

Aimard Gustave

The Pearl of the Andes: A Tale of Love and Adventure



Gustave Aimard

**The Pearl of the Andes: A
Tale of Love and Adventure**

«Public Domain»

Aimard G.

The Pearl of the Andes: A Tale of Love and Adventure /
G. Aimard — «Public Domain»,

Содержание

CHAPTER I.	5
CHAPTER II.	7
CHAPTER III.	9
CHAPTER IV.	11
CHAPTER V.	13
CHAPTER VI.	16
CHAPTER VII.	18
CHAPTER VIII.	21
CHAPTER IX.	23
CHAPTER X.	26
CHAPTER XI.	29
CHAPTER XII.	31
CHAPTER XIII.	33
CHAPTER XIV.	35
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	36

Gustave Aimard

The Pearl of the Andes: A Tale of Love and Adventure

CHAPTER I. IN THE CABILDO

While Doña Rosario effected her escape by the assistance of Curumilla, as recorded in the "Adventurers," Don Tadeo was not long in regaining his senses. On opening his eyes he cast a bewildered look around him, but as soon as memory threw light into his brain, he let his head sink into his hands, and gave a free vent to his grief.

Don Tadeo wept! Don Tadeo, the King of Darkness, who a hundred times had smilingly looked death in the face – who had had such a miraculous escape – the man whose iron will had so rapidly crushed everything that opposed the execution of his projects; who by a word, a gesture, a frown, governed thousands of men submissive to his caprices, wept.

But Don Tadeo was not a man whom grief, however intense, could depress for a length of time.

"Oh, all is not ended yet," he cried. "But courage! I have a people to save before I avenge my daughter."

He clapped his hands, and Don Gregorio appeared. He saw at a glance the ravages which grief had made in the mind of his friend, but he saw that the King of Darkness had subdued the father. It was about seven o'clock in the morning.

"What are your intentions with regard to General Bustamente?" Gregorio asked.

Don Tadeo was calm, cold, and impassive; all traces of emotion had disappeared from his face, which had the whiteness and rigidity of marble.

"My friend," he replied, "we yesterday saved the liberty of our country, which was on the verge of ruin; but if, thanks to you and to all the devoted patriots who fought on our side, I have for ever overthrown Don Bustamente, and annihilated his ambitious projects, I have not on that account taken his place."

"But you are the only man – "

"Do not say that," Don Tadeo interrupted, "I do not recognise in myself the right of imposing upon my fellow citizens ideas and views which may be very good, or which I believe to be so, but which, perhaps, are not theirs. The right of freely choosing the man who is henceforward to govern them."

"And who tells you, my friend, that that man is not yourself?"

"I do!" Don Tadeo observed in a firm voice.

Don Gregorio gave a start of surprise.

"That astonishes you, does it not, my friend? But what is to be said? So it is. I am only anxious to lay down power, which is a burden too heavy for my worn-out strength, and to return again to private life."

"Oh! do not say that," Don Gregorio replied warmly; "the gratitude of the people is eternal."

"All smoke, my friend," Don Tadeo observed, ironically. "Are you sure the people are pleased with what I have done? But let us end this; my resolution is taken, and nothing can change it."

"But – " Don Gregorio wished to add.

"One word more," said Don Tadeo. "To be a statesman, my friend, a man must march alone in the way he has marked out for himself; he must have neither children, relations, nor friends. The man who is in power ought to be only human in appearance."

"What do you mean to do, then?"

"In the first place to send General Bustamente to Santiago: although the man merits death, I will not take upon myself the responsibility of his condemnation; enough blood has been shed by my orders. He shall depart tomorrow with General Cornejo and the senator Sandias, sufficiently escorted to secure him from a *coup de main*."

"Your orders shall be punctually obeyed."

"They are the last you will receive from me."

"But why?"

"Because this very day I will transfer my power to your hands."

"But, my friend – "

"Not a word more, I beg of you. Now come with me to this poor young Frenchman, who has so nobly defended my unfortunate daughter."

Don Gregorio followed him without reply.

The count had been placed in a chamber where he had received the greatest attention. His situation was satisfactory, and excepting great weakness, he felt himself much better. Loss of blood alone caused the weakness. Don Tadeo went towards him, and said warmly —

"My friend, it is God who has thrown you and your companion upon my passage. I have only known you a few months, and I have already contracted towards you a debt which it is impossible I can ever discharge."

"Why attach so high a value to the little I have been able to do, Don Tadeo." said Louis. "Alas! I would have given my life to preserve Doña Rosario."

"We shall find her again!" Don Tadeo observed, energetically.

"Oh! If I were able to get on horseback," the young man cried.

At this moment the door opened, and a peon who entered said a few words in a low voice to Don Tadeo.

"Let him come in! let him come in!" the latter cried, and turning towards Louis added, "We are about to hear some news."

An Indian entered; it was Joan, the man Curumilla had been unwilling to kill.

CHAPTER II.

JOAN

The sordid clothes which covered the person of the Indian were stained with mud, and torn by thorns and briars. It was evident that he had made a hasty journey through woods and along bad roads. He bowed with modest grace to the three gentlemen, and waited.

"Does not my brother belong to the valiant tribe of the Black Serpents?" Don Tadeo asked.

The Indian made a sign in the affirmative. Don Tadeo was well acquainted with the Indians, and knew that they only spoke when necessity required.

"What is my brother's name?" he resumed.

"Joan," the Indian said; "in remembrance of a warrior of the palefaces whom I killed."

"Good," Don Tadeo replied, with a melancholy smile; "my brother is a chief renowned in his tribe."

Joan smiled haughtily.

"My brother has arrived from his village; he has, no doubt, business to transact with the palefaces."

"My father is mistaken," the Indian replied sharply; "Joan asks the help of no one; when he is insulted, his own lance avenges him."

"My brother will excuse me," Don Tadeo said; "he must have some reason for coming to me."

"I have one," said the Indian.

"Let my brother explain himself then."

"I will answer my father's questions," said Joan, bowing.

Don Tadeo knew what sort of man he had to do with. A secret presentiment told him that he was the bearer of important news: he, therefore, followed up his questions.

"Whence does my brother come?"

"From the *toldería* of San Miguel."

"That is some distance from the city; is it long since my brother left it?"

"The moon was about to disappear and the Southern Cross alone shed its splendid light upon the earth, when Joan commenced his journey."

It was nearly eighteen leagues from the village of San Miguel to the city of Valdivia. Don Tadeo was astonished. He took from the table a glass, which he filled to the brim with *aguardiente*, and presented it to the messenger, saying —

"My brother will drink this *coui* of firewater; probably, the dust of the road sticking to his palate prevents him from speaking as easily as he could wish."

The Indian smiled; his eyes sparkled greedily; he took the glass and emptied it at a draught.

"Good," he said, smacking his lips. "My father is hospitable; he is truly the Great Eagle of the Whites."

"Does my brother come from the chief of his tribe?" Don Tadeo continued.

"No." Joan replied; "it was Curumilla that sent me."

"Curumilla!" the three men cried.

Don Tadeo breathed more freely.

"Curumilla is my friend," he said; "no harm has happened to him, I hope?"

"Here are his poncho and his hat," Joan replied.

"Heavens!" Louis exclaimed — "he is dead!"

"No," said the Indian, "Curumilla is brave and wise. Joan had carried off the young, pale, blue-eyed maiden; Curumilla might have killed Joan; he was not willing to do so; he preferred making a friend of him."

"Curumilla is good," Don Tadeo replied; "his heart is large and his soul is not cruel."

"Joan was the chief of those who carried off the young white girl. Curumilla changed clothes with him," the Indian continued, sententiously; "and said 'Go and seek the Great Eagle of the Whites, and tell him that Curumilla will save the young maiden, or perish!' Joan has come."

"My brother has acted well," said Don Tadeo.

"My father is satisfied," he said – "that is enough."

"And my brother carried off the pale girl? Was he well paid for that?"

"The great *cavale* with the black eyes is generous," the Indian said, smiling.

"Ah! I knew it!" cried Don Tadeo, "still that woman! – still that demon!"

Louis rose and said, in a voice trembling with emotion, "My friend, Doña Rosario must be saved!"

"Thanks, boundless thanks, for your devotion, my friend!" said Don Tadeo; "but, you are very weak."

"Of what consequence is that!" the young man exclaimed eagerly. "Were I to perish in the task, I swear to you, Don Tadeo de León, by the honour of my name, that I will not rest till Doña Rosario is free."

"My friend," Don Tadeo said, "three men – three devoted men, are already on the trail of my daughter."

"Your daughter?" Louis said with astonishment.

"Alas! yes, my friend, my daughter! Why should I have any secrets from you? That blue-eyed angel is my daughter! the only joy left to me in this world."

"Oh! we will recover her! We must!" Louis cried with great emotion.

"My friend," Don Tadeo continued, "the three men of whom I spoke to you are at this moment endeavouring to deliver the poor child. However dearly it costs me, I think it is best to wait."

Louis moved uneasily.

"Yes, I comprehend that this inaction is painful to you. Alas! do you think it is less so to a father's heart? Don Louis, I endure frightful torments. But I resign myself, while shedding tears of blood at not being able to do anything."

"That is true," the wounded man admitted; "we must wait, Poor Father! Poor daughter!"

"Yes," said Don Tadeo, faintly, "pity me, my friend, pity me!"

"But," the Frenchman continued, "this inactivity cannot last. You see I am strong, I can walk."

"You are a hero as to heart and devotion," Don Tadeo said with a smile; "and I know not how to thank you."

"Oh! how much the better if you regain hope," cried Louis, who had blushed at his friend's words.

Don Tadeo turned towards Joan.

"Does my brother remain here?" he asked.

"I am at my father's orders," the Indian replied.

"May I trust my brother?"

"Joan has but one heart and one life."

"My brother has spoken well; I will be grateful to him."

The Indian bowed.

"Let my brother return here on the third sun; he shall place us upon the track of Curumilla."

"On the third sun Joan will be ready."

And saluting the three gentlemen gracefully, the Indian retired to take a few hours of a repose which his great exertions had rendered necessary.

CHAPTER III. THE PURSUIT

We will return to Curumilla. The night was gloomy – the darkness profound. Urging their horses on with voice and gesture, the fugitives made the best of their way towards a forest which, if they could but reach, they would be safe.

A leaden silence brooded over the desert. They galloped on without uttering a word – without looking behind them. All at once the neighing of a horse fell upon their ears like the gloomy alarm call of a clarion.

"We are lost!" Curumilla exclaimed.

"What is to be done?" Rosario asked anxiously.

"Stop," he at length cried.

The young girl left everything to her guide. The Indian requested her to dismount.

"Have confidence in me," he said; "whatever a man can do I will undertake, to save you."

"I know you will!" she replied gratefully.

Curumilla lifted her up in his arms, and carried her with as much facility as if she had been a child.

"Why do you carry me thus?" she asked.

"We must leave no sign," he replied shortly.

He placed her on the ground with great precaution at the foot of a tree.

"This tree is hollow, my sister will conceal herself in it; she will not stir till I return."

"Oh! you will not abandon me," she said.

"I am going to make a false track, I shall soon return."

The poor girl hesitated, she was frightened. Curumilla divined what she felt. "It is our only chance of safety," he said, mournfully, "if my sister is not willing, I can remain."

Rosario was not one of the weak, puling daughters of our great European cities, who wither before they bloom. Her resolution was formed with the rapidity of lightning; she bore up against the fear which had taken possession of her mind, and replied in a firm voice —

"I will do what my brother desires."

"Good!" the Indian said. "Let my sister conceal herself, then."

He cautiously removed the cactus and creepers which surrounded the lower part of the tree, and exposed a cavity, into which the young girl crept, all trembling, like a poor sparrow in the eyrie of an eagle. As soon as Rosario was comfortably placed in the hollow of the tree, the Indian restored the plants to their primitive state, and completely concealed her hiding place with this transparent curtain. Then he regained the horses, mounted his own, led the other, and galloped off.

He galloped thus for many minutes without relaxing his speed, and when he thought himself sufficiently far from the place where Doña Rosario was concealed, he dismounted, listened for an instant, untied the sheep skins from the horses' feet and set off again with the speed of an arrow. He soon heard the galloping of horses behind him; at first distant, but rapidly drawing near and at last becoming distinct. Curumilla had a ray of hope, for his manoeuvre had succeeded. He still pressed on his horse, and leaving his heavy wooden stirrups, with their sharp angles, to beat against the sides of the still galloping animal, he stuck his long lance into the ground, threw his weight upon it, and raising himself by the strength of his wrists, sprang lightly to the ground, whilst the two abandoned horses held on their furious course. Curumilla glided in among the bushes, and made the best of his way back towards Rosario, persuaded that the horsemen would be misled by the false track.

Antinahuel had sent out his mosotones in all directions, in order to discover the traces of the fugitives, but himself had remained in the village. Antinahuel was too experienced a warrior to allow

himself to be misled. His scouts returned, one after another, without having discovered anything. The last two that returned brought with them two stray horses bathed in steam. These were the two horses abandoned by Curumilla.

"Will she escape us then?" the Linda asked.

"My sister," the Toqui replied, coolly, with a sinister smile, "when Antinahuel pursues an enemy, he does not escape."

"And yet – " she said.

"Patience," he replied; "they had a chance; their horses gave them a great advantage over me; but, thanks to my precautions, I have forced them to abandon their horses, which alone could have saved them. Within an hour they will be in our hands."

"To horse, then; and let us delay no longer," Doña Maria exclaimed impatiently.

"To horse, then, be it!" replied the chief.

This time no false route was pursued; they followed in a straight line the track by which the prisoners had escaped.

In the meantime Curumilla had rejoined Rosario.

"Well?" she asked, in a voice half choked by fear.

"In a few moments we shall be taken," the chief replied mournfully.

"What! have we no hope left?"

"None! We are surrounded on all sides."

"Oh, my Maker! What have I done?" the poor girl sobbed.

Curumilla reclined upon the ground; he had taken his weapons from his belt, and placed them beside him; and with the stoical fatalism of the Indian when he knows that he cannot escape a destiny that threatens him, he waited impassively, his arms crossed upon his breast, the arrival of the enemy. They heard the tramp of the horses drawing nearer and nearer. In a quarter of an hour all would be over.

"Let my sister prepare," Curumilla said coolly: "Antinahuel approaches."

"Poor man," said Rosario; "why did you endeavour to save me?"

"The young blue-eyed maiden is the friend of my pale brothers; I would lay down my life for her."

"You must not die, chief," she said, in her soft clear tones; "you shall not!"

"Why not? I do not dread torture; my sister shall see how a chief can die."

"Listen to me. You have heard the threats of that woman; my life is in no danger."

He replied by a gesture of assent.

"But," she continued, "if you remain with me, if you are taken, they will kill you."

"Yes," he remarked, coolly.

"Then who will inform my friends of my fate? If you die, chief, what can they do to deliver me?"

"That is true; they can do nothing."

"You must live, then, chief, for my sake."

"Does my sister wish it?"

"I insist upon it."

"Good!" said the Indian. "I will go, then; but let not my sister be cast down."

At this moment the noise of the approaching cavalcade resounded with a loudness that announced they were close at hand. The chief gathered up his arms, replaced them in his belt, and, after bestowing a last sign of encouragement upon Rosario, he glided among the high grass and disappeared. Antinahuel and the Linda were within ten paces of her.

"Here I am," she said, in a firm voice; "do with me what you please."

Her persecutors, struck with such an exhibition of courage, pulled up their horses in astonishment. The courageous girl had saved Curumilla.

CHAPTER IV. SERPENT AND VIPER

Doña Rosario stood motionless, her arms crossed, her head haughtily raised, and her look disdainful. The Linda leaped from her horse, and seizing her by the arm, shook her violently.

"Oh, oh!" she said, in a bitterly mocking tone, "my pretty dear! This is the way you oblige people to come after you: is it?"

Doña Rosario only replied to this flood of words by a look of cold contempt.

"Ah!" the exasperated courtesan exclaimed, clutching her arm, "I will bring down that proud spirit!"

"Madam," Rosario replied, mildly, "you hurt me very much."

"Serpent!" the Linda shrieked, "why can I not crush you beneath my heel?"

Rosario staggered a few paces; her foot struck against a root, and she fell. In her fall her forehead came in contact with a sharp stone; she uttered a feeble cry of pain, and fainted. The Indian chief, at the sight of the large gash in the young girl's forehead, uttered a roar like that of a wild beast. He leant over her raised her tenderly, and endeavoured to stop the bleeding.

"Fie!" said the Linda, with a jeering laugh; "are you going to play the old woman – you, the first chief of your nation?"

Antinahuel remained silent; for an instant he felt an inclination to stab the fury: he darted a glance at her so loaded with anger and hatred, that she was terrified, and instinctively made a movement as if to put herself on the defensive. As yet the attentions of Antinahuel had no effect; Rosario remained still senseless. In a few minutes the Linda was reassured by observing that love occupied more of the thoughts of the chief than hatred.

"Come, tie the creature upon a horse," she said.

"This woman belongs to me," Antinahuel replied, "and I alone have the right of disposing of her."

"Not yet, chief; a fair exchange: when you have delivered the general, I will give her up to you."

"My sister forgets," said Antinahuel, "that I have fifty mosotones with me."

"What does that signify?" she replied.

"It signifies," he replied, "that I am the stronger."

"Indeed!" she said, sneeringly, "is that the way you keep your promises?"

"I love this woman," he said, in a deep voice.

"*Caray!* I know that well enough," she replied.

"I will not have her suffer."

"See there, now," she cried, still jeering; "I give her up to you expressly that she may suffer."

"If such is my sisters thought, she is mistaken."

"Chief, my friend, you do not know what you are talking about; you are ignorant of the hearts of white women."

"I do not understand my sister."

"No; you do not comprehend that this woman will never love you – that she will never entertain for you anything but contempt and disdain."

"Oh!" Antinahuel replied, "I am too great a chief to be thus despised by a woman."

"You will see you are, though; in the meantime I demand my prisoner."

"My sister shall not have her."

"Then try to take her from me!" she shrieked; and springing like a tiger cat, she pushed away the chief, and seized the young girl, to whose throat she applied her dagger so closely that blood stained the point.

Antinahuel uttered a terrible cry.

"Stop!" he shouted in consternation; "I consent to everything."

"Ah!" cried the Linda, with a smile of triumph, "I knew I should have the last word."

The chief bit his fingers with powerless rage but he was too well acquainted with this woman to continue a struggle which he knew must infallibly terminate in the maiden's death. By a prodigy of self command he forced his face to assume a smile, and said in a mild voice —

"Wah! my sister is excited! Of what consequence is it to me whether this woman is mine now or in a few hours hence?"

"Yes, but only when General Bustamente is no longer in the hands of his enemies, Chief."

"Be it so!" he said, "since my sister requires it; let her act as she thinks fit."

"Very well; but my brother must prove his faith to me."

"What security can I give my sister, that will thoroughly satisfy her?" he said with a bitter smile.

"This," she replied, with a sneer; "let my brother swear by the bones of his ancestors that he will not oppose anything it shall please me to do, till the general is free."

The chief hesitated; the oath the Linda requested him to take was one held sacred by the Indians, and they dreaded breaking it in the highest degree; such is their respect for the ashes of their fathers. But Antinahuel had fallen into a snare, from which it was impossible for him to extricate himself.

"Good!" he said, smiling; "let my sister be satisfied. I swear upon the bones of my father that I will not oppose her in anything she may please to do."

"Thank you," the Linda answered; "my brother is a great warrior."

Antinahuel had no other plausible pretext for remaining: he slowly, and, as if regretfully, rejoined his mosotones, got into his saddle, and set off, darting at the Linda a last glance, that would have congealed her with fear if she had seen it.

"Poor puling creature!" she said. "Don Tadeo, it is you I wound in torturing your leman! Shall I at length force you to restore to me my daughter?"

The Indian peons attached to her service had remained with her. In the heat of the pursuit the horses, abandoned by Curumilla and brought back by the scouts, had remained with the troop.

"Bring hither one of those horses!" she commanded.

The courtesan had the poor girl placed across one of the horses, with her face towards the sky; then she ordered that the feet and hands of her victim should be brought under the belly of the animal and solidly fastened with cords by the ankles and wrists.

"The woman is not firm upon her legs," she said, with a dry, nervous laugh.

The poor girl gave scarcely any signs of life; her countenance had an earthy, cadaverous hue, and the blood flowed copiously. Her body, horribly cramped by the frightful posture in which she was tied, had nervous starts, and dreadfully hurt her wrists and ankles, into which the cords began to enter. A hollow rattle escaped from her oppressed chest.

CHAPTER V. AN INDIAN'S LOVE

The Linda rejoined Antinahuel, who, knowing what torture she was preparing to inflict on the young girl, had stopped at a short distance from the spot where he had left her.

When they reached the *toldería*, the horsemen dismounted and the maiden was untied and transported, half dead, into the same *cuarto* where, an hour before, she had, for the first time, found herself in the presence of the courtesan.

The appearance of Rosario was really frightful, and would have excited pity in anybody but the tigress whose delight it was to treat her so cruelly. Her long hair hung in loose disorder upon her half-naked shoulders, and at various spots adhered to her face through the blood which had flowed from her wound; her face, soiled with blood and dirt, wore a greenish cast, and her half-closed lips showed that her teeth were tightly clenched. Her wrists and ankles, to which still hung strips of the thick cord by which she had been fastened to the horse, were frightfully bruised and discoloured. Her delicate frame was convulsed with nervous quiverings, and her faint breathing painfully issued from her heaving chest.

"Poor girl!" the chief murmured.

"Why, chief!" said the Linda, with a sardonic smile. "I scarcely know you! Good Heavens! how love can change a man! What, you, intrepid warrior, pity the fate of this poor maudlin chit! I really believe you will weep over her like a woman, next!"

"Yes," the chief said; "my sister speaks truly, I scarcely know myself! Oh!" he added, bitterly, "is it possible that I, Antinahuel, to whom the Huincas have done so much wrong, can be so? This woman is of an accursed race; she is in my power, I could avenge myself upon her, satisfy the hatred that devours me, make her endure the most atrocious injuries! – and, I dare not! – no, I dare not!"

"Does my brother, then, love this woman so much?" the Linda asked, in a soft, insinuating tone.

Antinahuel looked at her as if she had awakened him suddenly from his sleep; he fixed his dull eyes upon her, and exclaimed —

"Do I love her? – love her! – let my sister listen. Before dying, and going to hunt in the blessed prairies with the just warriors, my father called me to him, and placing his mouth to my ear – 'My son, he said, thou art the last of our race; Don Tadeo de León is also the last of his; since the coming of the palefaces, the family of that man has been always fatally opposed to ours, everywhere and under all circumstances. Swear to kill that man whom it has never been in my power to reach!' I swore to do it. Good!' he said, Pillian loves children who obey their father; let my son mount his best horse, and go in search of his enemy. Then, with a sigh, my father bade me depart. Without replying, I saddled, as he had commanded me, my best horse, and went to the city called Santiago, resolved to kill my enemy."

"Well?" the Linda asked, seeing him stop short.

"Well!" he resumed, "I saw this woman, and my enemy still lives." The Linda cast upon him a look of disdain; but Antinahuel did not remark it – he continued —

"One day this woman found me dying, pierced with wounds; she made her peons bear me to a stone *toldo*, where for three months she watched over me, driving back the death which had hung over me."

"And when my brother was cured?" the Linda asked eagerly.

"When I was cured," he resumed, passionately, "I fled away like a wounded tiger, bearing in my heart an incurable wound! Two suns ago, when I was quitting my *toldería*, my mother, whom I loved and venerated, wished to oppose my departure; she knew that it was love that attracted me from her, that it was to see this woman I left her. Well, my mother – "

"Your mother?" the courtesan said, breathlessly.

"As she persisted in not allowing me to depart, I trampled her, without pity, beneath the hoofs of my horse!" he cried, in almost a shriek.

"Oh!" exclaimed the Linda, recoiling.

"Yes! it is horrible, is it not, to kill one's mother? Now!" he added, with a frightful mocking laugh, "will my sister ask again if I love this woman? For her sake, to see her, to hear her address to me one of those sweet words which she used to speak near me, or only to see her smile, I would joyfully sacrifice the most sacred interests. I would wade through the blood of my dearest friends – nothing should stop me!"

The Linda, as she listened to him and observed him, reflected deeply, and as soon as he ceased she said —

"I see that my brother really loves this woman. I was deceived, I must repair my fault."

"What does my sister mean?"

"I mean, that if I had known, I should not have inflicted so severe a chastisement."

"Poor girl!" he sighed.

The Linda smiled ironically to herself. "But my brother does not know what palefaced women are," she continued; "they are vipers, which you endeavour in vain to crush, and which always rise up again to sting the heel of him who places his foot upon them. It is of no use to argue with passion, were it not so I would say to my brother, 'Be thankful to me, for in killing this woman I preserve you from atrocious sorrow.'"

Antinahuel moved uneasily.

"But," she continued, "my brother loves, and I will restore this woman to him; within an hour I will give her up to him."

"Oh! if my sister does that," Antinahuel exclaimed, intoxicated with joy, "I will be her slave!"

Doña Maria smiled with an undefinable expression.

"I will do it," she said, "but time presses, we cannot stay here any longer – my brother doubtless forgets."

Antinahuel darted a suspicious glance at her.

"I forget nothing," he replied; "the friend of my sister shall be released."

"Good! my brother will succeed."

"Still, I will not depart till the blue-eyed maiden has recovered her senses."

"Let my brother hasten to give orders for our departure in ten minutes."

"It is good!" said Antinahuel; "in ten minutes I shall be here."

He left the cuarto with a hasty step. As soon as he was gone, the Linda knelt down by the young girl, removed the cords that still cut her flesh, washed her face with cold water, fastened up her hair, and carefully bandaged the wound on her forehead.

"Oh!" she thought, "through this woman I hold you, demon!"

She softly raised the maiden, placed her in a high-backed chair, remedied, as well as she was able, the disorder in her dress, and then applied a phial of powerful salts to her nostrils.

These salts were not long in producing their effect; she breathed a deep sigh, and opened her eyes, casting round vague and languid looks. But suddenly her eye fell upon the woman who was lavishing her cares upon her; a fresh pallor covered the features, which had begun to be slightly tinged with red, she closed her eyes, and was on the point of fainting again. The Linda shrugged her shoulders, took a second phial from her bosom, and opening the poor girl's mouth introduced a few drops of cordial between her livid lips. At that moment Antinahuel returned.

"Everything is ready," he said; "we can depart immediately."

"When you please," Doña Maria replied.

"What is to be done with this girl?"

"She will remain here: I have arranged everything."

"Let us be gone, then!" and turning towards Rosario, she said, with a malignant smile. "Farewell, till we meet again, señorita!"

Doña Rosario rose, and said in an earnest tone, "I do not curse you; but God grant, if you ever have children, that they may never be exposed to the tortures you have condemned me to endure."

On hearing this speech, which seared her heart like a red-hot iron, the Linda uttered a cry of terror; a cold perspiration beaded on her pale forehead, and she staggered out of the apartment.

"My mother! my mother!" cried Rosario; "if you still live, where are you? Why do you not come to the help of your daughter?"

CHAPTER VI.

PREPARATIONS FOR DELIVERANCE

The little troop of cavalry, at the head of which Antinahuel and the Linda rode, advanced rapidly and silently along the road from San Miguel towards the valley in which, the day before, the renewal of the treaties had been accomplished. At sunrise they debouched into the plain. They had scarcely advanced fifty paces when they saw a horseman coming at full speed towards them. This horseman was Black Stag: Antinahuel halted his escort.

"What is the use of this halt?" Doña Maria observed.

"Is my sister a soldier?" Antinahuel asked.

Doña Maria, mortified at this rude speech, reined in her horse and remained a few paces in the rear, so that Antinahuel was left alone at the head of his troop. At the expiration of five minutes Black Stag pulled up his horse.

"Has my father returned among his children?" he said, bowing his head as a salutation to the chief.

"Yes!" Antinahuel replied. "What has my son done during my absence?"

"I have executed the orders of my father."

"All of them?"

"All!"

"Good! Has my son received any news of the palefaces?"

"A strong body of the Chiaplos is preparing to quit Valdivia to repair to Santiago."

"Good! With what purpose?"

"They are taking to Santiago the prisoner named General Bustamente."

Antinahuel turned towards the Linda, and exchanged a glance of intelligence with her.

"For what day have the Huincas fixed their departure?"

"They are to set out the day after tomorrow."

Antinahuel reflected for a few minutes.

"This is what my son will do," he said. "In two hours he will strike his camp, and direct his course toward the Canyon del Rio Seco, where I will go and wait for him."

"I will obey!" said the Black Stag, bowing his head affirmatively.

"Good! My son is an experienced warrior; he will execute my orders with intelligence."

The man smiled with pleasure at receiving this praise from his chief; after bowing respectfully before him, he made his horse curvet gracefully, and set off with his followers.

Antinahuel took the road towards the mountains at a sharp trot. After riding silently for some time by the side of Doña Maria, he turned towards her graciously, and said —

"Does my sister understand the tenor of the order I have just given?"

"No!" she replied, with a slight tinge of irony; "as my brother has well remarked, I am not a soldier."

"My intentions are very simple," he replied; "the Canyon del Rio Seco is in a narrow defile which the palefaces are obliged to cross. Fifty chosen warriors can here contend with advantage against twenty times their number. It is in that place I am determined to wait for the Huincas. The Moluchos will take possession of the heights; and when the palefaces have entered that passage without suspicion, I will attack them on all sides."

"Does there, then, exist no other road to Santiago?"

"None; they must go that way."

"Then they are doomed!" she joyfully exclaimed.

"Without doubt!" he said proudly; "the Canyon del Rio Seco is celebrated in our history."

"Then my brother can answer for saving Don Pancho Bustamente?"

"Yes, unless the sky falls!" he said, with a smile.

CHAPTER VII. A COUNTERMINE

As Trangoil-Lanec had predicted, Louis recovered from the effects of his wounds with surprising rapidity. Whether it was owing to his ardent desire to commence his researches, or to the goodness of his condition, we will not say; but on the eve of the day fixed for the departure he was quite on the alert, and told Don Tadeo he was ready to start whenever he pleased.

He was the more anxious to depart in that Valentine, his dog Cæsar, and Trangoil-Lanec had been absent three days, and no tidings had been received. Curumilla had not come back. All these circumstances augmented in an enormous degree the impatience of the count; whilst, on his part, Don Tadeo was not much more easy. The poor father shuddered at the idea of the suffering to which his child was exposed.

And yet there was mingled an undefinable joy at thinking of the tortures he should inflict, in his turn, upon Doña Maria, when revealing to her that the person she had taken so much delight in martyring was her own daughter. Don Tadeo, a man of elevated mind, endeavoured to shake off this unworthy thought, but it persisted in recurring with tenacity.

Don Gregorio, in whose hands Don Tadeo had placed his power and authority, urged on by Louis, hastened the preparations for the departure on the morrow. At about eight o'clock in the evening. Don Gregorio, after giving certain instructions in one of the private apartments of the cabildo to General Cornejo and the senator Sandias, who were to conduct Don Pancho to Santiago, had dismissed them, and was conversing with Don Tadeo, when the door was thrown open, and a man entered. On seeing him, they uttered a general cry of joy and astonishment. It was Curumilla!

"At last!" Louis and Don Tadeo exclaimed.

"I am here!" the Ulmen replied, sorrowfully.

As the poor Indian seemed quite exhausted with fatigue and want of food, they made him sit down. In spite of all his Indian stoicism, Curumilla literally seized the food as soon as it appeared, and devoured it greedily.

As soon as the keenness of his appetite was a little abated, Curumilla related the full details of all that had happened since his departure from the camp, the manner in which he had delivered the young lady, and how, an hour after, she had been recaptured by her enemies. When he quitted Doña Rosario the brave Indian had only kept at a sufficient distance from her to avoid being himself taken by her ravishers.

Don Tadeo and the count warmly thanked him.

"I have done nothing yet," he said, "since all must be begun again; and now," he added, "it will be more difficult, for they will be on their guard."

"Tomorrow," Don Tadeo replied, warmly, "we will set out all together on the track."

"Yes," the chief said, "I am aware you are to depart tomorrow."

The three men looked at each other with astonishment; they could not understand how the news of their movements should be known.

"There are no secrets for Aucas, when they wish to know them," the chief said with a smile.

"It is impossible!" Don Gregorio exclaimed angrily.

"Let my brother listen," the chief replied quietly. "Tomorrow, at sunrise, a detachment of a thousand white soldiers will leave Valdivia to conduct the prisoner Bustamente to Santiago. Is it not so?"

"Yes," Don Gregorio replied, "I must admit that what you say is correct."

"Well," said the Ulmen smiling, "I cannot deny that the man who gave me these details had no suspicion that I overheard him."

"Explain yourself, chief, I implore you!" Don Tadeo cried; "we are upon burning coals."

"I have told you that I followed Antinahuel's party; I must add that occasionally I got before them. The day before yesterday, at sunrise, the Black Stag, who was left with Antinahuel's warriors during his absence, was on the prairie of the treaties, and as soon as he saw his chief, galloped to meet him. As I had no doubt that these two men, during their conference, would allow some words to escape that might afterwards be of service to me, I drew as close to them as possible, and that is the way they placed me in possession of their projects."

"Of their projects?" Don Gregorio asked, "are they mad enough, then, to think of attacking us?"

"The pale woman has made Antinahuel swear to deliver her friend, who is a prisoner."

"Well! and what then?"

"Antinahuel will deliver him."

"Ay, ay!" said Don Gregorio, "but that project is more easily formed than executed, chief."

"The soldiers are obliged to traverse the Canyon del Rio Seco."

"No doubt they are."

"It is there that Antinahuel will attack the palefaces with his mosotones."

"Sangre de Cristo!" Don Gregorio exclaimed, "What is to be done?"

"The escort will be defeated," Don Tadeo observed.

Curumilla remained silent.

"Perhaps not!" said the count: "I know the chief; he is not the man to cause his friends embarrassment without having the means of showing them how to avoid the peril he reveals to them."

"Unfortunately," Don Tadeo replied, "there exists no other passage but that cursed defile; it must absolutely be cleared, and five hundred resolute men might not there only hold a whole army in check, but cut it to pieces."

"That may be all very true," the young man replied persistently; "but I repeat what I have said – the chief is a skilful warrior, his mind is fertile in resources."

Curumilla smiled and nodded.

"I was sure of it!" Louis cried. "Now then, chief, speak out! Do you not know a means of enabling us to avoid this dangerous passage?"

"I will not certify that," the Ulmen replied; "but if my brothers the palefaces will consent to allow me to act, I will undertake to foil the plans of Antinahuel and his companions."

"Speak! speak, chief!" the count exclaimed, vehemently; "explain to us the plan you have formed; these caballeros rely entirely upon you."

"Yes," Don Tadeo replied, "we are listening to you anxiously, chief."

"But," Curumilla resumed, "my brothers must act with caution. I require to be left absolute master."

"You have my word, Ulmen," said Don Gregorio; "we will only act as you command us."

"Good!" said the chief; "let my brothers listen."

And without more delay he detailed to them the plan he had formed, and which, as might be expected, obtained the general assent. Don Tadeo and the count entered enthusiastically into it, promising themselves the happiest results. By the time the last measures were agreed to and all was arranged the night was far advanced, and the four speakers stood in need of some repose. Curumilla in particular, having slept but little for several days, was literally sinking with fatigue. Louis alone appeared to require no repair for his strength. But prudence demanded that a few hours should be given to sleep, and, in spite of the counts remonstrances, they separated.

The young man, forced to submit to the reasons of the experienced men who surrounded him, retired with a very bad grace, promising himself *in petto* not to let his friends forget the hour fixed upon for their departure.

Louis felt it was impossible to follow their example, and impatience and love – those two tyrants of youth – heated his brain, he ascended to the roof of the palace, and with his eyes fixed upon the

lofty mountains, whose dark shadows were thrown across the horizon, he gave all his thoughts to the fair Rosario.

Louis, abandoning himself to delightful thoughts, thus dreamed through the night, and did not think of descending till the stars successively disappeared in the depths of the heavens, and a pale whiteness began to tinge the horizon. In that climate this announced the speedy approach of day.

CHAPTER VIII. EL CANYON DEL RIO SECO

At about ten leagues from San Miguel de la Frontera, a miserable town peopled by some twenty or thirty Huiliche shepherds, on the road to Arauca, the land rises rapidly, and suddenly forms an imposing wall of granite, the summit of which is covered with virgin forests of firs and oaks, impenetrable to the sun. A passage of twenty yards at most, is opened by nature through this wall. Its length is more than a mile, forming a crowd of capricious, inextricable windings, which appear constantly to turn back upon themselves. On each side of this formidable defile, the ground, covered with trees and underwood, stage above stage, is capable, in case of need, of offering impregnable intrenchments to those who defend the passage.

This place is named El Canyon del Rio Seco, a name common in America, because not only has vegetation long since covered the face of this wall with an emerald carpet, but it is evident that in remote periods a channel by which the waters of the upper plateaus of the Andes, overflowing, either in consequence of an earthquake or some natural inundation, pour down to the plain – had violently and naturally cut itself a passage to the sea.

Antinahuel, followed closely by the Linda, who wished to see everything for herself, visited the posts, gave short and precise instructions to the Ulmens, and then regained the bivouac he had chosen, and which formed the advanced guard of the ambuscade.

"Now, what are we going to do?" Doña Maria asked.

"Wait," he replied.

And folding himself in his poncho, he laid down on the ground and closed his eyes.

On their side, the Spaniards had set out a little before daybreak. They formed a compact troop of five hundred horsemen, in the centre of whom rode without arms, and between two lancers, charged to blow out his brains at the least suspicious action, General Bustamente.

In advance of this troop, there was another of an almost equal force; this was, in appearance, composed of Indians. We say in appearance, because the men were in reality Chilians, but their Araucano costume, their arms, even to the caparison of their horses, in short, everything in their disguise, was so exact, that at a short distance it was impossible for even the experienced eyes of the Indians themselves to detect them. These apparent Indians were commanded by Joan.

When arrived at mid-distance between Valdivia and the Canyon, the hindermost troop halted, whilst that commanded by Joan continued its march, but slowly, and with increased precaution. Four horsemen closed the rear; Don Tadeo, Don Gregorio, the count, and Curumilla, who were engaged in earnest conversation.

"Then you persist in having nobody with you?" said Don Gregorio.

"Nobody; we two will be quite sufficient," Curumilla replied, pointing to the young Frenchman.

"Why will you not take me with you?" Don Tadeo asked.

"I thought you would prefer remaining with your soldiers."

"I am anxious to join my daughter as soon as possible."

"Come, then, by all means. You," turning to Don Gregorio, "will remember that nothing must induce you to enter the defile before you see a fire blazing on the summit of the Corcovado."

"That is perfectly understood, so now farewell."

After exchanging hearty shakes of the hand, the four men separated. Don Gregorio galloped after his troops, whilst Don Tadeo and the count, guided by Curumilla, began to climb the mountain. They continued to ascend for more than an hour, and at last reached a platform of considerable extent.

"Dismount," he said; Curumilla setting the example, which his companions followed.

"Let us unsaddle our horses," the chief continued. "We shall not want the poor beasts for some time. I know a place, not far off, where they will be comfortably sheltered, and where we can find them when we come back – if we do come back," he added.

"Holloa, chief!" Louis exclaimed, "Are you beginning to be apprehensive?"

"Och!" the Ulmen replied, "my brother is young, his blood is very warm; Curumilla is older, he is wise."

"Thanks," the young man said, "it is impossible to tell a friend that he is a fool more politely."

The three men continued to ascend, dragging their horses after them by their bridles, which was no easy matter in a narrow path where the animals stumbled at every step. At length, however, they gained the entrance of a natural grotto, into which they coaxed the noble creatures. They supplied them with food, and then closed up the entrance of the grotto with large stones, leaving only a narrow passage of air.

"Now let us begone," said Curumilla.

They threw their guns upon their shoulders, and set forward with a resolute step. After three quarters of an hour of this painful ascent the Ulmen stopped.

"This is the place," he said.

The three men had attained the summit of an elevated peak, from the top of which an immense and splendid panorama lay unrolled before their eyes.

CHAPTER IX. BEFORE THE FIGHT

As soon as they had set foot on the platform, Don Tadeo and the count sank exhausted. Curumilla left them undisturbed for a few minutes to recover their breath, then requested them to look around them. Beneath their feet was the Canyon del Rio Seco, with its imposing granite masses and its thick clumps of verdure.

"Oh!" Louis exclaimed, enthusiastically, "how splendid this is!"

Don Tadeo, accustomed from his infancy to such sublime panoramas, only cast an absent glance over the magnificent prospect. His mind was intent upon his daughter, the beloved child whom he hoped soon to deliver.

"Are we going to remain here long?" he asked.

"For a few minutes," Curumilla replied.

"What is the name of this place?" the count said.

"It is the peak which the palefaces call the Corcovado." said the Ulmen.

"The one upon which you appointed to light the signal fire?"

"Yes; let us hasten to prepare it."

The three men constructed an immense pile of wood.

"Now," said Curumilla, "rest, and do not stir till my return."

And without entering into further detail, Curumilla sprang down the steep declivity of the mountain, and disappeared among the trees. The two friends sat down near the pile, and waited pensively the return of the Ulmen. The troop commanded by Joan approached the defile, simulating all the movements of Indians, and were soon within gunshot of the Canyon. Antinahuel had perceived them, and had for some time been watching their movements. Notwithstanding all his cunning, the Toqui did not for an instant suspect a stratagem. The presence of Joan at the head of the troop, whom at the first glance he had recognised, completed his conviction.

Joan plunged into the defile without evincing the least hesitation; but scarcely had he proceeded a dozen yards when an Indian sprang out of a thicket, and stood in front of him. This Indian was Antinahuel himself.

"My son comes late," said the Toqui, casting a suspicious glance at him.

"My father will pardon me," Joan replied, respectfully; "I had notice only last night."

"Good," continued the chief; "I know my son is prudent. How many lances does he bring with him?"

"A thousand."

As may be perceived, Joan bravely doubled the number of his soldiers.

"Oh! oh!" said the Toqui, joyfully, "a man may be pardoned for coming late when he brings so numerous a troop with him."

"My father knows I am devoted," the Indian replied.

"I know you are; my son is a brave warrior. Has he seen the Huincas?"

"I have seen them."

"Are they far distant?"

"No; they are coming – in less than three-quarters of an hour they will be here."

"We have not an instant to lose. My son will place his warriors in ambush."

"Good! It shall be done; my father may leave it to me."

At this moment the troop of false Indians appeared at the entrance of the defile, into which they boldly entered, after the example of their leader.

"My son will use all possible diligence," said Antinahuel, and hastened back to his post.

Joan and his men went forward at full gallop; they were watched by from a thousand to fifteen hundred invisible spies, who, at the smallest suspicion, created by a doubtful gesture even, would have massacred them without mercy.

Joan, after having made his men dismount and conceal their horses in the rear, distributed them with a calmness and collectedness that must have banished the suspicions of the chief. Ten minutes later the defile appeared as solitary as before. Joan had scarcely gone six paces into the thicket when a hand was laid upon his shoulder. He turned sharply round; Curumilla was before him.

"Good!" the latter murmured, in a voice low as a breath; "let my son follow me with his men."

Joan nodded assent, and with extreme precaution and in perfect silence three hundred soldiers began to escalate the rocks in imitation of the Ulmen. The three hundred men led by Joan, who had escalated the wall of the defile on the opposite side of the canyon, were divided into two troops. The first had taken up a position above Black Stag, and the second, a hundred strong, were massed as a rear post. As soon as Curumilla had prepared the manoeuvre we have just described, he quitted Joan and rejoined his companions.

"At last!" they cried, both in a breath.

"I began to be afraid something had happened to you, chief," said the count.

Upon which Curumilla only smiled. "Everything is ready," he said; "and when the palefaces please, they can penetrate into the defile."

"Do you think your plan will succeed?" Don Tadeo asked anxiously.

"I hope it will," the Indian replied.

"What are we to do now?"

"Light the fire, and depart."

"How depart? Our friends?"

"They stand in no need of us; as soon as the fire is alight we will set out in search of the young maiden."

"God grant that we may save her!"

Curumilla, after lighting a bit of tinder which he had in a horn box, collected with his feet a heap of dried leaves, placed the tinder beneath them, and began to blow with all his might. The fire, acted upon by the breeze, which at that height blew strongly, was rapidly communicated, and shortly a thick column of flame mounted roaring to the sky.

"Good!" said Curumilla to his companions; "they see the signal."

"Let us begone, then, without delay," cried the count, impatiently.

"Come on, then," said Don Tadeo.

The three men plunged into the immense virgin forest which covered the summit of the mountain, leaving behind them that sinister beacon – a signal for murder and destruction. On the plain, Don Gregorio, fearing to advance before he knew what he had positively to trust to, had given orders to his troops to halt. He did not conceal from himself the dangers of his position, so that if he fell in the battle he was about to fight, his honour would be safe and his memory without reproach.

"General," he said, addressing Cornejo, who as well as the senator was close to him, "you are accustomed to war, are an intrepid soldier, and I will not conceal from you that we are in a position of peril.

"Oh! oh!" said the general; "explain, Don Gregorio, explain!"

"The Indians are in ambush in great numbers, to dispute the passage of the defile with us."

"The rascals! Only see now! Why, they will knock us all on the head," the general, still calm, said.

"Oh! it is a horrible trap!" the senator cried.

"Caspita! a trap, I believe it is, indeed!" the general continued. "But you will be able to give us your opinion presently; if, as is not very probable, you come safely through, my friend."

"But I will not go and run my head into that frightful fox's hole!" cried Don Ramón, beside himself.

"Bah! you will fight as an amateur, which will be very handsome on your part."

"Sir," said Don Gregorio, coldly, "so much the worse for you; if you had remained quietly at Santiago, you would not be in this position."

"That is true, my friend," the general followed up, with a hearty laugh.

"How did it happen that you, who are as great a coward as a hare, troubled yourself with military politics?"

The senator made no reply to this cruel apostrophe.

"Whatever may happen, can I reckon upon you, general?" Don Gregorio asked.

"I can only promise you one thing," the old soldier answered, nobly; "that I will not shrink, and if it should come to that, will sell my life dearly. As to this cowardly fellow, I undertake to make him perform prodigies of valour."

At this threat the unhappy senator felt a cold sweat inundate his whole body. A long column of flame burst from the top of the mountain.

Don Gregorio cried, "Caballeros! Forward! and God protect Chili!"

"Forward!" the general repeated, unsheathing his sword.

CHAPTER X. THE PASSAGE OF THE DEFILE

While these things were going on in the defile, a few words exchanged between Antinahuel and the Linda filled the Toqui with uneasiness, by making him vaguely suspicious of some treachery.

"What is the matter?" Doña Maria asked.

"Nothing very extraordinary," he replied, carelessly; "some reinforcements have arrived rather late, upon which I did not reckon."

"Good Heavens!" said Doña Maria, "I have been perhaps deceived by an extraordinary resemblance; but, if the man I mean were not forty leagues off, I should declare it is he who commands that troop."

"Let my sister explain herself," said Antinahuel.

"Tell me, in the first place, chief," the Linda continued, "the name of the warrior to whom you spoke?"

"His name is Joan."

"That is impossible! Joan is at this moment more than forty leagues from this place, detained by his love for a white woman," the Linda cried.

"My sister must be mistaken, because I have just been conversing with him."

"Then he is a traitor!" she said passionately.

The chief's brow became thoughtful.

"This has an awkward appearance," he said. "Can I have been betrayed?" he added in a deep tone.

"What are you going to do?" the Linda asked, stopping him.

"To demand of Joan an account of his ambiguous conduct."

"It is too late," the Linda continued, pointing with her finger to the Chilians.

"Oh!" Antinahuel cried, with rage, "woe be to him if he prove a traitor."

"It is no longer time for recrimination and threats; you must fight."

"Yes," he replied, fervently; "we will fight now. After the victory it will be time enough to chastise traitors."

The plan of the Araucanos was of the most simple kind: to allow the Spaniards to enter the defile, then to attack them at once in front and in rear, whilst the warriors in ambush on the flanks poured down upon them enormous stones and fragments of rock. A party of the Indians had bravely thrown themselves both in front and rear of the Spaniards to bar their passage. Antinahuel sprang up, and encouraging his warriors with voice and gesture, he rolled down an immense stone amongst his enemies. All at once a shower of bullets came pattering down upon his troops. The false Indians, led by Joan, showed themselves, and charged him resolutely to the cry of "Chili! Chili!"

"We are betrayed!" Antinahuel shouted, "Kill, kill!"

Some horsemen charged in troops at speed, whilst others galloped at random among the terrified infantry.

The Araucanos did not yield an inch – the Chilians did not advance a step. The *mêlée* undulated like the waves of the sea in a tempest; the earth was red with blood.

The combat had assumed heroic proportions.

At length, by a desperate effort Antinahuel succeeded in breaking through the close ranks of the enemies who enveloped him, and rushed into the defile, followed by his warriors, and waving his heavy hatchet over his head. Black Stag contrived to effect the same movement; but Joan's Chilian horse advanced from behind the rising ground which had concealed them, with loud cries, and came on sabring all before them.

The Linda followed closely the steps of Antinahuel, her eyes flashing, her lips compressed.

"Forward! – forward!" Don Gregorio cried in a voice of thunder.

"Chili! Chili!" the general repeated, cutting down a man at every blow.

More dead than alive, Don Ramón fought like a demon; he waved his sword, rode down all in his way with the weight of his horse, and uttered inarticulate cries with the gestures of one possessed.

In the meantime, Don Bustamente snatched a sword from one of the soldiers, made his horse plunge violently, and dashed forward, crying with a loud voice —

"To the rescue! – to the rescue!"

To this appeal the Araucanos replied by shouts of joy, and flew towards him.

"Ay, ay," a scoffing voice cried; "but you are not free yet, Don Pancho."

General Bustamente turned sharply round, and found himself face to face with General Cornejo, who had leaped his horse over a heap of dead bodies. The two men, after exchanging a look of hatred, rushed against each other with raised swords. The shock was terrible; the two horses fell with it. Don Pancho received a slight wound in the head; the arm of General Cornejo was cut through by the weapon of his adversary. With a bound Don Pancho was again on his feet; General Cornejo would willingly have been so, likewise, but suddenly a knee pressed heavily upon his chest, and obliged him to sink upon the ground.

"Pancho! Pancho!" Doña María cried, with the laugh of a demon, for it was she, "see how I kill your enemies!"

Don Pancho had not even heard the exclamation of the courtesan, so fully was he engaged in defending himself. At the sight of the odious murder committed by the Linda, Don Ramón shouted —

"Viper! I will not kill you, because you are a woman; but I will mar your future means of doing evil."

The Linda sank beneath his blow with a shriek of pain; he had slashed her down the cheek from top to bottom! Her hyena-like cry was so frightful that it even brought to a pause the combatants engaged around her. Bustamente heard her, and with one bound of his horse was by the side of his ancient mistress, whom the wound on her face rendered hideous. He stooped slightly down, and seizing her by her long hair, threw her across the neck of his horse; then plunging his spurs into the animal's flanks, he dashed, headforemost, into the thickest of the *mêlée*. In spite of the efforts of the Chilians to recapture the fugitive, he succeeded in escaping.

At a signal from Antinahuel, the Indians threw themselves on each side of the defile, and scaled the rocks with incredible velocity under a shower of bullets.

The combat was over. The Araucanos had disappeared. The Chilians counted their losses, and found them great; seventy men had been killed, and a hundred and forty-three were wounded. Several officers, among whom was General Cornejo, had fallen. It was in vain they searched for Joan. The intrepid Indian had become invisible.

Don Gregorio was in despair at the escape of General Bustamente. It was now useless for Don Gregorio to return to Santiago; on the contrary, it was urgent that he should return to Valdivia, in order to secure the tranquillity of that province which would, no doubt, be disturbed by the news of the generals' escape; but, on the other hand, it was quite as important that the authorities of the capital should be placed upon their guard. Don Gregorio was in great trouble about choosing a person whom he could trust with this commission, when the senator came to his relief. The worthy Don Ramón had finished by taking courage in reality; he actually, and in good faith, believed himself the most valiant man in Chili, and, unconsciously, assumed the most ridiculously extravagant airs. Above all, he burned with the desire of returning to Santiago.

Don Gregorio asked the senator to be the bearer of the double news of the battle gained over the Indians – a battle in which he, Don Ramón, had taken so large a share of the glory – and the unexpected escape of General Bustamente.

Don Ramón accepted with a proud smile of satisfaction a mission in every way so honourable to him. As soon as the despatches, which Don Gregorio wrote at once, were ready, he mounted his horse, and, escorted by fifty lancers, set out for Santiago.

CHAPTER XI. THE JOURNEY

After his interview with Don Tadeo, Valentine had scarcely taken time to bid the young count farewell, but had instantly departed, followed by Trangoil-Lanec and his inseparable Newfoundland dog.

The morning on which the sanguinary battle we have described was fought in the Canyon del Rio Seco, Valentine and Trangoil-Lanec were marching side by side, followed closely by Cæsar. The two men were talking while they cracked a biscuit, which they washed down from time to time with a little smilax water, contained in a gourd, which hung at the girdle of Trangoil-Lanec.

"Why chief," said Valentine, laughing, "you drive me to despair with your indifference."

"What does my brother mean?" the astonished Indian said.

"Caramba! We are traversing the most ravishing landscape in the world, and you pay no more attention to all these beauties than to the granite masses yonder in the horizon."

"My brother is young." Trangoil-Lanec observed: "he is an enthusiast."

"I do not know whether I am an enthusiast or not," replied the young man, warmly; "I only know this – that nature is magnificent."

"Yes," said the chief, solemnly, "Pillian is great; it is he who made all things."

"God, you mean, chief; but that is all one; our thought is the same, and we won't quarrel about a name."

"In my brother's island," the Indian asked curiously, "are there no mountains and trees?"

"I have already told you, chief, more than once that my country is not an island, but a land as large as this; there is no want of trees, thank God! There are even a great many, and as to mountains, we have some lofty ones, Montmartre among the rest."

"Hum," said the Indian, not understanding.

"Yes!" Valentine resumed, "we have mountains, but compared to these they are but little hills."

"My land is the most beautiful in the world," the Indian replied proudly. "Why do the palefaces wish to dispossess us of it."

"There is a great deal of truth in what you say, chief."

"Good!" said the chief; "all men cannot be born in my country."

"That is true, and that is why I was born somewhere else."

Cæsar at this moment growled surlily.

"What is the matter, old fellow?" said Valentine.

Trangoil-Lanec remarked quietly —

"The dog has scented an Aucas."

So it was, for scarcely had he spoken, when an Indian horseman appeared at the turning of the road. He advanced at full gallop towards the two men, whom he saluted, and went on his way.

Shortly afterwards the travellers arrived, almost without being aware of it, at the entrance of the village.

"So now, I suppose, we are at San Miguel?" remarked Valentine.

"Yes," the other replied.

"And is it your opinion that Doña Rosario is no longer here?"

"No," said the Indian, shaking his head. "Let my brother look around him."

"Well," said the young man, turning his eyes in all directions, "I see nothing."

"If the prisoner were here, my brother would see warriors and horses; the village would be alive."

"Corbleu!" thought Valentine; "these savages are wonderful men; they see everything, they divine everything. Chief," he added, "you are wise; tell me, I beg of you, who taught you all these things."

The Indian stopped; with a majestic gesture he indicated the horizon to the young man, and said, in a voice the solemn accent of which made him start —

"Brother, it was the desert.

"Yes," the Frenchman replied, convinced by these few words; "for it is there alone that man sees God face to face."

They now entered the village, and, as Trangoil-Lanec had said, it seemed deserted. They saw a few sick persons, who, reclining upon sheepskins, were complaining lamementably.

"Caramba!" said Valentine, much disappointed, "you have guessed so truly, Chief, that there are even no dogs to bite our heels."

All at once Cæsar sprang forward barking, and, stopping in front of an isolated hut, began to munch the ground with his claws, uttering furious cries.

The two men ran hastily towards the hut, and Cæsar continued his howlings.

CHAPTER XII. INFORMATION

When Valentine and Trangoil-Lanec gained the front of the hut, the door was opened, and a woman presented herself.

This woman had in her countenance a marked expression of mildness, mixed with a melancholy cast; she appeared to be suffering pain. Her dress, entirely composed of blue cloth, consisted of a tunic which fell to her feet, but was very narrow, which makes the women of that country take short steps; a short mantle, called an *ichcha*, covered her shoulders and was crossed upon her breast, where it was drawn together by means of a silver buckle.

As soon as this woman opened the door, Cæsar rushed so violently into the interior of the hut that he almost knocked her down in his passage. She staggered, and was obliged to hold herself up by the wall.

"I know what troubles the animal thus," the woman said mildly; "my brothers are travellers; let them enter this poor hut, which belongs to them; their slave will serve them."

So saying, the mistress of the hut stood on one side to allow the strangers to enter. They found Cæsar crouching in the middle of the *cuarto*, with his nose close to the ground, sniffing, snatching, and growling.

"Good God!" Valentine muttered anxiously, "what has been done here?"

Without saying a word Trangoil-Lanec placed himself close to the dog; stretched along upon the ground, with his eyes intently fixed upon it, he examined it as closely as if he thought his glance could penetrate it. At the end of a minute he arose, and seated himself by Valentine, who seeing his companion had got a fit of Indian silence, found it necessary to speak first.

"Well, chief," he asked, "what is there fresh?"

"Nothing," the *Ulmen* replied; "these traces are at least four days old."

"What traces are you speaking of, chief?"

"Traces of blood."

"Of blood!" the young man cried. "Can Doña Rosario have been assassinated?"

"No," the chief replied, "if this blood belonged to her, she has only been wounded; her wound has been dressed."

"Dressed! come, that is too strong, chief!"

"My brother is quick – he does not reflect. Let him look here."

And he opened his right hand, and displayed an object enclosed in it.

"Caramba!" Valentine replied, quite out of humour, "an old dried leaf! What on earth can that teach?"

"Everything," said the Indian.

"Pardieu? If you can prove that, chief, I shall consider you the greatest *machi* in all *Araucania*."

"It is very simple. This leaf is the *oregano* leaf; the *oregano* so valuable for stopping the effusion of blood."

"Here are traces of blood; a person has been wounded; and on the same spot I find an *oregano* leaf: that leaf did not come there of itself, consequently that person's wounds have been dressed."

The woman now entered, bearing two ox horns full of *harina tostada*; they ate their horn of meal heartily, and drank more than one cup of *chicha* each. As soon as they had ended this light repast, the Indian presented the *maté* to them, which they tossed off with great pleasure, and then they lit their cigars.

"My sister is kind," Trangoil-Lanec said; "will she talk a minute with us!"

"I will do as my brothers please."

Valentine took two piastres from his pocket, and presented them to the woman, saying, "Will my sister permit me to offer her this trifle to make earrings?"

"I thank my brother," said the poor woman; "my brother is a muruche; perhaps he is the relation of the young paleface girl who was here?"

"I am not her relation," he said, "I am her friend. I confess that if my sister can give me any intelligence of her, she will render me happy."

"Some days ago," said the woman, "a great woman of the palefaces arrived here towards evening, followed by half a score of mosotones; I am not well, and that is why, for a month past, I have remained in the village. This woman asked me to allow her to pass the night in my hut. Towards the middle of the night there was a great noise of horses in the village, and several horsemen arrived, bringing with them a young palefaced maiden of a mild and sad countenance; she was a prisoner to the other, as I afterwards learnt. I do not know how the young girl managed it, but she succeeded in escaping. This woman and the Toqui went in search of the young girl, whom they soon brought back across a horse, with her head cut. The poor child had fainted; her blood flowed in abundance; she was in a pitiable state. I do not know what passed, but the woman suddenly changed her manner of acting towards the young girl; she dressed her wound, and took the most affectionate care at her. After that, Antinahuel and the woman departed, leaving the young girl in my hut, with ten mosotones to guard her. One of these mosotones told me that the girl belonged to the Toqui, who intended to make her his wife."

"Yesterday the paleface squaw was much better, and the mosotones set off with her, about three o'clock."

"And the young girl," Trangoil-Lanec asked, "did she say nothing to my sister before she departed?"

"Nothing," the woman answered; "the poor child wept; she was unwilling to go, but they made her get on horseback by threatening to tie her on."

"Which way did they go?" said Trangoil-Lanec.

"The mosotones talked among themselves of the tribe of the Red Vulture."

"Thanks to my sister," the Ulmen replied; "she may retire, the men are going to hold a council."

The woman arose and left the cuarto.

"Now," the chief asked, "what is my brother's intention?"

"Pardieu! we must follow the track of the ravishers."

"Good! that is also my advice; only, two men are not enough to accomplish such a project."

"True; but what else are we to do?"

"Not to set out till this evening."

"Why so?"

"Because Curumilla will have rejoined us by that time."

Valentine, knowing that he had several hours to pass in this place, resolved to take advantage of the opportunity; he stretched himself upon the ground, placed a stone under his head, closed his eyes, and fell asleep. Trangoil-Lanec did not sleep, but, with a piece of cord which he picked up in a corner of the hut, he measured all the footprints left upon the ground of the hut.

After carefully tying the end of the cord to his belt, he, in his turn, lay down upon the ground close to Valentine.

CHAPTER XIII. THE AMBUSCADE

Curumilla and his two companions descended the steep sides of the Corcovado; if the ascent had been difficult, the descent was not less so. Everywhere escaped thousands of hideous creatures; and not unfrequently they caught glimpses of snakes, unfolding their threatening rings under the dead leaves which on all sides covered the ground. Sometimes they were obliged to crawl on their knees, at others to jump from branch to branch.

This painful and fatiguing march lasted nearly three hours. At the end of that time they found themselves again at the entrance of the grotto where they had left their horses. The two white men were literally knocked up, particularly the count. As for Curumilla, he was as fresh and active as if he had not gone a step. Physical fatigue seems to have no hold on the iron organisation of the Indians.

"My brothers require rest," he said; "we will remain here for them to recover their strength."

A half hour passed away without a word being exchanged. Curumilla had disappeared for a time.

When he returned he drew from his belt a small box which he presented to the count, saying, "Take this."

"Oh!" cried Don Tadeo, joyfully, "coca!"

"Yes," said the Indian, "my father can take some."

"What is all that to do?" said the count.

"My friend," said Don Tadeo, "America is the promised land; its privileged soil produces everything; as we have the herb of Paraguay, which is so good a substitute for tea, we have coca, which, I assure you, advantageously supplies the place of the betel, and has the faculty of restoring the strength and reviving the courage."

"The deuce!" said the young man. "You are too serious, Don Tadeo, to leave me for an instant to suppose you wish to impose upon my credulity; give me quickly, I beg, some of this precious drug."

Don Tadeo held out to the count the coca he had prepared. The latter put it into his mouth without hesitation. Curumilla, after having carefully reclosed the box and returned it to his belt, saddled the horses. All at once a sharp firing was heard.

"What is all that?" Louis cried, springing up.

"The fight beginning," Curumilla replied coolly.

At that moment the cries became redoubled.

"Come!" said Don Tadeo; "one hour's delay cannot cause any great harm to my daughter."

"To horse, then," said the chief.

As they drew nearer, the noise of the fierce fight that was raging in the defile became more distinct; they recognised perfectly the war cry of the Chilians mixed with the howlings of the Araucanos; now and then bullets were flattened against the trees, or whizzed around them.

"Halt!" cried the Ulmen suddenly.

The horsemen checked their horses, which were bathed in sweat. Curumilla had conducted his friends to a place which entirely commanded the outlet of the defile on the side of Santiago. It was a species of natural fortress, composed of blocks of granite, strangely heaped upon one another by some convulsion of nature, perhaps an earthquake. These rocks, at a distance, bore a striking resemblance to a tower; and their total height was about thirty feet. In a word, it was a real fortress, from which a siege might be sustained.

"What a fine position," Don Tadeo observed.

They dismounted: Curumilla relieved the horses of their equipments, and let them loose in the woods. A slight movement was heard from among the leaves, the boughs of the underwood parted,

and a man appeared. The Ulmen cocked his gun. The man who had so unexpectedly arrived had a gun thrown on his back, and he had in his hand a sword, crimson to the hilt. He ran on, looking around him on all sides, not like a man who is flying, but, on the contrary, as if seeking for somebody. Curumilla uttered an exclamation of surprise, quitted his hiding place, and advanced towards the newcomer.

"I was seeking my father," he said earnestly.

"Good!" Curumilla replied; "here I am."

"Let my son follow me," said Curumilla, "we cannot stay here."

The two Indians climbed the rocks, at the summit of which Don Tadeo and the young count had already arrived.

The two whites were surprised at the presence of the newcomer, who was no other than Joan; but the moment was not propitious for asking explanations; the four men hastened to erect a parapet. This labour completed, they rested for a while.

"When I saw," he said, "that the prisoner had succeeded in escaping, in spite of the valiant efforts of the men who escorted him. I thought it would be best you should be acquainted with this news, and I plunged into the forest, and came in search of you."

"Oh!" said Don Tadeo, "if that man is free, all is lost."

The four men placed themselves, gun in hand, on the edge of the platform. The number of the fugitives increased every instant. The whole plain, just before so calm and solitary, presented one of the most animated spectacles. From time to time men were to be seen falling, many of them never to rise again; others, more fortunate, who were only wounded, made incredible efforts to rise. A squadron of Chilian horsemen came out at a gallop, driving before them the Araucanos, who still resisted. In advance of this troop a man mounted on a black horse, across the neck of which a fainting woman was reclining, was riding with the rapidity of an arrow. He gained ground constantly upon the soldiers.

"It is he," cried the Don, "it is the general."

At the same time the count and Curumilla fired. The horse stopped short, reared perfectly upright, fought the air with its forefeet, appeared to stagger for an instant, and then fell like lead, dragging its rider down with it.

The Indians, struck with terror at this unexpected attack, redoubled their speed, and fled across the plain.

CHAPTER XIV. THE FORTRESS

"Quick, quick!" the count cried, springing up, "let us secure the general."

"One instant!" said Curumilla, phlegmatically; "the odds are not equal, let my brother look."

At the moment a crowd of Indians debouched from the defile. But these wore a good countenance. Marching in close order, they withdrew step by step, not like cowards who fled, but like warriors proudly abandoning a field of battle which they contested no longer, but retreated from in good order. As a rearguard a platoon of a hundred men sustained this brave retreat. All at once a fusillade broke out with a sinister hissing, and some Chilean horsemen appeared, charging at speed.

The Indians, without giving way an inch, received them on the points of their long lances. Most of the fugitives scattered over the plain had rallied to their companions and faced the enemy. There was during a few minutes a hand-to-hand fight, in which our adventurers wished to take a part. Four shots were suddenly fired from the temporary fortress, the summit of which was covered with a wreath of smoke. The two Indian chiefs rolled upon the ground. The Araucanos uttered a loud cry of terror and rage, and rushed forward to prevent the carrying off of their fallen chiefs. But with the quickness of lightning Antinahuel and Black Stag abandoned their horses and sprang up, brandishing their weapons, and shouting their war cry.

The Chileans, whose intention was only to drive back their enemies out of the defile, retired in good order, and soon disappeared. The Araucanos continued their retreat.

General Bustamente had disappeared some time before.

"We can continue our route," said Don Tadeo rising. "You see the plain is clear; the Araucanos and the Chileans have retired each their own way.

"There are too many eyes concealed there," said Curumilla, pointing to the forest.

"You are mistaken, chief," Don Tadeo objected; "the Araucanos have been beaten. Why should they persist in remaining here, where they have no longer anything to do?"

"My father is not acquainted with the warriors of my nation," Curumilla replied; "they never leave enemies behind them, when they have any hope of destroying them."

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

Текст предоставлен ООО «ЛитРес».

Прочитайте эту книгу целиком, [купив полную легальную версию](#) на ЛитРес.

Безопасно оплатить книгу можно банковской картой Visa, MasterCard, Maestro, со счета мобильного телефона, с платежного терминала, в салоне МТС или Связной, через PayPal, WebMoney, Яндекс.Деньги, QIWI Кошелек, бонусными картами или другим удобным Вам способом.