-horse, and with a shriek the gale was upon them. The vessel shook from

stem to stern as if she had struck against a rock, and her bow was pressed down lower and lower until she seemed as if she were going to dive head-foremost. But as she gathered way, her bow rose, and in a minute she was flying along at some eighteen knots an hour.

"She is all right now, Mr. Prendergast," the captain said. "It is well we stripped her so thoroughly, and that she is not heavily laden."

Four men had been placed at the wheel, and it needed all their strength to keep her from yawing. In half an hour the sea began to get up, and the captain laid her course south-east, which put the wind on her quarter.

"It is well we were not a degree or so farther south, Captain."

"Yes; it would have been as much as we could do to weather the Falklands; for with this small amount of sail we should have made a terrible amount of leeway. As it is, all is fair sailing."

The darkness gradually passed away, and in an hour after the gale had struck her the *Para* was sailing under a bright blue sky. Although but few points off the wind, she was lying down till her lee scuppers were under water. The spray was flying over her sparkling in the sun; the sailors were crouched under the weather bulwark, lashed to belaying-pins and stanchions to prevent themselves from shifting down to leewards. Six hours later it was evident that there was some slight diminution in the force of the wind.

"She is going about fourteen knots now," the captain said; "we can head her more to the south. We must be nearly abreast of the islands, and according to my reckoning forty or fifty miles to the east of them."

It was now dark, and the watch was sent below.

"To-morrow morning we shall be able to get some more sail on her," the master said, "and I hope by the next morning the squall will be over, for we shall then have made our southing, and the wind will be right in our teeth when we turn her head west. There is no saying which way it will come when the squall dies out. What do you think, Johnson?"

"We are pretty sure to get it hot from one quarter or another," the man said. "I should say most likely from the south."

"Except for the cold that would be better than west," Harry remarked.

"Yes, if it is not too strong; but it is likely to be strong. After such a gale as we have had, it seldom settles down for some time. As like as not there will be bad weather for the next month."

The next morning when Harry went on deck he saw that the reefs had been shaken out of the topsails and the spanker hoisted. There was still a fresh wind, but it had backed round more to the south, and there was so sharp a nip in it that he went below and put on a pea-jacket. Then he beckoned to Bertie, who was off duty, to join him on the poop.

"That has been a smart blow, Bertie."

"Yes, but I had it worse than that the last time I came round the Horn. I think we shall be shortening sail again before long. The clouds are banking up to the south-west. She is a good sea-boat, isn't she?"

"She has behaved uncommonly well. We shall want all our clothes before night, Bertie. It was May when we started, and it is nearly mid-winter down here."

"There is one thing, we shan't have so much risk of coming across drifting icebergs, most of them will be frozen up hard and fast down in the south. They don't matter much when the weather is clear, but if it is thick one has an awful time of it. On my first voyage it was like that, and I tell you I didn't think I was going to see England again. We had some desperately close shaves."

The wind speedily freshened, and by evening the ship was under close-reefed canvas again. The clouds were flying fast overhead and the air was thick. Before the evening watch was set the ship was brought round on the other tack, and was running to the east of south.

"We will lie on this course till morning, Mr. Prendergast," said the captain, "and then if the wind holds, I think we shall be able to make a long leg and weather the Horn."

For six days the storm raged with unabated violence. The cold was intense, the spray breaking over the bows froze as it fell, and the crew were engaged for hours at a time in breaking up the masses of ice thus formed. Harry had volunteered to take a watch in turn with the first and second mates. The captain was almost continuously on deck. Twice they encountered icebergs, and once in a driving snow-storm nearly ran foul of one. Fortunately it was daylight, and the whole crew being on deck, they were able to put the vessel about just in time. During this time the vessel had only gained a few miles' westing. All on board were utterly exhausted with the struggle against the bitter wind; their hands were sore and bleeding through pulling upon frozen ropes, their faces inflamed, and their eyelids so swollen and sore that they could scarcely see. Then the wind began to abate, and more sail being got on the *Para*, she was able to lie her course.

CHAPTER III

AT LIMA

Three days later the sky cleared, and the captain, getting an observation, found that they had rounded the southernmost point of the Cape. Another day and the *Para's* head was turned north, and a week later they were running smoothly along before a gentle breeze, with the coast of Chili twenty miles away. The heavy wraps had all been laid aside, and although the air was still frosty, the crew felt it warm after what they had endured. The upper spars and yards had all been sent up, and she was now carrying a crowd of canvas. The mate had thawed out under the more congenial surroundings. He had worked like a horse during the storm, setting an example, whether in going aloft or in the work of clearing off the ice from the bows, and even when his watch was relieved he seldom went below.

"Well, I hope, Mr. Johnson, we shall sail together until you get your next step," the captain said. "I could not wish for a better first officer."

"I want nothing better, sir. She is a fine ship, well manned and well commanded. I begin to feel at home in her now; at first I didn't. I hate changes; and though the last captain I sailed with was a surly fellow, we got on very well together. I would rather sail with a man like that than with a skipper who is always talking. I am a silent man myself, and am quite content to eat my meal and enjoy it, without having to stop every time I am putting my fork into my mouth to answer some question or other. I was once six months up in the north without ever speaking to a soul. I was whaling then, and a snow-storm came on when we were fast on to a fish. It was twenty-four hours before it cleared off, and when it did there was no ship to be seen. We were in an inlet at the time in Baffin's Bay. We thought that the ship would come back, and we landed and hauled up the boat. The ship didn't come back, and, as I learned long afterwards, was never heard of again. I suppose she got nipped between two icebergs.

"Winter was coming on fast, and the men all agreed that they would rather try and make their way south overland than stay there. I told them that they were fools, but I admit that the prospect of a winter there was enough to frighten any man. I did not like it myself, but I thought it was wiser to remain there than to move. Some of the men went along the shore, or out in the boat, and managed to kill several sea-cows. They made a sledge, piled the meat on it, and started.

"Meanwhile I had been busy building a sort of hut. I piled great stones against the foot of the cliffs, and turned the boat upside down to form a roof. The men helped me to do that job the last thing before they started. Then I blocked up the entrance, leaving only just room for me to crawl in and out. The snow began to fall steadily three days after the others had gone, and very soon covered my hut two feet deep. I melted the blubber of the whale in the boat's baler, for we had towed the fish ashore. The first potful or two I boiled over a few bits of drift-wood. After that it was easy enough, as I unravelled some of the boat's rope, dipped it in the hot blubber, and made a store of big candles. There was a lot of meat left on the sea-cows, so I cut that up, froze it, and stowed as much as I could in the hut. I was bothered about the rest, as I knew the bears were likely to come down; but I found a ledge on the face of the perpendicular rock, and by putting the boat's mast against it I was able to get up to it. Here I piled, I should say, a ton of meat and blubber. Then I set to work and collected some dried grass, and soon I had enough to serve as bed and covers. It took me a month to do all this, and by that time winter was down on me in earnest. I had spent my evenings in making myself, out of the skins of the three cows, breeches, high boots, and a coat with a hood over the head, and in order to make these soft I rubbed them with hot oil. They were rough things, but I hoped that I might get a bear later on. Fortunately the boat had two balers, for I required one in which to melt the snow over the lamp.

"Well, sir, I lived there during that winter. I did not find it altogether dull, for I had several bits of excitement. For a month or so bears and wolves came down and fought over the carcass of the

whale. When that was eaten up they turned their attention to me, and over and over again they tried to break in. They had better have left me alone, for though they were strong enough to have pulled away the rocks that blocked the entrance, they could not stand fire. As I had any amount of rope, I used to soak it in rock-oil, set it on fire, and shove it out of the entrance. Twice small bears managed to wriggle up the passage, but I had sharpened the boat-hook and managed to kill them both. One skin made me a whole suit, and the other a first-rate blanket. Not that it was ever unpleasantly cold, for a couple of my big candles, and the thick coating of snow over it, kept the place as warm as I cared for. Occasionally, when the bears had cleared off, I went out, climbed the mast, and got fresh supplies down. They had made desperate efforts to get at the meat, but the face of the rock was luckily too smooth for them to get any hold. When spring came and the ice broke up, I planted the mast on the top of the cliff with the sail fastened as a flag, and a month after the sea was clear a whaler came in and took me off. That was how I pretty well lost the use of my tongue, and though I am better than I was, I don't use it much now except on duty."

"That certainly accounts for it," Harry said; "you must have had an awful time."

"I don't think I minded it very much, sir. Except when I was bothered by the bears I slept a good lot. I think at first I used to talk out loud a good deal. But I soon dropped that, though I used to whistle sometimes when I was cooking the food. I don't think I should have held on so long if I had only had the sea-cow flesh, but the bears made a nice change, and I only wished that one or two more had managed to crawl in."

"I wonder you were able to kill them with a boat-hook."

"I didn't, sir. You know every whaler carries an axe to cut the line if necessary, and I was able to split their skulls as they crawled in before they could get fairly on to their feet and use their paws. I was getting very weak with scurvy towards the end; but as soon as the snow melted plants began to shoot, and I was able to collect green stuff, so that I was nearly well by the time I was picked up."

The weather continued fine all the time they were coasting up the Chilian coast. They were a week at Valparaiso getting out the cargo they had brought for that town, and did some trading at smaller ports; but at last, just four months after leaving England, they dropped anchor off Callao. "Well, it has been a jolly voyage, Harry," his brother said as they were rowed ashore, after a hearty farewell from the captain and the first officer.

"I am glad you enjoyed it, Bertie. I was sorry all the time I hadn't taken a passage for you aft."

"I am better pleased to have been at work; it would have been awfully slow otherwise. The mates were both good fellows, and I got on well with the other apprentices. I tried at first not to turn out on night watch, as I was not obliged to do so, but I soon gave it up; it seemed disgusting to be lying there when the others had to turn out. It has been a jolly voyage, but I am glad that we are here at last, and are going to set to work in search of treasures."

"I had begun to think that we should not get on shore to-day," Harry said as they neared the landing-place. "What with three hours' waiting for the medical officer, and another three for that bumptious official whom they call the port officer, and without whose permission no one is allowed to land, I think everyone on board was so disgusted that we should have liked nothing better than to pitch the fellow overboard. It was rather amusing to watch all those boatmen crowding round shouting the praises of their own craft and running down the others. But a little of it goes a long way. It is the same pretty nearly at every port I have entered. Boatmen are harpies of the worst kind. It is lucky that we had so little baggage; a tip of a couple of dollars was enough to render the custom-house officer not only civil but servile."

As they mounted the steps they were assailed by a motley crowd, half of whom struggled to get near them to hold out their hands for alms, while the other half struggled and fought for the right of carrying their baggage. Accustomed to such scenes, Harry at once seized upon two of them, gave them the portmanteaux, and, keeping behind them, pushed them through the crowd, telling them to lead the way to the hotel that the captain had recommended as being the least filthy in the place.

They crossed a square covered with goods of all kinds. There were long rows of great jars filled with native spirit, bales of cinchona bark, piles of wheat from Chili, white and rose-coloured blocks of salt, pyramids of unrefined sugar, and a block of great bars of silver; among these again were bales and boxes landed from foreign countries, logs of timber, and old anchors and chains. Numbers of people who appeared to have nothing to do sauntered about or sat on logs. In odd corners were native women engaged in making the picanties upon which the poor largely exist; these were composed of fresh and salt meat, potatoes, crabs, the juice of bitter oranges, lard, salt, and an abundance of pepper pods.

"That is the sort of thing we shall have to eat, Bertie."

"Well, I should not mind if I had not got to look on at the making; they smell uncommonly good."

The hotel was larger and even more dirty than the captain's description had led them to expect. However, the dinner that was served to them was better than they had looked for, and being very hungry after their long wait, they did full justice to it.

"It might have been a good deal worse, Bertie."

"I should think so; after four months of salt junk it is splendid!"

A cup of really good coffee, followed by a little glass of native spirits, added to their satisfaction. They had hesitated before whether to push on at once to Lima or wait there till next morning. Their meal decided them—they would start at daybreak, so as to get to Lima before the sun became really hot. Harry asked the landlord to bargain for two riding mules and one for baggage to be ready at that hour, and they then strolled out to view the place, although Bertie assured his brother that there was nothing whatever to see in it.

"That may be, Bertie; but we are not going to begin by being lazy. There is always something to see in foreign lands by those who keep their eyes open."

After an hour's walk Harry was inclined to think that his brother was right. The houses were generally constructed of canes, plastered with mud, and painted yellow. As the result of earthquakes, scarce a house stood upright—some leaned sideways, and looked as if they were going to topple over into the road; while others leaned back, as if, were you to push against them, they would collapse and crush the inmates.

Their night was not a pleasant one. The beds were simple, consisting only of hides stretched across wooden frames, but, as they very speedily found, there were numerous other inhabitants. They therefore slept but little, and were heartily glad when the first gleam of dawn appeared.

Slipping on their clothes, they ran down to the shore and had a bath. By the time they returned breakfast was ready—coffee, fish, and eggs. The mules did not appear for another hour, by which time their patience was all but exhausted. The portmanteaux were speedily strapped on to the back of the baggage mule, and they mounted the two others. The muleteer had brought one for himself, and, fastening the baggage animal behind it, they started.

It was six miles to Lima, but as the city is five hundred and twelve feet above the sea, the ascent was steady and somewhat steep. The road was desperately bad, and the country uninteresting, being for the most part dried up. Occasionally they saw great mounds of adobe bricks, the remains of the ancient habitations. As they neared the town vegetation became general, small canals irrigating the country. Here were fruit and vegetable gardens, with oranges, plantains, vines, and flowers.

Passing through a gate in the walls they entered the town, which afforded a pleasant contrast to the squalid misery of Callao. The city, however, could not be called imposing; the houses were low and irregular, fantastically painted in squares or stripes, and almost all had great balconies shut in with trellis-work.

Few of the houses had any windows towards the street, the larger ones being constructed with a central courtyard, into which the rooms all opened. The streets were all built at right angles, the principal ones leading from the grand square, in which stood the cathedral and the palace of the Spanish viceroys, the other sides consisting of private houses, with shops and arcades below them.

The hotel to which they had been recommended was a large building with a courtyard, with dining and other rooms opening from it, and above them the bedrooms. In comparison with the inn at Callao it was magnificent, but in point of cleanliness it left a great deal to be desired. After settling themselves in their room they went out. The change in temperature since they had left Callao had been very great.

"The first thing to do, Bertie, is to buy ourselves a couple of good ponchos. You see all the natives are wearing them."

"We certainly want something of the sort, Harry. I thought it was heat that we were going to suffer from, but it seems just the other way. To judge from the temperature we might be in Scotland, and this damp mist chills one to the bone."

"I am not much surprised, for of course I got the subject up as much as I could before starting; and Barnett told me that Lima was altogether an exceptional place, and that while it was bright and warm during the winter months, from May till November on the plains only a few miles away, even in the summer months there was almost always a clammy mist at Lima, and that inside the house as well as outside everything streamed with moisture. He said that this had never been satisfactorily accounted for. Some say that it is due to the coldness of the river here—the Rimac—which comes down from the snowy mountains. Others think that the cold wind that always blows down the valley of the river meets the winds from the sea here, and the moisture contained in them is thus precipitated. I believe that a few miles higher up we shall get out of this atmosphere altogether. Still, the ponchos will be very useful, for it will be really cold up in the mountains. They serve for cloaks in the daytime and blankets at night. The best are made of the wool of the guanacos, a sort of llama. Their wool is very fine, and before we start we will get two of coarser wool to use as blankets to sleep on, while we have the finer ones to cover us."

There was no difficulty in finding a shop with the goods they wanted, and the prices, even of the best, were very moderate. They next bought two soft felt hats with broad brims.

"That is ever so much more comfortable. We will wait until to-morrow before we begin what we may call business, Bertie. Of course I shall deliver the other letters of introduction that Mr. Barnett gave me; but the principal one—that to his former muleteer—is more important than all put together. If anything has happened to him, there is an end of any chance whatever of finding treasure. Of course he may have moved away, or be absent on a journey with his mules, in which case we shall have either to follow him or wait for his return."

"That would be a frightful nuisance."

"Yes; still, it is one of the things that we foresaw might happen."

"I vote we go at once, Harry, and see if he is here."

"I don't think we shall find him here; for Barnett said that he lived in the village of Miraflores, five miles away on the north, and that if he is not there, Señor Pasquez, to whom I have a letter, will be likely to tell me where he is to be found, for he is often employed by him. However, I am as anxious as you to see him. As it is only eleven o'clock yet, there is no reason why we should not go to Miraflores. They will get mules for us at the hotel, and tell us which road to take."

It was not necessary, however, to go into the hotel, for when they returned, two or three men with mules were waiting to be hired. They engaged two animals, and as the man of whom they hired them had a third, and he was ready to accompany them for a small fee, they agreed to take him with them.

Before they were a mile out of the town the mist cleared off and the sun shone brightly. The heat, however, was by no means too great to be pleasant. Miraflores was a charming village, or rather small town, nestling among gardens and orchards.

"I want to find a muleteer named Dias Otero," Harry said to their guide as they rode into the place.

"I know him well," he said. "Everyone about here knows Dias. His wife was a cousin of my mother's."

"Do you know whether he is at home now?"

"Yes, señor; I saw him in Lima three days ago. He had just come down from the mountains. He had been away two months, and certainly will not have started again so soon. Shall I lead you to his house at once?"

"Do so; it is to see him that I have come to this town. He worked for a long time with a friend of mine some years ago, and I have brought a message from him. I may be some time talking with him, so when I go in you can tie up your mules for a while."

"That is his house," the man said presently.

It lay in the outskirts of the town, and was neater than the generality of houses, and the garden was a mass of flowers. They dismounted, handed over the mules to their owner, and walked to the door. An Indian of some five-and-forty years came out as they did so.

"Are you Dias Otero?" Harry asked.

"The same, señor."

"I have just arrived from England, and bring a letter to you from Señor Barnett, with whom you travelled for two or three years some time ago."

The man's face lit up with pleasure. "Will you enter, señor. Friends of Señor Barnett may command my services in any way. It is a delight to hear from him. He writes to me sometimes, but in these troubles letters do not always come. I love the señor; there never was a kinder master. He once saved my life at the risk of his own. Is there any hope of his coming out again?"

"I do not think so, Dias. He is strong and well, but I do not think he is likely to start again on a journey of exploration. He is my greatest friend. My brother and I were left under his charge when we were young, and he has been almost a father to us. It is he who has sent us out to you. Here is his letter."

"Will you read it to me, señor. I cannot read; I am always obliged to get somebody to read my letters, and write answers for me."

The letter was of course in Spanish, and Harry read:

"Dear friend Dias,

"I am sending out to you a gentleman, Mr. Prendergast, an officer of the British Navy, in whom I am deeply interested. His brother accompanies him. I beg that you will treat them as you would me, and every service you can render him consider as rendered to myself. From a reason which he will no doubt explain to you in time, it is of the deepest importance to him that he should grow rich in the course of the next two years. He asked my advice, and I said to him, 'There is no one I know of who could possibly put you in the way of so doing better than my friend Dias Otero. I believe it is in his power to do so if he is willing.' I also believe that for my sake you will aid him. He will place himself wholly in your hands. He does not care what danger he runs, or what hardships he has to go through in order to attain his purpose. I know that I need not say more to you. He has two years before him; long before that I am sure you will be as interested in him as you were in me. He has sufficient means to pay all expenses of travel for the time he will be out there. I know that you are descended from nobles of high rank at the court of the Incas when the Spaniards arrived, and that secrets known to but few were passed down from father to son in your family. If you can use any of those secrets to the advantage of my friend, I pray you most earnestly to do so. I trust that this letter will find you and your good wife in health. Had I been ten years younger I would have come out with my friends to aid them in their adventure, but I know that in putting them into your hands I shall be doing them a vastly greater service than I could do were I able to come in person."

When Harry ceased, the Indian sat for some time without speaking, then he said:

"It is a matter that I must think over, señor. It is a very grave one, and had any other man than Señor Barnett asked this service of me no money could have tempted me to assent to it. It is not only that my life would be in danger, but that my name would be held up to execration by all my people were I to divulge the secret that even the tortures of the Spaniards could not wring from us.

I must think it over before I answer. I suppose you are staying at the Hotel Morin; I will call and see you when I have thought the matter over. It is a grave question, and it may be three or four days before I can decide."

"I thank you, Dias; but there is no occasion for you to give a final decision now. Whether or no, we shall travel for a while, and I trust that you will go with us with your mules and be our guide, as you did to Mr. Barnett. It will be time enough when you know us better to give us a final answer; it is not to be expected that even for Señor Barnett's sake you would do this immense service for strangers, therefore I pray you to leave the matter open. Make arrangements for your mules and yourself for a three months' journey in the mountains, show us what there is to see of the gold and silver placers, and the quicksilver mines at Huanuco. At the end of that time you will know us and can say whether you are ready to aid us in our search."

The native bowed his head gravely.

"I will think it over," he said; "and now, señors, let us put that aside. My wife has been busy since you entered in preparing a simple meal, and I ask you to honour me by partaking of it."

"With pleasure, Dias."

It consisted of *puchero*, a stew consisting of a piece of beef, cabbage, sweet-potatoes, salt pork, sausage-meat, pigs' feet, yuccas, bananas, quinces, peas, rice, salt, and an abundance of Chili peppers. This had been cooked for six hours and was now warmed up. Two bottles of excellent native wine, a flask of spirits, and some water were also put on the table. The Indian declined to sit down with them, saying that he had taken a meal an hour before.

While they ate he chatted with them, asking questions of their voyage and telling them of the state of things in the country.

"It is always the same, señors, there is a revolution and two or three battles; then either the president or the one who wants to be president escapes from the country or is taken and shot, and in a day or two there is a fresh pronunciamiento. We thought that when the Spaniards had been driven out we should have had peace, but it is not so; we have had San Martin, and Bolivar, and Aguero, and Santa Cruz, and Sucre. Bolivar again finally defeated the Spaniards at Ayacucho. Rodil held possession of Callao castle, and defended it until January of this year. We in the villages have not suffered—those who liked fighting went out with one or other of the generals; some have returned, others have been killed—but Lima has suffered greatly. Sometimes the people have taken one side, sometimes the other, and though the general they supported was sometimes victorious for a short time, in the end they suffered. Most of the old Spanish families perished; numbers died in the castle of Callao, where many thousands of the best blood of Lima took refuge, and of these well-nigh half died of hunger and misery before Rodil surrendered."

"But does not this make travelling very unsafe?"

The Indian shrugged his shoulders.

"Peru is a large country, señor, and those who want to keep out of the way of the armies and lighting can do so; I myself have continued my occupation and have never fallen in with the armies. That is because the fighting is principally in the plains, or round Cuzco; for the men do not go into the mountains except as fugitives, as they could not find food there for an army. It is these fugitives who render the road somewhat unsafe; starving men must take what they can get. They do not interfere with the great silver convoys from Potosi or other mines—a loaf of bread is worth more than a bar of silver in the mountains—but they will plunder persons coming down with goods to the town or going up with their purchases. Once or twice I have had to give up the food I carried with me, but I have had little to grumble at, and I do not think you need trouble yourself about them; we will take care to avoid them as far as possible."

After chatting for an hour they left the cottage, and, mounting their mules, returned to Lima.

"I think he will help us, Harry," Bertie said as soon as they set out.

"I think so too, but we must not press him to begin with. Of course there is a question too as to how far he can help us. He may know vaguely where the rich mines once existed; but you must remember that they have been lost for three hundred years, and it may be impossible for even a man who has received the traditions as to their positions to hit upon the precise spot. The mountains, you see, are tremendous; there must be innumerable ravines and gorges among them. It is certain that nothing approaching an accurate map can ever have been made of the mountains, and I should say that in most cases the indications that may have been given are very vague. They would no doubt have been sufficient for those who lived soon after the money was hidden, and were natives of that part of the country and thoroughly acquainted with all the surroundings, but when the information came to be handed down from mouth to mouth during many generations, the local knowledge would be lost, and what were at first detailed instructions would become little better than vague legends. You know how three hundred years will alter the face of a country—rocks roll down the hills, torrents wash away the soil, forests grow or are cleared away. I believe with you that the Indian will do his best, but I have grave doubts whether he will be able to locate any big thing."

"Well, you don't take a very cheerful view of things, Harry; you certainly seemed more hopeful when we first started."

"Yes. I don't say I am not hopeful still, but it is one thing to plan out an enterprise at a distance and quite another when you are face to face with its execution. As we have come down the coast, and seen that great range of mountains stretching along for hundreds of miles, and we know that there is another quite as big lying behind it, I have begun to realize the difficulties of the adventures that we are undertaking. However, we shall hear, when Dias comes over to see us, what he thinks of the matter. I fancy he will say that he is willing to go with us and help us as far as he can, but that although he will do his best he cannot promise that he will be able to point out, with anything like certainty, the position of any of the old mines."

Next day they called on Señor Pasquez, who received them very cordially.

"So you are going to follow the example of Señor Barnett and spend some time in exploring the country and doing some shooting. Have you found Dias?"

"Yes, señor, and I think he will go with us, though he has not given a positive answer."

"You will be fortunate if you get him; he is one of the best-known muleteers in the country, and if anyone comes here and wants a guide Dias is sure to be the first to be recommended. If he goes with you he can give you much useful advice; he knows exactly what you will have to take with you, the best districts to visit for your purpose, and the best way of getting there. For the rest, I shall be very happy to take charge of any money you may wish to leave behind, and to act as your banker and cash any orders you may draw upon me. I will also receive and place to your account any sums that may be sent you from England."

"That, sir, is a matter which Mr. Barnett advised me to place in your hands. After making what few purchases we require, and taking fifty pounds in silver, I shall have two hundred and fifty pounds to place in your hands. Mr. Barnett will manage my affairs in my absence, and will send to you fifty pounds quarterly."

"You will find difficulty in spending it all in two years," the merchant said with a smile. "If you are content to live on what can be bought in the country, it costs very little; and as for the mules, they can generally pick up enough at their halting-places to serve them, with a small allowance of grain. You can hire them cheaply, or you can buy them. The latter is cheaper in the end, but you cannot be sure of getting mules accustomed to mountains, and you would therefore run the risk of their losing their foothold, and not only being dashed to pieces but destroying their saddles and loads. However, if you secure the services of Dias Otero, you will get mules that know every path in the mountains. He is famous for his animals, and he himself is considered the most trustworthy muleteer here; men think themselves lucky in obtaining his services. I would send him with loads of uncounted gold and should be sure that there would not be a piece missing."

Next day Dias came to the hotel.

"I have thought it over, señor," he said. "I need not say that were it only ordinary service, instead of exploring the mountains, I should be glad indeed to do my best for a friend of Señor Barnett; but as to the real purpose of your journey I wish, before making any arrangement, that the matter should be thoroughly understood. I have no certain knowledge whatever as to any of the lost mines, still less of any hidden treasures; but I know all the traditions that have passed down concerning them. I doubt whether any Indians now possess a certain knowledge of these things. For generations, no doubt, the secrets were handed down from father to son, and it is possible that some few may still know of these places; but I doubt it. Think of the hundreds and thousands of our people who have been killed in battle, or died as slaves in the mines, and you will see that numbers of those to whom the secrets were entrusted must have taken their knowledge to the grave with them.

"In each generation the number of those who knew the particulars of these hiding-places must have diminished. Few now can know more than I do, yet I am sure of nothing. I know generally where the mines were situated and where some treasures were concealed, and what knowledge I have I will place at your service; but so great a care was used in the concealment of the entrances to the mines, so carefully were the hiding-places of the treasures chosen, and so cunningly concealed, that, without the surest indications and the most minute instructions, we might search for years, as men indeed have done ever since the Spanish came here, without finding them. I am glad that I can lay my hand upon my heart and say, that whatever may have been possessed by ancestors of mine, no actual details have ever come down to me; for, had it been so, I could not have revealed them to you. We know that all who were instructed in these were bound by the most terrible oaths not to reveal them. Numbers have died under the torture rather than break those oaths; and even now, were one of us to betray the secrets that had come down to him, he would be regarded as accursed. No one would break bread with him, every door would be closed against him, and if he died his body would rot where it fell. But my knowledge is merely general, gathered not only from the traditions known to all our people, but from confidences made by one member of our family to another. Full knowledge was undoubtedly given to some of them; but all these must have died without initiating others into the full particulars. Such knowledge as I have is at your disposal. I can take you to the localities, I can say to you, 'Near this place was a great mine,' but unless chance favours you you may search in vain."

"That is quite as much as I had hoped for, Dias, and I am grateful for your willingness to do what you can for us, just as you did for Señor Barnett."

CHAPTER IV

A STREET FRAY

"Now, señor," Dias said, "as we have settled the main point, let us talk over the arrangements. What is the weight of your baggage?"

"Not more than a mule could carry. Of course we shall sling our rifles over our shoulders. We have a good stock of ammunition for them and for our pistols. We shall each take two suits of clothes besides those we wear, and a case of spirits in the event of accident or illness. We shall each have three flannel shirts, stockings, and so on, but certainly everything belonging to us personally would not mount up to more than a hundred and fifty pounds. We should, of course, require a few cooking utensils, tin plates, mugs, and cups. What should we need besides these?"

"A tent and bedding, señor. We should only have, at the start, to carry such provisions as we could not buy. When we are beyond the range of villages in the forests we might often be weeks without being able to buy anything; still, we should probably be able to shoot game for food. We should find fruits, but flour we shall have to take with us from the last town we pass through before we strike into the mountains, and dried meat for an emergency; and it would be well to have a bag of grain, so that we could give a handful or so to each of the mules. I am glad you have brought some good spirits—we shall need it in the swamps by the rivers. Your tea and coffee will save your having to buy them here, but you will want some sugar. We must take two picks and a shovel, a hammer for breaking up ore, a small furnace, twenty crucibles and bellows, and a few other things for aiding to melt the ore. You would want for the journey five baggage mules, and, of course, three riding mules. I could hardly manage them, even with aid from you, in very bad places, and I would rather not take any strange man with me on such business as we have in hand. But some assistance I must have, and I will take with me my nephew José. He has lost his father, and I have taken him as my assistant, and shall train him to be a guide such as I am. He is but fifteen, but he already knows something of his business, and such an expedition will teach him more than he would learn in ten years on the roads."

"That would certainly be far better than having a muleteer whom you could not trust, Dias. My brother and myself will be ready to lend you a hand whenever you want help of any kind. We have not had any experience with mules, but sailors can generally turn their hands to anything. Now, how about the eight mules?"

"I have five of my own, as good mules as are to be found in the province; we shall have to buy the three others for riding. Of course I have saddles and ropes."

"But you will want four for riding."

"No, señor; yours and the one I ride will be enough. José at times will take my place, and can when he likes perch on one of the most lightly laden animals."

"How much will the riding mules cost?"

"I can get fair ones for about fifty dollars apiece; trade is slack at present owing to the troubles, and there are many who would be glad to get rid of one or two of their train."

"And now, Dias, we come to the very important question, what are we to pay you for yourself, your nephew, and the five mules—say by the month?"

"I have been thinking the matter over, señor—I have talked it over with my wife"—he paused for a moment, and then said: "She wishes to go with me, señor."

Harry opened his eyes in surprise. "But surely, Dias, you could not think of taking her on such an expedition, where, as you say yourself, you may meet with many grave dangers and difficulties?"

"A woman can support them as well as a man," Dias said quietly. "My wife has more than once accompanied me on journeys when I have been working on contract. We have been married for fifteen years, and she has no children to keep her at home. She is accustomed to my being away for

weeks. This would be for months, perhaps for two years. I made no secret to her that we might meet with many dangers. She says they will be no greater for her than for me. At first she tried to dissuade me from going for so long a time; but when I told her that you were sent me by the gentleman who saved my life a year after I married her, and that he had recommended you to me as standing to him almost in the relation of a son, and I therefore felt bound to carry his wishes into effect, and so to pay the debt of gratitude that I owed him, she agreed at once that it was my duty to go and do all in my power for you, and she prayed me to take her with me. I said that I would put it before you, señor, and that I must abide by your decision."

"By all means bring her with you, Dias. If you and she are both willing to share the dangers we should meet with, surely we cannot object in any way."

"Thank you, señor; you will find her useful. You have already seen that she can cook well; and if we have José to look after the animals when we are searching among the hills, you will find it not unpleasant, when we return of an evening, to find a hot supper ready for us."

"That is quite true, and I am sure we shall find your wife a great acquisition to our party. The only difference will be, that instead of one large tent we must have two small ones—it does not matter how small, so long as we can crawl into them and they are long enough for us to lie down. And now about payment?"

"I shall not overcharge you," Dias said with a smile. "If my wife had remained behind I must have asked for money to maintain her while we were away. It would not have been much, for she has her garden and her house, and there is a bag hid away with my savings, so that if she had been widowed she could still live in the house until she chose someone else to share it with her; she is but thirty-two, and is as comely as when I first married her. However, as she is going with us, there will be no need to trouble about her. If misfortune comes upon us and I am killed, it is likely she will be killed also. We shall have no expenses on the journey, as you will pay for food for ourselves and the animals. You will remember, señor, that I make this journey not as a business matter—no money would buy from me any information that I may have as to hidden mines or treasures,—I do it to repay a debt of gratitude to my preserver, Don Henry Barnett, and partly because I am sure that I shall like you and your brother as I did him. I shall aid you as far as lies in my power in the object for which you are undertaking this journey. Therefore until it is finished there shall be no talk about payment. You may have many expenses beyond what you calculate upon. If we meet with no success, and return to Lima empty-handed, I shall have lost nothing. I shall have had no expenses at home, my wife and I will have fed at your expense, and José will have learned so much that he would be as good a guide as any in the country. You could then give me the three mules you will buy, to take the place of any of mine that may have perished on the journey, and should you have them to spare, I will take a hundred dollars as a *bueno mano*. If we succeed, and you discover a rich mine or a hidden treasure, you shall then pay me what it pleases you. Is it a bargain?"

"The bargain you propose is ridiculously one-sided, Dias, and I don't see how I could possibly accept the offer you make to me."

"Those are my terms, señor," Dias said simply, "to take or to leave."

"Then I cannot but accept them, and I thank you most heartily;" and he held out his hand to Dias, and the Indian grasped it warmly.

"When do you propose we shall start?"

"Will this day week suit you, señor? There are the mules to buy, and the tents to be made—they should be of vicuña skin with the wool still on, which, with the leather kept well oiled, will keep out water. We shall want them in the hills, but we shall sometimes find villages where we can sleep in shelter."

"Not for us, Dias. Mr. Barnett has told me that the houses are for the most part alive with fleas, and I should prefer to sleep in a tent, however small, rather than lie in a bed on the floor of any one

of them. We don't want thick beds, you know—a couple of thicknesses of well-quilted cotton, say an inch thick each, and two feet wide. You can get these made for us, no doubt."

The Indian nodded.

"That would be the best for travel; the beds the Peruvian caballeros use are very thick and bulky."

"You will want two for yourself and your wife, and two for José. By the by, we shall want a tent for him."

Dias smiled. "It will not be necessary, señor; muleteers are accustomed to sleep in the open air, and with two thick blankets, and a leathern coverlet in case of rain, he will be more than comfortable. I shall have five leather bags made to hold the beds and blankets. But the making of the beds and tents will take some time—people do not hurry in Lima,—and there will be the riding saddles and bridles to get, and the provisions. I do not think we can be ready before another week. It will be well, then, that you should, before starting away, visit the ruins of Pachacamac. All travellers go there, and it will seem only natural that you should do so, for there you will see the style of the buildings, and also the explorations that were everywhere made by the Spaniards in search of treasure."

"Very well, Dias; then this day week we shall be ready to start. However, I suppose I shall see you every day, and learn how you are getting on with your preparations."

Bertie had been sitting at the window looking down into the street while this conversation was going on. "Well, what is it all about?" he asked, turning round as the Indian left the room. "Is it satisfactory?"

"More than satisfactory," his brother answered. "In the first place his nephew, a lad of fifteen, who is training as a mule-driver, is going with us, which is much better than getting an outsider; in the next place his wife is going with us."

"Good gracious!" Bertie exclaimed, "what in the world shall we do with a woman?"

"Well, I think we shall do very well with her, Bertie; but well or ill she has to go. She will not let her husband go without her, which is natural enough, considering how long we shall be away, and that the journey will be a dangerous one. But really I think she will be an acquisition to the party. She is bright and pretty, as you no doubt noticed, and what is of more importance, she is a capital cook."

"She certainly gave us a good meal yesterday," Bertie said, "and though I could rough it on anything, it is decidedly pleasanter to have a well-cooked meal."

"Well, you see, that is all right."

"And how many mules are we to take?"

"Five for baggage, and three for riding. I have no doubt Dias's wife will ride behind him, and the boy, when he wants to ride, will perch himself on one of the baggage mules. Dias has five mules, and we shall only have to buy the three for riding."

"What is it all going to cost, Harry?" Bertie said when his brother had told him all the arrangements that had been made. "That is the most important point after all."

"Well, you will be astonished when I tell you, Bertie, that if we don't succeed in finding a treasure of any kind I shall only have to pay for the three riding mules, and the expenses of food and so on, and a hundred dollars."

"Twenty pounds!" Bertie said incredulously; "you are joking!"

"No, it is really so; the man said that he considered that in going with me he is only fulfilling the obligation he is under to Mr. Barnett. Of course I protested against the terms, and would have insisted upon paying the ordinary prices, whatever they might be, for his services and the use of his mules; but he simply said that those were the conditions on which he was willing to go with me, and that I could take them or leave them, so I had to accept. I can only hope that we may find some treasure, in which case only he consented to accept proper payment for his services."

"Well, it is awfully good of him," Bertie said; "though really it doesn't seem fair that we should be having the services of himself, his wife, his boy, and his mules for nothing. There is one thing, it will be an extra inducement to him to try and put us in the way of finding one of those mines."

"I don't think so, Bertie; he said that not for any sum of money whatever would he do what he is going to do, but simply from gratitude to Barnett. It is curious how the traditions, or superstitions, or whatever you like to call them, of the time of the Incas have continued to impress the Indians, and how they have preserved the secrets confided to their ancestors. No doubt fear that the Spaniards would force them to work in the mines till they died has had a great effect in inducing them to conceal the existence of these places from them. Now that the Spaniards have been cleared out there is no longer any ground for apprehension of that kind, but they may still feel that the Peruvians would get the giant's share in any mine or treasure that might be found, and that the Indians would, under one pretence or another, be defrauded out of any share of it. It is not wonderful that it should be so considering how these poor people have been treated by the whites, and it would really seem that the way in which Spain has gone to the dogs is a punishment for her cruelties in South America and the Islands. It may be said that from the very moment when the gold began to flow the descent of Spain commenced; in spite of the enormous wealth she acquired she fell gradually from her position as the greatest power in Europe.

"In 1525, after the battle of Pavia, Spain stood at the height of her power. Mexico was conquered by Cortez seven years before, Peru in 1531, and the wealth of those countries began to flow into Spain in enormous quantities, and yet her decline followed speedily. She was bearded by our bucaners among the Islands and on the western coast; the Netherlands revolted, and after fierce fighting threw off her yoke; the battle of Ivry and the accession of Henry of Navarre all but destroyed her influence in France; the defeat of the Armada and the capture of Cadiz struck a fatal blow both to her power on the sea and to her commerce, and within a century of the conquest of Peru, Spain was already an enfeebled and decaying power. It would almost seem that the discoveries of Columbus, from which such great things were hoped, proved in the long run the greatest misfortune that ever befell Spain."

"It does look like it, Harry; however, we must hope that whatever effect the discovery of America had upon Portugal or Spain, it will make your fortune."

Harry laughed.

"I hope so, Bertie, but it is as well not to be too hopeful. Still, I have great faith in Dias, at any rate I feel confident that he will do all he can; but he acknowledges that he knows nothing for certain. I am sure, however, that he will be a faithful guide, and that though we may have a rough time, it will not be an unpleasant one. Now, you must begin to turn to account what Spanish you have learned during the voyage; I know you have worked regularly at it while you have not been on duty."

"I have learned a good lot," Bertie said; "and I dare say I could ask for anything, but I should not understand the answers. I can make out a lot of that Spanish *Don Quixote* you got for me, but when Dias was talking to you I did not catch a word of what he was saying. I suppose it will all come in time."

"But you must begin at once. I warn you that when I am fairly off I shall always talk to you in Spanish, for it would look very unsociable if we were always talking together in English. If you ride or walk by the side of the boy you will soon get on; and there will be Donna Maria for you to chat away with, and from what we saw of her I should say she is sociably inclined. In three months I have no doubt you will talk Spanish as well as I do."

"It will be a horrid nuisance," Bertie grumbled; "but I suppose it has got to be done."

Three days later Dias said he thought they might as well start the next day to Pachacamac.

"We shall only want the three riding mules and one for baggage. Of course we shall not take José or my wife. By the time we return everything will be ready for us."

"I shall be very glad to be off, Dias. We know no one here except Señor Pasquez; and although he has been very civil and has begged us to consider his house as our own, he is of course busy during the day, and one can't do above a certain amount of walking about the streets. So by all means let us start to-morrow morning. We may as well go this time in the clothes we wear, it will be time enough to put on the things we have bought when we start in earnest."

Starting at sunrise, they rode for some distance through a fertile valley, and then crossed a sandy plain until they reached the little valley of Lurin, in which stand the ruins of Pachacamac. This was the sacred city of the natives of the coast before their conquest by the Incas. During their forty-mile ride Dias had told them something of the place they were about to visit. Pachacamac, meaning "the creator of the world," was the chief divinity of these early people, and here was the great temple dedicated to him. The Incas after their conquest erected a vast Temple of the Sun, but they did not attempt to suppress the worship of Pachacamac, and the two flourished side by side until the arrival of the Spaniards. The wealth of the temple was great; the Spaniards carried away among their spoils one thousand six hundred and eighty-seven pounds of gold and one thousand six hundred ounces of silver; but with all their efforts they failed to discover the main treasure, said to have been no less than twenty-four thousand eight hundred pounds of gold, which had been carried away and buried before their arrival.

"If the Spaniards could not succeed in getting at the hiding-place, although, no doubt, they tortured everyone connected with the temple to make them divulge the secret, it is evident there is no chance for us," Harry said.

"Yes, señor, they made every effort; thousands of natives were employed in driving passages through the terraces on which the temple stood. I believe that they did find much treasure, but certainly not the great one they were searching for. There is no tradition among our people as to the hiding-place, for so many of the natives perished that all to whom the secret was known must have died without revealing it to anybody. Had it not been so, the Spaniards would sooner or later have learned it, for although hundreds have died under torture rather than reveal any of the hiding-places, surely one more faint-hearted than the rest would have disclosed them. Certain it is that at Cuzco and other places they succeeded in obtaining almost all the treasures buried there, though they failed in discovering the still greater treasures that had been carried away to be hidden in different spots. But Pachacamac was a small one in comparison with Cuzco, and it was believed that the treasures had not been carried far. Tradition has it that they were buried somewhere between this town and Lima. Doubtless all concerned in the matter fled before the Spaniards arrived, at any rate with all their cruelty the invaders never discovered its position. The report that it was buried near may have been set about to prevent their hunting for it elsewhere, and the gold may be lying now somewhere in the heart of the mountains."

Harry Prendergast and his brother looked in astonishment at the massive walls that rose around the eminence on which the temple had stood. The latter had disappeared, but its situation could be traced on the plateau buttressed by the walls. These were of immense thickness, and formed of huge adobe bricks almost as hard as stone; even the long efforts of the Spaniards had caused but little damage to them. The plateau rose some five hundred feet above the sea, which almost washed one face of it. Half-way up the hill four series of these massive walls, whose tops formed terraces, stood in giant steps some fifty feet high. Here and there spots of red paint could be seen, showing that the whole surface was originally painted. The ascent was made by winding passages through the walls. On the side of the upper area facing the sea could be seen the remains of a sort of walk or esplanade, with traces of edifices of various kinds. On a hill a mile and a half away were the remains of the Incas' temple and nunnery, the style differing materially from that of the older building; it was still more damaged than the temple on the hill by the searchers for treasure.

Pachacamac was the most sacred spot in South America, vast numbers of pilgrims came here from all points. The city itself had entirely disappeared, covered deeply in sand, but for a long distance

round, it had, like the neighbourhood of Jerusalem and Mecca, been a vast cemetery, and a small amount of excavation showed the tombs of the faithful, occupied in most cases by mummies.

"We will ride across to the Incas' temple. There is not much to see there, but it is as well that you should look at the vaults in which the treasures were hid. There are similar places at Cuzco and several of the other ruins."

"It may certainly be useful to see them," Harry agreed, and they rode across the plain. Leaving their mules outside they entered the ruins. The Indian led them into some underground chambers. He had brought a torch with him, and this he now lit.

"You have to be careful or you might otherwise tumble into one of these holes and break a limb; and in that case, if you were here by yourselves, you would certainly never get out again."

They came upon several of these places. The openings were sometimes square and sometimes circular, and had doubtless been covered with square stones. They were dug out of the solid ground. For about six feet the sides of the pit were perpendicular; in some it swelled out like a great vase with a broad shoulder, in others it became a square chamber of some size.

"Some of these places were no doubt meant to store grain and other provisions," the Indian said, "some were undoubtedly treasuries."

"Awkward places to find," Harry said; "one might spend a lifetime in searching for them in only one of these temples."

"They were the last places we should think of searching," Dias said. "For years the Spaniards kept thousands of men at work. I do not say that there may not be some few places that have escaped the searchers, but what they could not with their host of workers find certainly could not be found by four or five men. It is not in the temples that the Incas' wealth has been hidden, but in caves, in deep mountain gorges, and possibly in ruins on the other side of the mountains where even the Spaniards never penetrated. There are such places. I know of one to which I will take you if our search fails elsewhere. It is near the sea, and yet there are not half a dozen living men who have ever seen it, so strangely is it hidden. Tradition says that it was not the work of the Incas, but of the people before them. I have never seen it close. It is guarded, they say, by demons, and no native would go within miles of it. The traditions are that the Incas, when they conquered the land, found the place and searched it, after starving out the native chief who had fled there with his followers and family. Some say that they found great treasure there, others that they discovered nothing; all agree that a pestilence carried off nearly all those who had captured it. Others went, and they too died, and the place was abandoned as accursed, and in time its very existence became forgotten; though some say that members of the tribe have always kept watch there, and that those who carelessly or curiously approached it have always met with their death in strange ways. Although I am a Christian, and have been taught to disbelieve the superstitions of my countrymen, I would not enter it on any condition."

"If we happen to be near it I shall certainly take a close look at it," Harry said with a laugh. "I don't fancy we should see anything that our rifles and pistols would find invulnerable."

It was getting dark by the time they had finished their inspection of the rooms, so, riding two or three miles away, they encamped in a grove up the valley. Next morning they returned to Lima. Dias had given out that the two white señors intended to visit all the ruined temples of the Incas, and as other travellers had done the same their intention excited neither surprise nor comment.

On the following evening after dark Harry and his brother were returning from the house of Señor Pasquez.

"It is a pleasant house," Harry said; "the girls are pretty and nice, they play and sing well, and are really charming. But what a contrast it was the other morning when we went in there and accidentally ran against them when we were going upstairs with their father, utterly untidy, and, in fact, regular sluts—a maid of all work would look a picture of neatness beside them."

Bertie was about to answer, when there was an outburst of shouts from a wine-shop they were passing, and in a moment the door burst open and half a dozen men engaged in a fierce conflict

rushed out. Knives were flashing, and it was evident that one man was being attacked by the rest. By the light that streamed out of the open door they saw that the man attacked was Dias. It flashed across Harry's mind that if this man was killed there was an end to all hope of success in their expedition.

"Dash in to his rescue, Bertie," he cried; "but whatever you do, mind their knives."

With a shout he sprang forward and struck to the ground a man who was dodging behind Dias with uplifted knife, while Bertie leapt on to the back of another, the shock throwing the man down face forward. Bertie was on his feet in a moment, and brought the stick he carried with all his force down on the man's head as he tried to rise. Then, springing forward again, he struck another man a heavy blow on the wrist. The knife dropped from the man's hand, and as he dashed with a fierce oath upon Bertie the stick descended again, this time on his head, and felled him to the ground. In the meantime one of the assailants had turned fiercely on Harry and aimed a blow at him with his knife; but with the ease of a practised boxer Harry stepped back, and before the man could again raise the knife he leaped in and struck him a tremendous blow on the point of his chin. The fifth man took to his heels immediately. The other four lay where they had fallen, evidently fearing they would be stabbed should they try to get on to their feet.

"Are you hurt, Dias?" Harry exclaimed.

"I have several cuts, señor, but none of them, I think, serious. You have saved my life."

"Never mind that now, Dias. What shall we do with these fellows—hand them over to the watch?"

"No, señor, that would be the last thing to do; we might be detained here for months. I will take all their knives and let them go."

"Here are two of them," Bertie said, picking up those of the men he had struck.

Dias stood over the man Harry had first knocked down, and with a fierce whisper ordered him to give up his knife, which he did at once. The other was still stupid from the effect of the blow and his fall, and Dias had only to take his knife from his relaxed fingers.

"Now, señor, let us be going before anyone comes along."

"What was it all about, Dias?" Harry asked as he walked away.

"Many of the muleteers are jealous, señor, because I always get what they consider the best jobs. I had gone into the wine-shop for a glass of pulque before going round to see that the mules were all right. As I was drinking, these men whispered together, and then one came up to me and began to abuse me, and directly I answered him the whole of them drew their knives and rushed at me. I was ready too, and wounded two of them as I fought my way to the door. As I opened it one of them stabbed me in the shoulder, but it was a slanting blow. Once out they all attacked me at once, and in another minute you would have had to look for another muleteer. 'Tis strange, señors, that you should have saved my life as Mr. Barnett did. It was a great deed to risk your lives with no weapons but your sticks against five ruffians with their knives."

"I did not use my stick," Harry said. "I am more accustomed to use my fists than a stick, and can hit as hard with them, as you saw. But my brother's stick turned out the most useful. He can box too, but cannot give as heavy a blow as I can. Still, it was very lucky that I followed your advice, and bought a couple of heavy sticks to carry with us if we should go out after dark. Now you had better come to the hotel, and I will send for a surgeon to dress your wound."

"It is not necessary, señor; my wife is waiting for me in my room, she arrived this afternoon. Knife cuts are not uncommon affairs here, and she knows quite enough to be able to bandage them."

"At any rate we shall have to put off our start for a few days."

"Not at all, señor; a bandage tonight and a few strips of plaster in the morning will do the business. I shall be stiff for a few days, but that will not interfere with my riding, and José will be able to load and unload the mules, if you will give him a little assistance. Adios! and a thousand thanks."

"That was a piece of luck, Bertie," Harry said when they had reached their room in the hotel. "In the first place, because neither of us got a scratch, and in the second, because it will bind Dias

more closely to us. Before, he was willing to assist us for Barnett's sake, now it will be for our own also, and we may be quite sure that he will do his best for us."

"It is my first scrimmage," Bertie said, "and I must say that I thought, as we ran in, that it was going to be a pretty serious one. We have certainly come very well out of it."

"It was short and sharp," Harry laughed. "I have always held that the man who could box well was more than a match for one with a knife who knew nothing of boxing. One straight hit from the shoulder is sure to knock him out of time."

Next morning Dias and his wife came up early. The former had one arm in a sling. As they entered, the woman ran forward, and, throwing her arms round Bertie, she kissed him on both cheeks. The lad was too much surprised at this unexpected salute to return it, as his brother did when she did the same to him. Then, drawing back, she poured out her thanks volubly, the tears running down her cheeks.

"Maria asked me if she might kiss you," Dias said gravely when she stopped. "I said that it was right that she should do so, for do we not both owe you my life?"

"You must not make too much of the affair, Dias; four blows were struck, and there was an end to it."

"A small matter to you, señor, but a great one to us. A Peruvian would not interfere if he saw four armed men attacking one. He would be more likely to turn down the next street, so that he might not be called as a witness. It is only your countrymen who would do such things."

"And you still think that you will be ready to start the day after to-morrow?"

"Quite sure, señor. My shoulder will be stiff and my arm in a sling for a week, but muleteers think nothing of such trifles,—a kick from a mule would be a much more serious affair."

"You don't think those rascals are likely to waylay us on the road, and take their revenge?"

"Not they, señor. If you could do such things unarmed, what could you not do when you had rifles and pistols? The matter is settled. They have not been seriously hurt. If one of them had been killed I should be obliged to be careful the next time I came here; as it is, no more will be said about it. Except the two hurt in the wine-shop they will not even have a scar to remind them of it. In two years they will have other things to think about, if it is true that Colombia means to go to war with Chili."

"What is the quarrel about, Dias?"

"The Colombians helped us to get rid of the Spaniards, but ever since they have presumed a right to manage affairs here."

"Perhaps nothing will come of it."

"Well, it is quite certain that there is no very good feeling between Chili, Bolivia, Colombia, and Peru."

"I suppose they will be fighting all round some day?"

"Yes, and it will interfere with my business. Certainly we are better off than when the Spaniards were here; but the taxes are heavy, and things don't go as people expected they would when we got rid of the Spaniards. All the governments seem jealous of each other. I don't take any interest in these matters except so far as they interfere with trade. If every man would attend to his own affairs it would be better for us all."

"I suppose so, Dias; but one can hardly expect a country that has been so many years governed by a foreign power to get accustomed all at once to governing itself."

"Now, señor, I shall be glad if you will go with me and look at the stores that are already collected. I think you will find that everything is ready."

CHAPTER V

AMONG THE MOUNTAIN

Two days later the mules were brought round to the door at sunrise, and Harry and his brother sallied out from the hotel, dressed for the first time in the Peruvian costume. They were both warmly clothed. On their heads were felt hats with broad brims, which could be pulled down and tied over the ears, both for warmth and to prevent their being blown away by the fierce winds that sweep down the gorges. A thick poncho of llama wool fell from their shoulders to their knees, and loosely tied round their necks were thick and brightly-coloured scarves. They wore high boots, and carried large knives stuck in a strap below the knee. The rifles were fastened at the bow of their saddles, and their wallets, with provisions for the day, were strapped behind. By the advice of Dias each had in his pocket a large pair of green goggles, to protect their eyes from the glare of sun and snow. They tied these on before coming downstairs, and both agreed that had they met unexpectedly in the street they would have passed each other without the slightest recognition.

"It is a pity, Harry," Bertie said seriously, "that you did not have your portrait taken to send home to a certain young lady. You see, she would then have been able to hang it up in her room and worship it privately, without anyone having the slightest idea that it was her absent lover."

"You young scamp," Harry said, "I will pull your ears for you."

"If you attempt anything of the sort, I shall tie the brim of my hat tightly over them. I really think it is very ungrateful of you not to take my advice in the spirit in which I gave it."

"If you intend to go on like this, Bert, I shall leave you behind."

"You can't do it."

"Oh, yes, I can! I might give you in charge for some crime or other; and in lack of evidence, the expenditure of a few dollars would, I have no doubt, be sufficient to induce the judge, magistrate, or whatever they call him, to give you six months' imprisonment."

"Then you are an unnatural brother, and I will make no more suggestions for your good."

So they had come downstairs laughing, though feeling a little shy at their appearance as they issued out of the courtyard. Speedily, however, they gained courage as they saw that passers-by paid no attention to them.

They had spent the previous afternoon in packing the bundles, in which every item was put away so that it could be got at readily, and in making sure that nothing had been omitted. The five baggage mules were fastened one behind another, and José stood at the head of the leading one. As they came out Dias swung his wife on to a cushion strapped behind his saddle, and mounted himself before her. Harry and his brother climbed into theirs. They had both refused to put on the heavy and cruel spurs worn by the Peruvians, but had, at the earnest request of the Indian, put them in their saddle-bags.

"You will want them," he said. "You need not use them cruelly, but you must give your mules an occasional prick to let them know that you have spurs."

On leaving the town the road ran up the valley of the Rimac, a small river, but of vital importance to the country through which it passes, as small canals branching from it irrigate the land.

"The Spaniards have done some good here at least," Harry said to Dias, who was riding beside him.

"Some of these canals were constructed in their time, but the rest existed long before they came here, and, indeed, long before the Incas came. The Incas' work lies chiefly beyond the mountains; on this side almost all the great ruins are of cities and fortresses built by the old people. Cuzco was the Incas' capital, and almost all the towns between the two ranges of the Andes were their work. It is true that they conquered the people down to the sea, but they do not seem to have cared to live here. The treasures of Pachacamac and the other places on the plains were those of the old people and

the old religion. The inhabitants of the plains are for the most part descendants of those people. The Incas were strong and powerful, but they were not numerous. That was why the Spaniards conquered them so easily. The old people, who regarded them as their masters, did not care to fight for them, just as the Peruvians did not care to fight for the Spaniards."

"I expect it was a good deal like the Normans in England," Bertie put in. "They conquered the Saxons because they were better armed and better disciplined, but they were few in number in comparison with the number they governed, and in their quarrels with each other the bulk of the people stood aloof; and it was only when the Normans began their wars in France and Scotland, and were obliged to enlist Saxon archers and soldiers, that the two began to unite and to become one people."

"I have no doubt that was so, Bertie; but you are breaking our agreement that you should speak in Spanish only."

"Oh, bother! you know very well that I cannot talk in it yet, and you surely do not expect that I am going to ride along without opening my lips."

"I know you too well to expect that," Harry laughed, "and will allow an occasional outbreak. Still, do try to talk Spanish, however bad it may be. You have got cheek enough in other things, and cheek goes a long way in learning to talk a foreign language. You have been four months at your Spanish books, and should certainly begin to put simple sentences together."

"But that is just what one does not learn from books," the lad said. "At any rate, not from such books as I have been working at. I could do a high-flown sentence, and offer to kiss your hand and to declare that all I have is at your disposal. But if I wanted to say, 'When are we going to halt for dinner? I am feeling very peckish,' I should be stumped altogether."

"Well, you must get as near as you can, Bertie. I dare say you cannot turn slang into Spanish; but you can find other words to express your meaning, and when you cannot hit on a word you must use an English one. Your best plan is to move along on the other side of Dias, and chat to his wife."

"What have I got to say to her?"

"Anything you like. You can begin by asking her if she has ever gone a long journey with her husband before, how far we shall go to-day—things of that sort."

"Well, I will try anyhow. I suppose I must. But you go on talking to Dias, else I shall think that you are both laughing at me."

Five miles from Lima they passed through the little village of Quiraz. Beyond this they came upon many cotton plantations, and in the ravines by the side of the valley or among the ruins of Indian towns were several large fortresses. They also passed the remains of an old Spanish town and several haciendas, where many cattle and horses were grazing. They were ascending steadily, and after passing Santa Clara, eleven miles from Lima, the valley narrowed and became little more than a ravine. On either side were rents made in the hills by earthquakes, and immense boulders and stones were scattered about at the bottom of the narrow gorge. Four hours' travelling brought them to Chosica, where the valley widened again near the foot of the hills.

Here they halted for the day. There was an inn here which Dias assured them was clean and comfortable, and they therefore took a couple of rooms for the night in preference to unpacking their tents.

"It is just as well not to begin that till we get farther away," Harry said. "We have met any number of laden mules coming down, and if we were to camp here we should cause general curiosity."

He accordingly ordered dinner for himself and his brother, Dias preferring to take his meal in a large room used by passing muleteers. The fare was as good as they had had at the hotel at Lima.

"I am not sorry that we halted here," Bertie said; "I feel as stiff as a poker."

"I think you got on very well, Bertie, with Mrs. Dias. I did not hear what you were saying, but you seemed to be doing stunningly."

"She did most of the talking. I asked her to speak slowly, as I did not manage to catch the sense of what she said. She seems full of fun, and a jolly little woman altogether. She generally understood what I meant, and though she could not help laughing sometimes, she did it so good-temperedly that one did not feel put out. Each time I spoke she corrected me, told me what I ought to have said, and made me say it after her. I think I shall get on fairly well at the end of a few weeks."

"I am sure you will, Bertie; the trouble is only at the beginning, and now that you have once broken the ice, you will progress like a house on fire."

There were still four hours of daylight after they had finished their meal, so they went out with Dias to explore one of the numerous burying-grounds round the village. It consisted of sunken chambers. In these were bones, with remains of the mats in which the bodies had been clothed. These wrappings resembled small sacks, and they remarked that the people must have been of very small size, or they could never have been packed away in them. With them had been buried many of the implements of their trade. One or two had apparently not been opened. Here were knitting utensils, toilet articles, implements for weaving, spools of thread, needles of bone and bronze. With the body of a girl had been placed a kind of work-box, containing the articles that she had used, and the mummy of a parrot, some beads, and fragments of an ornament of silver. Dias told them that all these tombs were made long before the coming of the Incas. He said that round the heads of the men and boys were wound the slings they had used in life, while a piece of cotton flock was wrapped round the heads of the women. Many of the graves communicated with each other by very narrow passages; the purpose of these was not clear, but probably they were made to enable the spirits of the dead to meet and hold communion with each other.

"I don't want to see any more of them," Bertie said after they had spent three hours in their investigations; "this sort of thing is enough to give one a fit of the blues."

Beyond Chosica civilization almost ceased. The road became little more than a mule track, and was in many places almost impassable by vehicles of any kind. Nothing could be wilder than the scenery they passed. At times rivers ran through perpendicular gorges, and the track wound up and down steep ravines. Sometimes they would all dismount, though Dias assured them it was not necessary; still, it made a change from the monotonous pace of little over two miles an hour at which the mules breasted the steep incline.

José rode on the first of the baggage mules, which was very lightly loaded; he generally sang the whole time. When on foot, Donna Maria stepped gaily along and Bertie had hard work to keep pace with her. He was making rapid progress with the language, though occasionally a peal of laughter from his companion told of some egregious error.

There were villages every few miles, but now when they halted they did so as a rule a mile before they got to one of these. Dinner was cooked over a fire of dead sticks, and after the meal Harry's tent was erected and the bed spread in it. The Indians went on to the village for the night, while Harry and his brother sat and smoked for a time by the fire and then turned in. At daybreak Dias rode back leading their riding mules and a baggage animal; the tent, beds, and the cooking utensils were packed up, and they rode in to the village and passed on at a trot until they overtook Maria and José, who had started with the other four mules when Dias rode away. At last they reached the head of the pass, and two days' journey took them to Oroya, standing on an elevated plateau some ten thousand feet above the sea, and five thousand below the highest point of the road.

The scenery had now completely changed. Villages were scattered thickly over the plain, cultivation was general. The hillsides were lined by artificial terraces, on which were perched chalets and small hamlets—they had seen similar terraces on the way up. These were as the Spaniards found them, and must at one time have been inhabited by a thriving population. Even now gardens and orchards flourished upon them up to the highest points on the hills. Oroya was a large place, and, avoiding the busy part of the town, they hired rooms, as it was necessary to give the mules two days'

rest. On the first evening after their arrival they gathered round a fire, for the nights were cold, and even in the daytime they did not find their numerous wraps too hot for them.

"Now, Dias," Harry said, "we must talk over our plans. You said that we would not decide upon anything till we got here."

"In the first place, señor, I think it would be well to go to the north to see the Cerro de Pasco silver mine, they say it is the richest in the world. It is well that you should see the formation of the rocks and the nature of the ore; we may in our journeyings come across similar rock."

"It is gold rather than silver that one wants to find, Dias. I do not say that a silver mine would not be worth a very large sum of money, but it would be necessary to open it and go to a large expense to prove it. Then one would have to go to England and get up a company to work it, which would be a long and difficult matter. Still, I am quite ready to go and see the place."

Dias nodded.

"What you say is true, señor. I could take you to a dozen places where there is silver. They may be good or may not, but even if they were as rich as Potosi the silver would have to be carried to Lima, so great a distance on mules' backs that it would swallow up the profits. And it would be almost impossible to convey the necessary machinery there, indeed to do so would involve the making of roads for a great distance."

"At the same time, Dias, should you know of any silver lodes that might turn out well, I would certainly take some samples, and send two or three mule-loads of the stuff home. They might be of no good for the purpose for which I have come out here, but in time I might do something with them; the law here is that anyone who finds a mine can obtain a concession for it."

"That is so, señor, but he must proceed to work it."

"I suppose it would be sufficient to put two or three men on for that purpose."

"But if you were away for a year difficulties might arise. It would be better for you only to determine the course of the lode, its thickness and value, to trace it as far as possible, and then hide all signs of the work, and not to make your claim until you return here."

"Very well, I will take your advice, Dias. And now about the real object of our journey."

"I have been thinking it over deeply," Dias said. "First as to mines; at present almost all the gold that is obtained is acquired by washing the sands of rivers. Here and there gold has been found in rocks, but not in sufficient quantities to make mining pay. The rivers whose sands are richest in gold are in the mountains that lie behind Lake Titicaca, which lies to the south of Cuzco and on the border of Bolivia. No one doubts that in the time of the Incas there existed gold mines, and very rich ones; for if it had not been so it is impossible to account for the enormous amount of gold obtained by the Spanish conquerors, and no one doubts that they got but a small portion of the gold in existence when they arrived. It is of no use whatever for us to search the old ruins of the Incas in Cuzco, or their other great towns; all that can be found there has already been carried away."

"Now you see, señor, Huanuco, Jauja, Cuzco, and Puno all lie near the eastern range of the Andes, and when the alarm caused by the arrogant conduct of the Spaniards began, it was natural that the treasures should be sent away into the heart of those mountains. The towns on the western sides of this plateau, Challhuanca, Tanibobamba, Huancavelica, would as naturally send theirs for safety into the gorges of the western Andes, but all traditions point to the fact that this was not done by the Incas. As soon as the Spaniards arrived and struck the first blow, the great chiefs would naturally call together a band of their followers on whose fidelity they could rely, load the treasures on llamas, of which they possessed great numbers, and hurry them off to the mountains."

"It is among the mountains, therefore, that our search must be made. All our traditions point to the fact that it was along the eastern range of the Cordilleras, and the country beyond, that by far the greater portion of the treasures were taken for concealment. At any rate, as we have but eighteen months for the search it is on that side that we must try, and ten times that length of time would be insufficient for us to do it thoroughly. As to the gold mines, it is certain that they lie in that portion of

the range between Cuzco and Lake Titicaca. It was near Puno, a short distance from the lake, that the Spaniards, owing to the folly of an Indian, found great treasures in a cave. They would probably have found much more had not a stream suddenly burst out which flooded the whole valley and converted it into a lake. Which do you think we had better look for first, gold mines or hidden treasures?"

"Of course that must depend on you, Dias, and how much you know about these matters. I need not say that a hidden treasure would be of vastly more use to me than the richest gold mine in the world. To obtain the gold from a mine an abundance of labour is required, besides machinery for crushing quartz and separating the gold from it. In the bed of a river, if it is rich and abounding in nuggets, three or four men, with rough machinery, could wash out a large quantity of gold in a short time, and a place of that sort would be far better than a rich mine, which could not be worked without a large amount of capital."

"I have heard tales of such places on the other side of the mountains to the south. From time to time gold-seekers have returned with as much as they could carry, but not one in a hundred of those that go ever come back; some doubtless die from hunger and hardship, but more are killed by the Indians. Most of the tribes there are extremely savage, and are constantly at war with each other, and they slay every white man who ventures into their country."

"Then is it not probable, Dias, that the gold could have come from their country?"

"Not from the plains, but from the streams running down into them; and although the Incas never attempted to subdue the tribes beyond the mountains, they may have had bodies of troops to protect the workers from incursions by these savages."

"Are there many wild beasts there?"

"In some parts of the mountains pumas and jaguars abound."

"That is not altogether satisfactory, though I should not mind if we fell in with one occasionally. But how about game, Dias?"

"The chief game are the wild vicuñas, which are very numerous in some parts; but they are very shy and difficult to hunt. Deer are plentiful, and there are foxes, bears, and hogs; but the great article of food is fish. On the plains the manatee, which is very like the seal, is caught; turtles are found in great numbers, and the people make oil from their eggs; and the buffo, a sort of porpoise, also abounds. The natives do not eat these, except when very pressed for food; they catch them for the sake of their oil. There are many kinds of fish: the sunaro, which I heard an English traveller say are like the fish the English call the pike; these grow to the length of seven or eight feet. And many smaller kinds of fish are caught by throwing the juice of the root of the barbastro into small streams. This makes the fish stupid, and they float on the surface so that they may easily be caught by hand. There are also many sorts of fruit."

"Well, then, we ought to do fairly well, Dias."

"Yes, señor; but many of these creatures are only found in the forests and in the rivers of the plains, and they are so much hunted by the savages there that they are very shy. But there are some creatures with which we certainly do not wish to meet, and unfortunately these are not uncommon. I mean the alligators and the great serpents. The natives fear the alligators much, for their weapons are of no avail against them, and they would never venture to attack a great snake."

"And besides these, what other disagreeables are there, Dias?" Bertie asked cheerfully.

"There is one other disagreeable," Dias replied, "and it is a serious one. There are in the mountains many desperate men. Some have slain an enemy who had friends influential enough to set the law in motion against them, or have escaped from prison; some have resisted the tax-collectors; many have been suspected of plotting against the government; and others are too lazy to work."

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