

Saved by a Ghost

By C. W. Leadbeater

CHAPTER I

EXPLANATORY

I, Victor King-Norman, am an old man now, and the events of my boyhood, of which I am about to write, lie half-a-century behind me. But even now it is painful to recall them, and I should not have disinterred them from the grave of time and renewed their vivid sensations, but for a request from an honoured friend whose wish is law to me. In obedience to that command I tell my tale, suppressing only the true names of some of the actors in the drama.

My father, Norman King-Norman, had been a man of considerable reputation in London in his youth, in the days of King William IV of somewhat inglorious memory. After he married my mother he disappeared altogether from the London firmament of which he had been a luminary, and lived all the year round at Norman Hall, his ancestral home in the north country.

When railways began to be heard of, he was keenly interested in them, foresaw a magnificent future for them, and invested much of his fortune in them. When I was thirteen years of age he had become the leading director of a certain railway then in course of construction in South America, and in connection with it he found it necessary to visit that continent—a much more serious voyage in those days of paddle-wheel steamers than it is now.

He took with him his family, consisting of my mother, myself, and my younger brother Gerald—a child of about seven years. We took a house at the seaport town which was the terminus of the railway, and resided there during the greater part of our stay in the country; but my father's business frequently took him into the interior, to the unfinished part of the line. I believe that the contractors found themselves unable for some reason to carry on the work, and that consequently my father, on behalf of the Company, practically took the completion of the line out of their hands; at any rate, whether I am correct as to the business details or not, I know that after the first few months his absences from the town were frequent and prolonged.

On several of these expeditions I was, to my great delight, permitted to accompany him; and once, on the memorable occasion whose history I am about to relate, my little brother Gerald was also allowed to join the party. The mother's anxious eye had detected—or she fancied so—some slight sign of diminished strength in the little boy; and it was thought that the entire change of life involved in a few days camping-out “up country” would be beneficial to him.

Before I can make my story intelligible to those who have not lived in South America, it will be necessary for me briefly to explain the social conditions of that marvellous continent. There are—or were at the time of which I speak—four principal races among the inhabitants of that part of the country in which lies the scene of my tale.

First came the descendants of the Spanish and Portuguese conquerors—a haughty, indolent race; a race courtly and hospitable, by no means without its good qualities, but yet one whose strongest characteristic was an immeasurable contempt (or the affectation of it) for all other races whatsoever.

Next came the Red Indians—the earlier lords of the soil; of these many tribes had adopted a kind of squalid semi-civilisation, but many others were still savages untamed and untamable—

men who regarded work of any kind as the deepest degradation—who hated the white man with a traditional, unrelenting hatred, and (strange though it may seem) more than reciprocated the boundless contempt of the blue-blooded hidalgo of Spain. It will no doubt be incomprehensible to many of us that a half-naked savage can entertain any other feeling than envy for our superior civilisation, however much he may dislike us; but I can only say that the quite genuine unaffected feeling of the Red Indian towards the white man is pure and unmitigated contempt. It is not flattering to our self-love, but it is absolutely true for all that; and an uncomfortable suspicion *will* sometimes creep in that there are aspects of the case in which his feeling is—well, not so very unreasonable.

Third came the Negro race—no inconsiderable portion of the population, and chiefly in a state of slavery, though the Government was doing all in its power to remove that curse from its territories; and last and worst came what were called the half-breeds or half-castes—a mixed race which seemed, as mixed races sometimes do, to combine all the worst qualities of both its parent stocks. Indian, Spaniard, and Negro alike despised them; and they in turn regarded all alike with a virulent hatred. So strong were these feelings that, when it came to enlistment in the army, the other races absolutely declined to serve in the same regiment with the half-castes, and these people therefore had to be drafted into regiments by themselves, so that there existed in the army regiments of both types, and their feelings towards each other were decidedly unfriendly.

At the time when my story begins these feelings of scarcely-veiled hostility had at last broken out into actual warfare. I forget what was made the excuse for the outbreak; some orders which were given to the half-caste regiments offended their dignity in some way, and there was an open mutiny. Four of these regiments marched off under the leadership of a man named Martinez, an officer, not without a certain amount of ability, but bearing an atrociously bad reputation. He was popularly credited with having broken over and over again every commandment in the decalogue; but whether all this was true or fabulous, it was at least certain that he was a man of vicious temper and abominable cruelty. Nevertheless he was said to be a good though unscrupulous leader, and there was a certain dash about him which made men of his own race follow him.

The affair ought to have been nothing but a petty mutiny quickly suppressed, and indeed that was what the Government wished to believe with regard to it. The Government of any South American State is usually in a rather precarious condition, and most of its subjects are generally ready on very slight provocation to make an attempt to overturn it; so the disaffection spread and became quite a rebellion. In the part of the country where we were, little was known of the movements of the insurgents; and, as I have said, it was the policy of the Government to minimise the whole affair and assure us that it was quite unimportant.

Later, when everything was over, it transpired that Martinez had concocted a plot of considerable ingenuity, and had contrived by all kinds of specious promises to induce several of the savage Indian tribes to join him. The two parties to this precious conspiracy were each playing false with the other; the idea of the half-breeds was to utilise the Indians to help them to massacre the whites, and then to turn upon their partners and murder them in turn, and thus consolidate their power. The idea of the Red Indians on the other hand was that they could utilise the mutinous regiments to help them to drive the white men into the sea, after which it would be quite easy to massacre the half-breeds, and so regain the country for themselves.

It never occurred to us that any danger from the insurgents could menace our little expedition into the interior. Whatever fighting there was, was going on some hundreds of miles to the south,

and the whole of our part of the country was perfectly free from it. But nevertheless we were destined to see much more of the struggle than we wanted, as my story will presently show.

The railway line ran through great tracts of primeval forest; and a South American forest is like no other in the world. Trees two hundred feet high and wide-spreading in proportion, literally one mass of blazing colour; domes of blue or scarlet or orange, and great creepers, thick as a man's leg, hanging from tree to tree, extending often for hundreds of feet, and covered with flowers even more splendid than those of the trees themselves. It was a favourite game with the children to choose each one of these giant creepers, and try in spite of its entanglements to trace it out to its end—the boy who had chosen the longest creeper being of course the winner. It was a veritable fairyland, unequalled in its marvellous beauty, but much too thickly inhabited for human comfort.

Precisely because men are so few, the nonhuman inhabitants flourish to a degree unknown elsewhere, and a large proportion of them are dangerous to man. Splendid creatures, many of them, but distinctly uncomfortable neighbours. The jaguar, more beautiful and kingly-looking even than the royal tiger of India, but equally dangerous; the boa-constrictor, the largest snake in the world, often thirty feet long and as thick as a man's thigh; the alligator, deadly as the shark of the ocean, swarming in every river and pool; all these and many other creatures make the conditions of human life somewhat arduous in those marvellous South American forests.

Full of birds, too, are they, alive with colours equalling those of the flowers; parrots of all kinds; huge screaming macaws, painted crudely and gorgeously in scarlet and blue and yellow; tiny humming-birds, no larger than the humble-bee, but glowing with ruby and emerald like actual living jewels; hundreds of varieties all resplendent in hue, but songless, except for the deep ringing bell-like note of the *campanero*; all kinds of strange-looking creatures, wondrous in colour but always with something bizarre about them, something unlike what is seen in any other land.

But it is the insect world above all others which forces itself upon the attention of a visitor, and usually unpleasantly. The tarantula and the scorpion are its aristocracy—not properly insects at all; huge ants, in countless millions, which start out upon mysterious migrations and turn aside for nothing; chigoes, uncomfortable little creatures which get under one's toe-nails and lay tiny little bags full of eggs, which have to be cut out by the servants each evening before one goes to bed. Assuredly the insect world is ever with us, and we usually wish that it was not.

Nevertheless, there was little of danger about our invasion of these primeval forests, for we were undertaking it under unusually favourable conditions. The small army of labourers who were working at the end of the line gave us the advantage of company. None of the larger wild beasts would come into the neighbourhood of so great a crowd of men, and we learnt by dire experience how to deal with the smaller beasts. Along with us as a kind of valet and general guardian came our faithful negro servant Tito. He had been presented to us as a slave, but we had freed him, and consequently he was overflowing with gratitude.

The railway was a mere trench cut through the forest, almost in a straight line, for at this stage no intermediate station had as yet been erected, and though it passed in the neighbourhood of several villages, none of them were actually in sight from it, so there was nothing to prevent a clear run. I remember on one occasion, a few weeks before that of which I am writing, I had myself a very exciting experience on that same line.

One day, when we were away at the end of the line just seventy-five miles from the terminus, news reached us through the arrival of a brother of one of the labourers that very serious defalcations had taken place in the office at the terminus, and that the defaulting cashier was

departing with his plunder by a certain steamer bound for Europe, which was due to start on that very day. The news arrived just an hour before the time for the sailing of the mail-steamer, and my father was in despair as to what to do. There were no telegraphs in those days, and a runner would take thirty hours to cover the distance, even going along the newly-made railway line.

We had an engine with us, but it was what is called a contractor's engine, not built for any high speeds; and even so, its regular driver was down that day with fever, and the young lad who was in charge of it, though he managed well enough to pull a few trucks up and down, was quite incapable of trying a record run with it. My father did not know how to manage the locomotive, and besides, it would have been a very serious matter for him to leave just then; but fortunately I, with a boy's fancy for machinery, had learnt to understand the engine pretty well, and had driven it many times, though only for short distances.

I at once offered to try to make the run in time to stop the steamer, and somehow felt certain that I could do it, although my father thought it quite impossible. Moments were flying, however, and there was little time to discuss the matter, so he consented to my making the attempt, though he thought it foredoomed to failure. The engine had steam up, and a few moments sufficed to load it with coal, and make sure that its tanks were full; and then off I started, with the boy who had previously driven the engine as a fireman. The run was a most exciting one; I pushed that engine to its utmost speed, and it was fortunate for me that on the whole the line was fairly straight, for I was in no mood to slacken much for curves. Suffice it to say that I did the distance in the time, though I arrived with the plates of the engine red-hot.

As soon as we reached the terminus, I jumped off and rushed up to the signal-tower on the hill, the official in charge of which was well known to me; and thankful I was to see the mail-steamer still lying in the bay, though she was even already getting up her anchors. Under my instructions, my friend the official at once ran up a signal imperatively calling upon the steamer to wait. Meantime I ran down the bill to the port authorities, and very soon a boat with quite an imposing array of police and other officials was being rowed out rapidly towards the steamer.

These port officials knew my father well as the consignee of large cargoes of rails and other materials, and so when once I reached the place my task was an easy one. Even the captain of the steamer knew me, and when he understood the gravity of the emergency he forgave me for delaying him. The defaulting cashier was at once arrested in spite of his excited protests, and haled ashore to prison, all the money being duly recovered. I believe I considerably damaged that engine by reckless overdriving; but the amount at stake was large enough to condone that trifling irregularity.

It was my father's custom to have a small wooden cabin built for him out at the end of the line, and live in it for a few days until the line had been constructed to a point which he found inconveniently far from it. Then he would have another similar cabin erected a little further along. Wood was so abundant that it was not worth while to carry the logs from one such halting place to another, even though it was only a few miles further on. There were generally plenty of logs lying on the pound, so some trees could be quickly chopped down and a new cabin put up at the cost of very little labour.

The usual plan was to choose logs perhaps a foot in diameter and split them in half longitudinally and in this way a rough hut was made quite strong enough to keep out any wild beasts known in that country, though there were of course many cracks between the logs, through which came plenty of light and air. Generally such a cabin was made without a window, but with a rough door—a door which had no hinges, but was kept in its place during the night by a heavy wooden bar which prevented it from falling inwards. In the daytime the door was laid aside and

the empty place served as a window. My father had a rough table for his office work, and we sat about on stumps or lay on the floor, as fancy dictated.

CHAPTER II

ATTACKED BY THE INDIANS

On the day on which my story begins, this hut happened to be erected at one end of a sort of glade or open place in the forest. Behind and on each side of the hut, the forest was not more than twenty yards away, but in front of its door the glade sloped gently down to the banks of a little stream perhaps a hundred and fifty yards away. Away beyond that stream, but concealed from view from the hut by great clumps of trees and a rise in the ground, was the end (for the time being) of the railway, where a crowd of men were busily working.

The men usually took a short siesta in the middle of the day, according to the custom of the country, and we sometimes tried to do so too; but, not being used to it, I at least could never get to sleep. This siesta was still in progress, though if I recollect rightly, it was about the time of its conclusion. My father sat writing at his table; I lay on the floor reading a story, and little Gerald was playing some childish game away in a corner. The servant Tito was absent on some of his work; at any rate he was not in the cabin or visible from it.

Suddenly the quiet of tropical noon was broken by a volley of rifle-shots—a most astounding phenomenon, for so far as we knew there was not a rifle except our own within fifty miles at least. We sprang to our feet, and my father went to the door and looked out down the glade. As I have said, the spot where the men were working was not actually visible from our door; so, as there was nothing unusual to be seen, my father took his rifle from the corner where it leaned, and started to see what was the matter. I snatched up my rifle also—for I also had one; in that wild country even little Gerald never went out without his tiny revolver stuck in his belt, and I habitually carried a brace of Colts, and took a rifle with me whenever I went out for a walk. And these precautions were by no means unnecessary, for, to say nothing of human inhabitants, dangerous wild animals came down quite close to the houses even on the outskirts of the town. Why, one morning I saw—but that is another story, as Rudyard Kipling so often says.

We were hardly outside the door when one of our labourers appeared from behind the clump of trees near the stream, running wildly. When he saw us he uttered a shout, but we could not understand what he said, and before he had time to speak again another rifle-shot rang out, and he threw up his arms and fell dead. Immediately there burst into view at the bottom of the glade a great crowd of painted savages, who waved their weapons and emitted bloodcurdling yells. Several shots were fired at us, but fortunately we were untouched, and we at once retired into the hut and put the door into its place, slipping in the heavy bar behind it. Then quite calmly my father remarked to me, as I stood there with my rifle still in my hand:

“You take the crack to the left of the door, and I will take this on the right. Rifles first; then pistols. We must kill as many as we can before they reach the hut. Steady, now; we cannot afford to miss.”

We had not then the quick-firing guns of the present day; but still ten of those Red Indians fell before they had come more than half-way up the rise. Some word of command was shouted, and in an instant they dashed into cover at each side of the glade, and for the moment disappeared from our sight. Still watching through the crack, my father said:

“This gives us a moment’s respite. Load again; have everything ready, and all your ammunition where you can reach it in a moment. They will be on us again directly.”

“But, father,” said I, “who are they, and what is it all about, and why do they come here attacking us in this mad way? We have done them no harm.”

“I don’t know, my boy,” he said; “and, as far as I can see, it does not seem very likely that we ever shall know, because whatever they want, and however they come here, we cannot hope to hold this place against a crowd like that; and all that we can do is to sell our lives as dearly as possible. We are a hundred miles from nearest help, and long before it can get here they will have disposed of us. I should not care for that, but that we have little Gerald with us. Why in the world did I bring him just this time and no other? and then *this* must happen!”

“What do you suppose has become of the men—the labourers?” said I.

“They must have been all killed,” replied my father, “in that volley that we heard. That is clear, because if any were left they would certainly have run in this direction, to try to take refuge with us.”

“But I do not see why they should kill them, or why they come after us,” I objected.

“No,” said my father, “I do not understand it either; but at least this is certain, that they are in their war-paint, and that always means they have started out with the intention to kill, and that they will fight to the death. No one can tell the reasons on which these barbarians act.”

At this moment we were interrupted by another loud yell, and the whole band of savages, who had come closer to us under cover of the forest, rushed out upon us simultaneously from both sides. Man after man fell, but they dashed up to the hut bravely enough, and threw themselves against the door. Fortunately the bar held, and, as they soon saw that they could do nothing to us, and were absolutely exposed to our fire, with another great shout they dashed back again into shelter.

So far we had escaped unhurt, while quite a number of corpses lay round the hut, for even little Gerald had taken his part bravely, and had shot at least two of the savages, besides wounding another. On my side one fierce-looking fellow had thrust the muzzle of his rifle through one of the cracks. I leaped to one side, seized it just as he discharged it, and fired my revolver over it straight into the face of its owner, who fell back with a groan, leaving the rifle projecting through the crack.

His shot filled the hut with smoke, but otherwise did us no harm. When they had fled into the woods I wanted to unbolt the door in order to take in that rifle, but my father would not allow it, saying that the Indians were certainly watching us from the woods, and that it would be an unnecessary exposure. Also he pointed out that the rifle would be of no use to us, even after we got it, as we were already armed and our ammunition would not fit it. It was a queer old muzzle-loader, fired with a percussion cap, and would certainly, as my father said, have been of no use to us; yet I relinquished that trophy with great reluctance, even though I knew quite well that the probabilities were that we should never live to exhibit it to anybody. So we pushed the rifle out, and let it fall among the bodies outside.

We had repulsed the attack, certainly, and so far we were unhurt, while the enemy had suffered considerable loss. We had gained but a barren victory, however, and we were under no illusions as to the gravity of our situation. We had with us a fair supply of ammunition, and, entrenched as we were, behind—not boards, but—heavy logs which were bullet-proof, we might possibly hold our own against another such attack or even several such, though a chance bullet might at any moment find its way through a crack and lay one of us low. But we had no food whatever (save, I think, half a box of biscuits); and, worse still, we had only a half-emptied bottle of water. Our

meals were under ordinary circumstances cooked for us by the missing Tito, but his primitive culinary arrangements were usually made out in the open or under a tree, and such stores of food as we had with us were kept with other stores down in the sheds near the railway line, so that if the savages chose simply to sit down and besiege us, there could be only one end to the affair.

Our conversation, as may be imagined, was not very hopeful. One thing alone seemed to occupy my father's mind—regret that he had brought my younger brother into this terrible position, and sorrow for the shock that the little boy's inevitable death must produce upon his loving mother. We speculated ceaselessly as to why these Indians were attacking us, and (more practically) as to what they were likely to do next, though the answers to these questions could hardly have been of any great importance to us. Whatever were their reasons, that they were going to kill us seemed certain. There appeared to be not the slightest loop-hole of escape, and absolutely the only thing that we could do on our side was to make the inevitable result as difficult for them as possible, and to exact from them as heavy a price for their victory as lay in our power.

Now ensued a long period of waiting, which was far more trying to our nerves (to mine at least) than the exciting time of the attack. All was silent in the forest around us, but unfortunately we knew well that that silence did not indicate that the Indians had abandoned us. After a long time, indeed, we heard a sound of chopping, and marvelled much what our enemies might be doing. Presently we discovered the meaning of the sound, for quite suddenly—in a flash, as it were—the silence changed into a pandemonium of sound, the savages rushing yelling upon the hut once more, madly and uselessly discharging their rifles at it as they ran forward. As before, we fired as rapidly as we could, and had already accounted for several of the attacking party, when my father shouted across to me:

“Here, this way. Aim only at those men with the log.”

Then I saw that six or eight of the Indians were carrying between them a huge log, which they evidently intended to use as a battering-ram to break in our door, which no doubt with so great a weight they could easily have done. But, though they had only some twenty yards to bring the thing, it did not reach us; my father's quick grasp of their intention foiled their plan for this time, at any rate, for we concentrated the fire of our revolvers upon those who were bearing the tree-trunk, and when they had gone half the distance already half of them were down, and the remainder found the weight too great for them. Others sprang forward bravely to take their places, but they were too late to catch the falling log, and when once it lay on the ground it was death for any man to approach it. Once more our assailants broke and fled in confusion. Once more we were left to exult over a temporary victory, and quite a pile of bodies lay upon and around their battering-ram.

This time, however, we had had the narrowest of escapes, for while my father and I were concentrating our attention upon those who surrounded the battering-ram, another plumed warrior had crept to the back of the hut, thrust the muzzle of his gun through a crack, and fired it at us from behind. He missed us, though but by a hair's breadth, and we found the bullet afterwards, embedded in one of the logs by the door. Our little Gerald had seen him and fired at him; indeed it is probable that it was his shrill shout of warning which deflected the Indian's aim. Gerald reported that he had not killed the man, but only wounded him, for though he staggered back and seemed badly hurt, he was yet able to crawl off into the forest. Our foes had lost heavily in their three attempts to capture us, but we knew that that would make them all the more determined that we should on no account escape.

Now there began for us a period of the most trying suspense. Hour after hour passed by, and nothing whatever occurred. We could not hope that they had given up their prey; we knew well enough that their chiefs had been dismayed by the slaughter of their men, and that they had decided to wait until darkness gave them a better opportunity. For myself, I know that I wished that they would attack us again, that they would continue attacking us, for anything seemed to me to be better than that dreadful waiting for certain death. Of course we speculated as to where poor Tito was, and how they had killed him; as to how the attack upon the workmen had been arranged; and what had happened to the foreman, a big powerful Scotchman, who must surely have been taken unawares, or he would have contrived to give a good account of almost any number of the savages. We thought of the mother at home and wondered whether any news of our fate would ever reach her, considering that there seemed to be no one left to tell the tale.

We were, I believe, what would be called religious people, yet I do not recollect that at this crisis of our fate we talked much about religious subjects. Once only, so far as I remember, did my father refer to such matters.

“Well, boys,” he said, “you are young to have to die like this, before you have seen anything of life, and I am sorry that I brought you with me. But it is no use being sorry; and who could have foreseen this? But remember we are in God’s hands, and nothing can happen to us without His knowledge; and whatever is His will for us, somehow or other that is the best for us, and if we die bravely, as Englishmen should, you may be sure that somehow we are serving Him in doing it, and when we meet him hereafter it will matter very little when or how we died, will it?”

And I think that, young as we were, we were inspired by his example, and we were chiefly comforted by the thought that at least we were dying together.

Time wore on, and at last the quick darkness of the tropics fell upon us. I think the strain of waiting had told upon us all. I know that I had several times caught myself nodding, and I think that little Gerald was, for a time at least, sound asleep; but my father never relaxed his watch for a moment. When the darkness had fallen, and the sounds of tropical night were all around us, he gave us a few words of kindly encouragement, and for the first time made a suggestion which seemed to be inspired by the faintest gleam of hope.

“Boys,” he said, “I do not know what they are doing, but if they do not show themselves soon I shall open the door as silently as possible, and we will try to slip off among the trees.”

“But,” I objected, “surely, father, they will be watching us on all sides.”

“Yes,” said my father, “most likely they are, but at least there is just a chance that we might get through. At the worst, if we fail, they can only kill us, and that is certainly what will happen to us if we stay here.”

When he said this I was all on fire to try the experiment at once; but then came to me the awful thought that perhaps we might not all escape, but that one of us might be killed; and suppose that one should be my father, what then should Gerald and I do? Or suppose it should be little Gerald, what use would my life be to me? I said nothing of these thoughts, but my enthusiasm for the plan was damped.

However, our ferocious enemies gave us no opportunity of putting it into execution. Suddenly out of the darkness came something like a stream of fire, and then in rapid succession another and another, and it seemed as though they fell upon the roof of our hut. For a moment we could not imagine what they were, but very soon the ingenuity of the savages dawned upon us. Though the walls of our hut were made of heavy half-logs deeply set in the ground, it was thatched only with palm-leaves. Our enemies had observed that vulnerable point, and were shooting on to the roof flaming arrows wrapped round with cotton steeped in oil.

In a few moments our roof was in a blaze, the hut was filled with blinding smoke, and the flaming fragments were falling all about us. We had to spring upon these fragments and stamp them out, or we should have been roasted to death; and while we were thus fighting for our lives with the flames, the Indians ran to where their battering-ram had fallen, picked it up and charged with it. With a tremendous crash the door and its bar broke from their supports, and in a moment we were surrounded by our foes. We could hardly see through the smoke, but already most of the burning thatch had fallen, and the onrush of the savages trampled out the flames.

“Back to back,” my father shouted, and in a moment somehow he and I and little Gerald were together in the centre of the hut, in the midst of an evil-smelling mass of red men, who seemed to be charging upon us simultaneously from all sides. Even then our pistols rang out, and I know that one or two at least went down upon my side; but I received a heavy blow upon the head from behind, and then I knew no more for a while of what was happening.

After a time (how long a time I have no means of knowing) I came to myself again; but, as it seems to me in trying to remember it, only very slowly and confusedly. At first I was conscious of a vague sense of pain, of a curious persistent jolting and a strong desire that the jolting would stop, and let me be at peace. It continued, however, and the sense of discomfort increased, and presently I became dimly conscious that I was moving in some way, or rather being carried in some peculiarly awkward and uncomfortable fashion. I think I had no memory for quite a long time of the fight or the Indians, or indeed of anything; and I may have remained in this condition of semi-stupor for a long period. It seemed like interminable ages to me, yet of course it may really have been but a few minutes (I have no means of knowing); but as my senses gradually reasserted themselves, I felt that at intervals I was being roughly pushed and scratched and struck by something from above, while I was confined in some uncomfortable way from beneath.

I am trying to describe the sensations of my recovery as well as I can, and yet I cannot really express them, for it was all indescribably vague and cloudy, and I seemed quite incapable of assigning causes to these sensations, or of understanding what was happening to me. But somehow by degrees it dawned upon me that I was upon the back of a horse or a mule, that the horrible jolting was caused by his stumbling over what seemed to be very uneven ground, and that the blows and scratches came to me from the low hanging branches of the trees under which we were passing.

I think it was when I had got about as far as this, that my consciousness seemed to return to me with a kind of jerk, to wake up again within me suddenly, and I realised that I was bound upon the back of this animal, that he was one of a large number of similar creatures, some of which were loaded with what seemed to be bales of goods, while others were ridden by the Indians. I saw also that many Indians were all about us on foot. And then with a shock, memory fully returned to me, and I realised that I must have been stunned by a blow in the burning hut, and that instead of killing me on the spot these Indians were carrying me off as a prisoner.

We were pushing through the forest at a good speed, and there under the trees the darkness was impenetrable. But almost as soon as my senses had fully returned to me we came out into a sort of clearing, where I could dimly see the mob of mounted and running savages which surrounded me. My first thought was, “Is my father also a prisoner?” And I raised a shout of “Father!” At least I tried to make it a shout, though I dare say in reality it was but a feeble cry. A moment of terrible suspense, and then a great wave of thankfulness came over me as I heard his cheery voice exclaim in reply from somewhere amidst the dusky mass in front of me:

“Ha, my boy, you are alive then!” he cried; “are you much hurt?”

“No, I think not,” I called in reply, “but my head feels queer. But are you hurt?”

I had only just time to hear “No” in reply, when an Indian thrust his face into mine and savagely told me to be silent, and at the same time I saw some sort of struggle taking place in front, which suggested that they were closing round my father and trying to keep him quiet also. The man who had checked me had spoken in a kind of bastard Spanish—half Spanish, half Portuguese, but spoken with a curious thick guttural accent that made it well-nigh incomprehensible; but when the ruffians round me spoke to one another, which was very rarely, they did so in some language of their own of which I knew nothing.

I could chatter well enough with the negroes in the curious *lingua franca* which they speak, and I tried in that to ask the Indians around me where they were taking us, and where my little brother was; but they either did not or would not understand me. At any rate they made no reply further than roughly to repeat the command to be silent when I tried to shout to my father once more. For some time after this I was in anxiety concerning the fate of little Gerald, but at last as we were crossing an open space I had the great joy of seeing him alive and apparently unhurt. A man who seemed of some consequence among the Indians was holding him in front of him as he rode, seated on the neck of his horse. I called to him at once to ask if he was hurt, and he called back:

“No, not much,” and, I think, asked after me. But the man who was holding him shook him roughly and ordered him to be quiet. Now that my mind was relieved as to the fate of my father and brother, I had leisure to consider my own condition, and it certainly did not improve on consideration. I found that I had been stripped absolutely naked, that my wrists were fastened together tightly behind me, and that my ankles were secured by a rope or thong which passed under the body of my steed.

In front of me was some sort of pack or roll of blankets, and to this also I was bound, apparently by the rope which tied it on to the horse. In my insensible condition I suppose I must have lain on this roll, tied to it as though I had myself been simply another package; and even now that I had come to myself I was unable to sit up and ride properly, or to extend a hand to save myself from striking against the lower branches of the trees under which we passed. Altogether my position was a vilely uncomfortable one, and when I add to that the fact that my head ached abominably from the blow which had stunned me, it will readily be understood that I was not in especially good spirits.

As far as I was able to think connectedly, I believe that I spent most of my time in wondering about the situation in which we found ourselves. Who could these Indians be, and what could be their object in attacking us so savagely as they had done, and yet after all in taking us prisoners instead of killing us off-hand? I knew well enough, from plenty of stories that I had heard, that it was not their custom to take prisoners; and though while there is life there is hope, and it was at least an unexpected boon that our lives had been spared so far. I must admit that the more I reflected upon our probable future the less I liked the prospect.

It seems incredible, in such a hideously uncomfortable position, but I believe that I must actually have slept, or at least dozed; for I remember nothing of the dawning, yet it was full daylight when my steed stopped with a jerk, which woke me to the consciousness that we were out of that interminable forest at last. To my intense surprise I saw before me, not the wigwags of the Indians, but what appeared to be the tents of an army; and with that sight there came upon me a sudden gleam of hope, which oddly enough turned me absolutely sick. If here were military tents, surely here also must be civilised men, and since these Indians, instead of killing us, had brought us to this place, was there not possible some hope of escape after all? What it all meant,

I had no more idea than I had had before, but at least this was something quite different from the gruesome end to our ride which my fears had been prompting me to expect when I fell asleep.

CHAPTER III

AT THE CAMP OF MARTINEZ

The Indians now began to unload the horses and to turn them out to graze, and among others they untied the rope that bound me to the bundle in front of me, and also that which fastened my ankles underneath the body of the horse. They did not, however, untie the cord which bound my wrists, and they simply dropped me on the ground among the other bales, and paid but little further attention to me. Perhaps it was just as well, for I hardly think that I could have stood upon my feet, and I was well content to sit upon the ground for a while and try to steady my swimming head and stretch my cramped muscles.

My father and Gerald had also been dismounted with a similar lack of ceremony, but a man stood on each side of my father as he sat on the ground, and though no actual endeavour to bind us was made beyond the fastening of the wrists, it was quite evident that we were carefully guarded, and that the Indians had no intention of neglecting us, or giving us any opportunity of slipping away from them.

Still, they did not prevent my father from walking over to where I lay and sitting down on the ground beside me, though his guards followed him closely. My father spoke authoritatively to such as appeared to be the chief men among the Indians, demanding in his best Spanish (which I must admit was barely intelligible) what they meant by seizing us in this way, by stripping us of our clothes, and generally treating us thus disgracefully. The Indians, however, took no notice—possibly because they really did not understand; though they must have known in a general way what he was saying, for presently they threw over us a couple of dirty *ponchos*. Now in that part of the world the *poncho* of an Indian was nothing but a blanket with a hole in the middle, through which the proud possessor put his head; so regarded as garments these things were distinctly inadequate, but at least they were enormously better than nothing, though we made many grimaces at their filthiness.

My father proclaimed his intention of going to the nearest of the tents, and trying to open up communication with some civilised being; but this the Indians would not permit, and they were evidently prepared to use force if necessary to detain us where we were. So we soon agreed that it was better for us to remain quiet and let circumstances develop themselves, since it seemed reasonably evident that the Indians did not mean to kill us or further to ill-treat us, and it was also clear that the camp was not yet awakened, for no one was moving about but a few sentinels.

The nearest tent to us was a large one, which was set quite apart from the others, higher up than they, and close to the edge of the forest. I remember it occurred to me that the scene in front of us had a certain resemblance to the little glade in which our hut had been erected, except that it was on a much larger scale. The forest lay behind us, and the larger tent which I have described stood with its back to it, something in the same way as our cabin had done. Down before it stretched a wide plain covered with the tents of the soldiers, and far away at the bottom I could see the gleaming waters of a stream. It was not difficult to infer that this must be the tent of the general, or whatever the officer in charge of this body of troops was called, for a special sentinel marched up and down a short beat in front of it.

In a few minutes appeared a tall Indian with a magnificent plume of feathers, whom I at once recognised as having been among those who attacked us the night before. Indeed, as he came nearer, and I could look at him more closely, I realised that I had seen him once before that also, though as he had then been dressed merely in the ordinary Indian fashion, I did not know him again at first in his war-paint and feathers. He had been pointed out to me in the streets of the town as a man of great power but exceedingly bad reputation, one who claimed the position of chief over all the Indians in that part of the country. He called himself by the name Antinahuel, which means, I am told, 'the tiger of the sun,' and he claimed descent from the ancient Incas of Peru. My information had been to the effect that there was in reality no foundation whatever for this claim, and that it was not recognised by the Peruvian Indians. Indeed, when in Peru I had myself seen the man who was accepted as the legitimate descendant, and while I have no means of deciding between the rival claimants, I may at least say that that man looked gentle, dignified and kindly, while this man had a face which, though powerful, was full of revolting cruelty.

I was by no means reassured by my recognition of Antinahuel, for if half that I had heard of him was true, I could only wonder that after having fallen into his hands we were still alive. Still, we *were* alive, and the tents were evidence that we had some one else to deal with besides this relentless savage, so we waited with what patience we could. From the frequent glances directed by our guards and the others at the large tent, it seemed probable that we were waiting for some one to come out; perhaps for the general of this force to awaken.

Presently, by degrees, the camp arose from its slumbers, and we saw frowsy-looking soldiers coming out of the various tents and talking together. We noticed at once that there was an absence of the discipline which one would naturally have expected—that the men were not all roused at once by a *reveillé*, but that they just seemed to wake as they chose. None of them, however, took any notice of us, or came up the hill to inspect us, from which we argued that they must be thoroughly accustomed to seeing the Indians in their war-paint—a sight which ordinarily would have instantly roused half-caste or Spanish natives into the wildest excitement.

Presently we could make out that some men dressed as officers were amongst the others, and a semblance of order began to show itself, some men trooping off down to the river with buckets. After a time, one who seemed to be a sort of leader among the Indians went down into the camp, and we saw him in conversation with one of the higher officers. After some few minutes' talk, they walked up the hill together and approached what we supposed to be the general's tent. Exchanging some pass-word with the sentry, who saluted him, the officer raised the flap of the tent and passed inside.

After an interval he came out again, accompanied by a choleric-looking little man who had evidently just been roused from sleep, and looked as though he resented it. He was dressed in a colonel's uniform, which, however, he wore in a slipshod, slovenly way. As he came out he was buckling his sword around his waist. As soon as he appeared, Antinahuel, who had, I suppose, been somewhere in the background all the time, came forward and exchanged with him a dignified salute.

We saw them speaking together, and it was evident from their glances in our direction that they were speaking of us. A crowd of soldiers was by this time gathering in that part of the camp nearest to us, apparently having realised that something unusual was going forward, but none of them ventured to approach very near to the tent, or to the group who were talking in front of it. The officer who had come up from the camp with the Indian turned towards them and shouted an order, and immediately four of his men came running up to him, received a few words of instruction, and then came quickly over to us, and motioned to us to rise and come with them.

They did not touch us roughly in any way, but two of them ranged themselves one on each side of my father, another took charge of me and the fourth of little Gerald, and thus they marched us up before the little man, who was evidently the commander of this curiously undisciplined force.

We were certainly not very dignified in appearance; apart from our filthy *ponchos* we were absolutely naked, and not even decently clean; for the branches of the trees which had scratched and struck us as we rode hurriedly through them had covered us with smears and scratches, so that we presented a most disreputable appearance. Nevertheless, as soon as we were brought up before the commander, my father at once poured out upon him a most indignant complaint as to the way in which we had been treated, accused the Indians of the slaughter of his workmen, and threatened the dire vengeance of the British Government on the heads of all concerned.

His Spanish, as I have said, was distinctly faulty, and the effect of his outburst was much marred by the fact that at points where he became utterly explosive he generally had to turn to me for a word; for the fact was that, from running about perpetually among the negro and Indian servants, I knew more of the *patois* of the country than he did. The little commander heard his tirade to the end, and then began to speak in reply with, I must admit, a praiseworthy courtesy. He began by expressing his deep regret at the 'accident' that had happened to us, assuring us that it was all a mistake.

"A mistake!" roared my father; "then it is a mistake for which somebody will have to pay heavily. Perhaps you do not realise that a number of men have been killed, seventy, eighty, a hundred men!"

The little commander shrugged his shoulders and spread out his hands, and assured us that no one could regret more than he the impetuosity of his Indian friends, but that in war these little mistakes would occasionally occur, and after all it was done, and it could not be undone.

My father was becoming more and more indignant, but he saw that this was not the time to discuss the question of eventual compensation or retribution, so he demanded that we should be instantly set free, and that our clothes should be returned to us, asserting that he was a British subject and did not propose to be treated in this way.

The little commander, with a patience really wonderful for him, considering what kind of man he was, replied that all this should be done, but that there was a little ceremony—a mere nothing—which it was necessary that we should go through first. He said that he had often heard of the English, and heard wonderful stories of their prodigious valour, and that while he regretted deeply, most deeply, that his Indian allies should have made the stupid error of mistaking us for Spaniards, and so putting us to all this deplorable inconvenience, yet on the other hand it was surely his good fortune which had brought us to him, in order that we might assist him in carrying out his plans.

He then gravely proceeded to offer to my father the command of one of the four regiments which he said he had with him, on consideration that we threw in our lot with him and took the oath of allegiance to him. He explained to us that he was General Martinez, and that the intolerable tyranny with which he and his race had been treated by the Spaniards had induced them to rise and throw off their yoke; that when this was done he himself intended to be the President or Dictator of the military republic which he should form, but he assured my father that in return for the help which he would now give him, he should receive a high post in this State of the future.

The cool assurance of all this amused us even under those circumstances, but it also aggravated my father still further, and he contrived to make the gist of his answer exceedingly clear, in spite of his broken Spanish. He declared that he, as a foreigner, had nothing whatever to do with the

local disturbances of the country, and that he absolutely declined to take part in them either on one side or the other; nor would he under any circumstances take the oath of allegiance to one who was an insurgent against the lawfully established Government of his country.

It appeared to me that the little commander was getting decidedly annoyed, and his hand began to trifle ominously with his sword-hilt; but still he kept his temper wonderfully, and explained to my father that he had absolutely no choice in the matter. He was grieved to insist, he said, but the fact was that he had stolen a march upon his enemies, that he had shaken off their pursuit and had contrived, quite unknown to them, to move his regiments far to the north of where they were supposed to be, and that he intended to strike an unexpected blow at the town which was the terminus of our railway, descending upon it from the interior on the side where there were no fortifications, and taking its authorities entirely unawares. Now, through a concatenation of circumstances which no one could deplore more than he did, we had learned the secret of this plan of his, which must be known to no living person; and therefore (once more he shrugged his shoulders and spread out his hands) desolated though he was at the apparent interference with our liberty, he was absolutely compelled to put us instantly to death if we would not throw in our lot with him.

Still my father indignantly refused, asserting over and over again that as an Englishman he declined to take part in such affairs. The little commander's patience was rapidly giving out, and at last he spoke quite sharply and definitely:

"I can waste no more time, sir. You must choose at once; either you will swear fealty to me, according to our usual form, or you will die within the hour."

And he turned to his officer and ordered him to bring from his tent what was necessary for the taking of the oath. Two soldiers immediately brought out thence a little table, a large book, an inkstand and a pen, and at the same time the officer brought a large carved wooden crucifix—evidently stolen from some church—and threw it down on the ground in front of us.

In order to explain the presence of this last article I must mention one of the peculiarities of this formidable little man. Whatever he may have thought it wise to admit to his men, he knew perfectly well that the undertaking of driving the white people into the sea would be no light one, and that he could hope to achieve it only by retaining the most enthusiastic devotion of every one of the limited number of his followers. Furthermore he knew these followers well; he knew that they were steeped in superstition to the very marrow of their bones; and he knew well also the tremendous hold that the priests of the Catholic Church had in that semi-civilised country over the members of their flocks.

Perhaps the form of Christianity which was at that time prevalent in South America was the most degraded to be seen anywhere on earth; but that in no way interfered with the fact that the priests in reality ruled the country, and that in one way or another what they wanted was always done. He also knew well enough that the influence of the Church was hostile to him, not so much because he was a notorious evil-liver, as because the priests were very well satisfied with things as they were, and did not desire any interference with a Government which was thoroughly under their thumb.

In order to defeat this ecclesiastical influence he had hit upon a device which, though it had no other merits, might at least be described as bold and ingenious; with quaint blasphemy he had aped the celebrated declaration of King Nebuchadnezzar, and had made every one of his followers take a solemn oath that until the war was over and the country in their hands they would speak to no priest, would enter no place of worship, and would offer no petition to God or man, except to himself. Each man had to swear this in front of Martinez himself, and in token of

his temporary renunciation of his ancestral faith each was made to set his foot upon the crucifix. Every member of his motley crowd had gone through this ceremony, and now Martinez demanded that we should go through it also.

I need hardly say that we had not the remotest intention of doing anything of the kind. We were members of the Church of England, and not of that of Rome; but nevertheless my mother was a devoted follower of Dr. Pusey, with whom she was intimately acquainted, and I myself habitually wore a tiny ebony and silver crucifix around my neck underneath my clothes—the only thing, by the way, which the Red Indians had left me, because, I suppose, they recognised it as a magical symbol of the Christians, and may perhaps have feared its power. You may imagine therefore with what horror we regarded this impious suggestion of the general's; though I think there is no doubt that, even if there had been no crucifix in the case, we should equally have refused to be thus coerced into attaching ourselves to a cause with which we had no sympathy.

Martinez paid no attention to my father's indignant though ungrammatical protests, but curtly ordered him to put his foot upon the crucifix and to take the prescribed oath. I clearly remember the thought passing through my mind: "What in the world will my father do now?" for I never even dreamt of the possibility of his complying with so atrocious a demand. For what he did do I was as utterly unprepared as anybody present. Remember that during all this conversation they had never loosed the cords which bound our wrists; so you may imagine the wild astonishment with which I saw my father, having taken a step forward as if to put his foot upon the crucifix, suddenly disengage his hands as if by magic, strike the little commander a tremendous blow in the face which promptly knocked him flat on his back, and then jump over his prostrate body and disappear into the forest close behind him!

The whole thing was so sudden, so startling, so comical that, in spite of the still formidable circumstances, I burst into a peal of laughter, which was echoed by little Gerald. All was confusion for a few moments. The officers rushed to pick up their half-stunned commander, and fetched a campstool for him to sit upon. The men in the camp behind shouted with surprise and, though I am not actually sure of it, I have a strong suspicion that my laugh was echoed by some of them also. In the few moments while Martinez was recovering, no one seemed to know exactly what to do. Possibly the second in command was not on the spot, but at any rate nothing was done, and I suppose that it may have been five minutes before the commander, after much drinking of water and much gasping and swearing under his breath, was once more in a condition to speak..

When he found utterance his language was not parliamentary. He was purple and choking with rage. He dragged himself to his feet, though at first he could stand only by leaning with his hand upon the table. He drew his sword; he flourished it, and the looks which he cast upon his officers were so savage that it really seemed as though he was going to use it.

"Where is that scoundrel?" he shouted. The officers looked at one another with stupefaction, for up to that moment I verily believe that no one had thought of pursuing the fugitive. Martinez became madder than ever.

"What!" he roared, "you have let him escape! imbeciles! incapables! pursue him at once—at once, I tell you! My honour has been insulted, and I will have his blood."

Hurriedly some arrangements were made for the pursuit, and one or two companies of soldiers were hastily marshalled and sent off to beat the forest. As soon as they had departed Martinez turned his rage upon me. He seemed to be almost foaming at the mouth, and looked as though he was possessed by a devil, and he hissed his words between his teeth as though he were on the point of literal physical explosion.

“Son of a scoundrel!” he said, “within an hour you shall see your villain father hanged on that tree!”

“You will have to catch him first,” I interrupted, with a laugh—which was not politic, I admit. But I was so glad to see my father escape that I did not think of that then, nor of the fact that, if *he* had escaped, *I* certainly had not.

“You impudent young dog!” he spluttered. (I really cannot translate the exact phrase which he used, but it was worse than that:) “You at least shall swear allegiance, and you had better do it at once, or I will have you flayed alive.”

I am afraid I laughed again, which was rude of me, but he really did look so utterly ridiculous in his impotent rage, and with a great lump already rising between his eyes, where my father had struck him.

“I shall do no such thing,” I said; “and if you dare to touch me, my father will repay you for it when he comes back.”

He half raised his sword, and for a moment it looked very much as though my career would be cut short then and there. But somehow he controlled himself, and an evil glint came into his one available eye (the other was fast closing under the influence of the blow). He turned and called Antinahuel.

“Perhaps,” he said, “your men can manage to make this young coxcomb change his mind. Don’t you think so?”

A slight disdainful smile passed over Antinahuel’s face.

“Perhaps they may,” and he signed to some of his men, who came up and began to drag me away. Martinez said no further words to him, but turned upon my little brother Gerald.

“You, at least, you little spawn of the devil, put your foot on that cross and repeat after me the words which I shall say to yOu.”

“Don’t you do it, Gerald,” I shouted back to him, as I was being dragged off; “remember S. Agnes!”

For not long before we had left home, our mother had told us the legend of S. Agnes, a Roman maiden of thirteen, who, it was alleged, had died for the sake of her faith sooner than perform some act of sacrifice which was against her conscience. Or perhaps she refused to be betrothed to what she called a heathen—I am not quite sure after all these years. But I know that the story had recently been told to us, and that we had both greatly admired the little girl’s heroism.

I wrenched myself free sufficiently to look back and see what the little boy did. He looked up quite bravely into the furious face of Martinez, and said in his clear childish treble:

“I will not do it. You are a very wicked man.”

What followed next I do not like to tell, even though I really believe now in my inmost heart that it was the act of a madman. Martinez whirled his sword above his head and cut the child down as he stood looking up in his face. When he saw the little body lying before him I think even he was ashamed, for he threw down his sword and turned away, muttering something about not having meant to do it. Even his officers, a set of hardened ruffians, showed some disgust on their faces, and all drew back as Martinez walked hurriedly into his tent.

What this meant to me, who loved that little brother more than my own life, I can hardly tell you. What I did I cannot justify; I can only tell you that I also was half-mad with grief and rage. But then and there I, a captive in the hands of ruthless savages, and little likely, so far as could be seen, to live to see to-morrow’s sun, registered with all the force of burning hate a solemn vow that I would never turn aside from the pursuit until I had slain Martinez in revenge for the death

of my brother. I was wrong, of course, but I was only a young boy, and the provocation was terrible.

Meantime I soon had my own affairs to think of. The Indians dragged me away to the borders of the forest, and after a little searching they found what they wanted—two young and flexible trees growing only a few yards apart. Four or five threw themselves upon each tree, and by their united weight and strength bent down the tops until they came almost together, and then they proceeded to tie me between these two tops, the right arm and leg to one, the left arm and leg to the other; and as soon as that was done to their satisfaction the men let go the trees, which instantly sprang back as far as they could and left me hanging between them. A diabolically ingenious woodsman's substitute for the mediæval rack of the Inquisition.

To be left hanging in such a position for hours under such a nerve-rending strain is an experience which I would rather not try to describe; nor need I tell in detail how they stood jeering underneath as I hung in mid-air as though on an invisible S. Andrew's cross. Nor how they pelted my aching body with fragments of broken bottles, or struck at me from beneath with long *lianas*, torn from the neighbouring trees. I will not harrow your feelings with a description of the unnameable tortures which they inflicted upon me all through that weary day.

But this at least I can say, that however horrible were the sufferings all through the day, only the one overpowering feeling burned ever stronger and stronger within my heart and mind—black, bitter hatred of Martinez, and the resolve to be revenged upon him for my brother's death. So entirely was I wrapped up in this that I believe for the most part I gave no answer to their repeated enquiries whether I would not now take the required oath. But I know that sometimes I replied by calling down curses upon their heads and threatening that dire vengeance should overtake them. It is best to draw a veil over this. Let me say only that their ingenuity was diabolical and their resources seemed endless.

I suppose that they got tired of me at last, as I showed no signs of yielding to them, and they felt that they must do something to bring matters to a crisis. So they hung me from the branch of a tree by a rope passed under my shoulders, and then proceeded to light a fire beneath my feet, which were soon most horribly burnt. But at the same time the hot air and the smoke half-suffocated me, and evidently I must have fainted. I suppose this frightened them, for their orders were not to kill me; and so for that night they desisted from their cruel work. But of all this I know nothing.

CHAPTER IV

THE FLIGHT

I regained consciousness only slowly and confusedly, coming back into a strange and terrible sense of all-pervading pain, which seemed to fill the whole world. Gradually this world of acute anguish contracted and became more definite, until at last I realised myself as a small boy still alive upon the physical plane and in a condition of horrible suffering. I found myself bound to a tree, just at the borders of the forest, not far from the tent of Martinez—bound by a rope which passed round me and the tree many times, and so formed a support without which I must of course have fallen, as the soles of my feet were so shockingly burnt that it would have been quite impossible for me to stand upon them for a moment.

It was night, and the camp lay quiet before me, except for the sentinels who walked steadily up and down on their beats. Two of these were not far from me, one passing up and down in front of

the commander's tent, and the other taking a much longer beat along a certain section just outside of the nearest row of tents. No one seemed to be specially guarding me; indeed it was quite unnecessary, as I was not only securely tied, but I could not have moved a yard even if I had been free.

As may easily be imagined, my thoughts were of the saddest. My brother had been murdered before my eyes; my father was a fugitive in a trackless forest, which I knew to be full of wild beasts, and was furthermore being pursued relentlessly by men who knew no mercy. I had nothing to expect but certain death—probably of the most appallingly painful kind. So perhaps I need not be ashamed to acknowledge that for a time I felt absolutely despairing, and only wished that death might come even now to release me from further suffering. The conditions were so bad in every way that it seemed to me that they could not be worse, and I actually even prayed for death, saying that I could bear no more.

But just at this moment of utter weakness and despondency, I saw something which for the moment actually made me forget even that excruciating pain; for there, just in front of me, stood my brother Gerald, whom I had seen only a few hours before cut down by the sword of Martinez! Indeed, the mark of that cruel blow still lay across his head—a great ghastly wound cleaving the skull asunder. And yet somehow even that did not look terrible at all, for the expression of the face was so sweet that it quite overpowered the impression given by the wound. He stood before me exactly as in life, the flickering light of distant campfires fully upon him, and yet his form seemed also to be surrounded by a faint light of its own.

But the wonderful thing was the expression of the face. It was the same child-face I knew so well, changed in no particular, and yet showing so much more than it had ever shown before. That he himself was happy—radiantly happy, and utterly at peace—no one could have doubted for a moment; and yet the eyes were filled with pity (but pity obviously for me only, and not at all for himself) and with the desire to encourage and strengthen me. I tried to speak, but could not; nor did he on his side say a word; but he took a step forward, his face broke out into a radiant smile of love, and he laid his hand caressingly upon my breast. And then, in a moment, he was gone, just before the sentinel, who had reached the end of his beat, turned his face in our direction once more.

I find it difficult to describe the effect which this beautiful little apparition had upon me. All my manifold pains were still as insistent as ever—my whole body was still nothing but one mass of agony; and yet my mental attitude had in that moment become just the reverse of what it had been before. Remember that I knew nothing then of the astral world, nothing of the possibilities of life after death; so to me this was a special portent from heaven, a special sign from God Himself, who had permitted my brother's spirit to return from the unseen world in order to cheer and comfort me in my trouble.

Inevitably then followed the certainty that, however hopeless the prospect might appear, somehow or other all would be well. Either, impossible as it appeared, I should somehow escape and recover, or else, if I was to die, I knew that I should die soon and painlessly, and be with my brother once more. Since outward circumstances were entirely unchanged, it is perhaps hard to comprehend that my despondency had vanished as though it had never been, and that I was now in a condition of eager expectancy—expectancy that something would happen, either death or some kind of liberation. What form this latter would take I could not imagine, and I remember reviewing the situation without being able to find a single reasonable suggestion.

If I remember rightly, I think I had decided that if there was to be some kind of intervention, the most likely form for it to take was that in some unexpected way the Government might have

received warning of the forced marches which Martinez supposed to be unknown to them, and that they on their part might have sent a force to intercept and surround him. I knew that that was practically impossible, yet every other supposition seemed even more impossible still, unless I was to expect some sort of direct angelic intervention, and I knew that such things were rare in these latter days. But that something would happen either to kill me or to release me I felt quite assured. And when the something *did* happen, although it came in a way which had never for a moment occurred to me, it was only for the moment that I was startled.

I felt the touch of a hand, evidently extended from behind the tree, and immediately afterwards I was conscious that the rope which bound me with such painful tightness to the tree was relaxing. I remember it flashed through my mind that my unknown friend behind the tree was probably not aware that I was unable to stand, and should certainly fall as soon as that rope was removed, and that thus his amiable intentions would be frustrated, and the sentry's attention attracted. But that was evidently foreseen. My deliverer waited until the nearest sentry's back was turned, and then, as the rope slackened, an arm came round, caught me and drew me

quickly and silently behind the tree. I had just time to recognise in the faint flash of the distant firelight that my rescuers were my father and the negro servant Tito, when the latter picked me up in his arms, and we executed a hurried and silent retreat into the forest.

When we had penetrated perhaps two hundred yards Tito laid me down, pulled out his huge clasp-knife and quickly cut the cords which still bound my wrists; but even when my arms were free I was unable to use them, because they had been so cramped and strained by the many hours of confinement. We exchanged a few hurried words, my father commiserating me for my sufferings, and I interrupting to ask whether he knew of Gerald's fate, and in the same breath assuring him that I had seen him since his death. My father seemed hardly to understand; I think that he supposed me to be delirious—as indeed I well might have been, considering all that I had been through; at any rate he said that he knew of Gerald's death, and that we must not stop to talk now, but must make every effort to get as far away from the camp as possible before my escape should be discovered. I was a helpless burden upon them, as I could not walk a step, and even the motion of being carried, gently and carefully as Tito did it, cost me harrowing pain.

In the dense forest the darkness was intense, and it was necessary that we should move as silently as possible, and with the utmost circumspection; so our advance was naturally of the slowest. Every moment we expected that an alarm would be given, and that we should hear the commencement of a pursuit. But I hoped that the sentry might not notice my absence, because the tree to which I had been hound was at some distance from him, just within the shade at the edge of the wood, and the camp-fires, which, an hour or two earlier had lit up that place, were now dying down. Time went on and nothing happened, and we made such progress as we could, but even at the best it was painfully slow. I knew nothing of the direction in which we were going, for the only thing of which we thought was to put as great a distance as possible between ourselves and that camp. Soon we found that the ground was rising—in places rather steeply.

All too soon for us the dawn came, and the earth leaped from dark night into broad daylight with the suddenness peculiar to the tropics. At the first light Tito laid me gently down, and asked my father to sit with me while he looked round for some place of concealment, as it was clear that we were still far too near the camp to avoid discovery unless we contrived to hide ourselves. Also it seems that I was rapidly sinking into stupor of exhaustion, and Tito, who knew something about medicine as practised among the negroes, thought it would be dangerous for me to push on farther.

After some search he found a place that would suit us admirably, and came back to carry me to it. It was a huge tree of unknown age, the heart of which had gradually rotted away, so that there was quite a chamber inside it, carpeted deeply by a soft powdering of decayed wood—a kind of natural sawdust. To all appearance the tree was as perfect and as sound as those around it, and the only way to enter this sylvan chamber was by climbing up the tree to a height of some fifteen feet, and then lowering oneself through a hole, whence perhaps a branch had fallen a century ago. The problem was how to get me into this retreat; but it was a case of necessity, and at last the thing was accomplished.

My father slipped off the *poncho* which had been given to him the day before. I was laid on that, and the corners were tied together so as to make a kind of cradle. Through that Tito slipped the rope which had bound me to the tree, which he had had the forethought to bring with him, rightly thinking that in our desperate condition almost anything might come in useful. Then he climbed the tree to a certain height, my father throwing up the end of the rope to him, and slowly and with great care he raised me from the ground and got me wedged between the trunk of the tree and a huge liana. Then he descended and helped my father to mount, and left him to hold on precariously to the liana and to support me, while he himself climbed a little higher, obtained a foothold close to the hole, and then by means of the rope drew me up and rested me beside him. Then he dropped lightly down upon the dust, which made that inside floor much higher than the level of the ground outside. My father then climbed up the few remaining feet, and carefully lowered me down into the arms of Tito. Soon they had me laid upon the floor, and it seemed almost comfortable to be able thus to rest in a recumbent position after so many hours of misery.

I hoped to sleep, but fever had seized upon me, and I believe that most of that day I was barely conscious, and at times even delirious. I knew nothing of what was going forward, but my father told me afterwards that, almost as soon as we were established, they heard a great noise from the direction of the camp, and an amount of shouting which evidently betokened great excitement. The faithful Tito climbed to the top of our tree and found that, because of the rising ground, he was able to see most of the camp. He reported much hurry and tumult, and presently declared that large bodies of soldiers were being sent into the forest in several different directions, evidently to search for us.

You see, our recapture was of enormous importance to the plans of Martinez. He had succeeded in altogether eluding the Government forces which had been sent out in pursuit of him. By several days of almost incredible forced marching he had contrived to lead his men into a position from which they could easily attack a town of great importance. His manœuvre was entirely unexpected by the Government army whom he had deluded into the idea that he had moved in the opposite direction; indeed, they were occupied in hunting down the small band which he had sent down there in order to mislead them—they supposing that that was his entire army. He had halted his men at the spot where we had made his acquaintance, to give them a couple of days' rest after the forced marching before they swept down upon the town, and in that wild district it was reasonably certain that he could not have been seen or his presence reported.

But if I and my father, or even one of us alone, could escape, could by some incredible means make his way to the nearest house or village, and thence send the alarm down to the seaport city, all Martinez's advantage would be lost; and since he had risked everything on this one bold move we may say that his cause would be lost too, and his life unquestionably forfeited. Therefore it was of capital importance for him to get hold of us at all costs, and so, instead of allowing his men to rest as he had intended them to do, he sent them out to range the forest in search of us. He knew well that we could not have gone far, for he knew that I at least was sorely

wounded, and that my father had no weapon; nor can it have seemed conceivable to him that we could escape for a single day the myriad dangers that surrounded us on every side in that forest. He did not know that we had the invaluable assistance of Tito, who knew all about these things, and was perfectly capable of protecting himself in the forest, and of wringing subsistence out of it.

They told me that groups of soldiers again and again came past the very tree in which we were hiding. They even overheard scraps of their conversation, and Tito, who knew their language perfectly, reported that they spoke much of witchcraft and of a supernatural deliverance. It was evident from what they said that the superstitions of Martinez also had been aroused, and that he was in a condition of panic fear. He thought (it seems one of his officers had told him so) that in killing Gerald he had brought ill-luck upon himself; he was unable to understand, as indeed were all of them, how my father could suddenly have got free when he was obviously securely bound, and he thought of my disappearance when I was practically at the point of death, as another instance of supernatural interference.

I remember that my father said that at one time some soldiers had thrown themselves down to rest quite close to the tree. Tito listened eagerly to their conversation, anxious to pick up any information that might be of use to us; and my father was oppressed with the fear that I might reveal our hiding-place by giving vent to low delirious mutterings. Fortunately this did not happen, and in the course of the afternoon I fell into a deep refreshing sleep, from which they wakened me only when darkness had fallen, and it was time to set out once more.

Meantime Tito had risked his life by climbing out of our refuge more than once to fetch some water for me, and some leaves of a plant which he knew, which he chewed into a paste and laid upon my burnt feet and some of the worst of my wounds. I do not know what this remedy was, but its effect was magical in the relief of pain, for when I was awakened in the evening, though still weak and in great suffering, I was distinctly much better than in the morning, and all trace of fever had for the time left me. The soldiers had retired to their camp just before night-fall, but we had little doubt from what had been overheard that the search would be renewed the next day. I felt great regret at leaving my soft couch, and in truth somewhat doubted the wisdom of moving on at all, since we had discovered so excellent a shelter; but both Tito and my father felt that they would know no ease until they were much further away from the camp.

They got me out of our refuge much in the same way as they had before got me in, and we set off up the hill. The whole general trend of the ground seemed to be upward, and several times during the night we came to little open places from which we were able to see the camp-fires of our enemies far below us. As we rose higher the trees grew somewhat less thickly, and our progress was on the whole rather more rapid—less slow would be a better way to put it. Once again dawn came, and Tito searched for a hiding-place, but this time no convenient hollow tree was to be found. We were in a region of magnificent monarchs of the forest, mostly with wide spaces between them, but so huge were they that though their trunks might be a hundred feet or even two hundred feet apart, their branches often intermingled high above our heads. These giants would have been quite unclimbable, except for the fact that in nearly every case huge lianas, with trunks as large as many a tree in these cold northern climes, wreathed round their splendid trunks and usually afforded a comparatively easy way of ascent for an active person.

While Tito was ranging about in search of a hiding-place it occurred to him to climb one of these great trees in order to see what our enemies were doing. Without much trouble he found a place from which the camp was still clearly visible, though very minute now in the far distance, and he saw the same hurry and preparation and sending out of troops as before; but though he

saw nothing new he presently heard something which sent him down the tree at his best speed, and he came rushing to us, with a face of that curious livid grey which is the nearest that a negro can come to turning white with fear.

“Dogs, master!” he said, “they are setting the slave-dogs on us. Listen!”

When we listened attentively, sure enough we heard far off the sonorous bay of a blood-hound. We knew that these great dogs were kept by certain shave-owners in the interior to track down run-away negroes; but how Martinez could have got hold of one we could not imagine. I can only suppose that among his men there must have been one who knew of the existence of such creatures on some inland plantation, that he must have mentioned the matter to his officer, and that when Martinez heard of it he must at once have sent off some men to borrow these dogs, even though to do so would put the great secret of his presence there into the hands of some at least of the people of that plantation. Indeed I fear much, knowing something of his character, that he may have adopted terribly efficacious means to ensure the silence of every human being upon that plantation; perhaps there may have been a wholesale massacre.

At any rate there were the dogs, and there could be little doubt of their ability to track us, both to our hiding-place of the day before and to the place where we now were, and our chance of escaping them seemed remarkably small. I had often heard stories of the untamable ferocity of these creatures, and of their resolution in following up a trail to the last. We sought no more for a place of concealment, but hurried hopelessly on, tending ever upwards towards the summit of the mountains. But we knew well that the progress of our pursuers would be very much faster than our own, and that nothing could save us from being overtaken.

Tito had a theory, founded upon some negro superstition, that the smell of blood would destroy the keenness of scent of the hounds, so he drew out his big knife and made with it a slight cut in his arm, sprinkling the blood which flowed plentifully around the spot where we were then standing. He seemed to have some confidence in this method, although he admitted that with some dogs it had been known to fail; so it seemed rather a slender reed to support the edifice of our hopes. We were at this time on the edge of a sort of ridge, and in front of us the ground dipped again, and made a kind of ravine, along the bottom of which flowed a shallow stream. On the other side of the stream the ground rose again, and the hillside stretched on before us. Looking at this stream a flash of inspiration came to me, as my father held me in his arms.

“Father,” I said excitedly, “don’t you remember the history of Scotland? Don’t you remember how Robert Bruce was once pursued by blood-hounds, and how he escaped from them by walking in the water, so that he left no trail?”

A light of hope appeared in my father’s eye. “Why, yes.” he said, “I have heard that story, long ago when I was at school. At least we can try it.”

Rapidly he explained the method to Tito, who at first seemed hardly to comprehend, but as the idea penetrated he said:

“That is true. Of course scent will not lie in the water. But then we cannot lie in the river, and when we get out again the dogs will smell us.”

“No, Tito, “ said I, “walk along the river until you find a big branch hanging over it, and then pull yourself out by the branch without touching the ground.”

“That is it,” said my father; “let us try it. It may succeed, and anyhow there is nothing else to do.”

I think Tito was doubtful about it, for he had a well-founded terror of those awful dogs; but we hurried down into the ravine, into the shallow stream, and then began to wade steadily up it. They had to walk some distance (I cannot say we, for I was being carried all the time, and was

acutely sensible how much I added to the dangers of the party) before we could find in the right position a branch which Tito thought possible. But even then, he took us on past two or three which might have suited us, because they belonged to giant trees which stood all alone, and he wished to have a line of retreat open to him.

Meantime the baying of the dogs sounded alarmingly near; but at last we came to a branch which satisfied Tito's fastidiousness, because it belonged to a tree whose branches interlocked with others, so that it might be possible for us to make our way (as the monkeys do) along what may be called the upper storey of the forest. The branch was thick and strong, but just beyond reach by jumping, and here arose a difficulty. The streamlet was but knee-deep, and it was easy enough for us to wade in it, but if my father should lay me down upon the bank a clue would be given to those remorseless brutes who were following us so closely.

They did not want to lay me down in the water—as they might easily have done, for I could have sat with my head above its surface—because the paste of leaves which Tito had made was still covering my wounded feet, and he declared that inflammation might set in if it were removed; so my poor father had to stand holding my heavy weight in his arms while Tito climbed cautiously up him and stood upon his shoulders. Then, with a very little jump he was able to grasp the branch and to pull himself up upon it. Then, unwinding the rope (which he had carried round his waist) he soon had me up beside him and carried me a little way to where a fork gave a place in which he could safely leave me, while he went back and pulled up my father by means of the same rope.

We found ourselves upon a branch as large as the trunk of many a tree, so that they were able to walk along it quite easily towards the giant trunk, supporting themselves by the many branchlets which sprang from it and by the twisted lianas which were hanging all around us. They were soon at the trunk and, crawling round it, made their way along a branch at the opposite side. Then, stepping off from that to an equally huge branch of another tree, which interpenetrated this one, they were able to follow that up to its trunk and to pass from that tree into a third, so that we were now at a considerable distance from the stream, and high up the hill.

Climbing a little further up this third tree, Tito discovered a place where two branches, leaving the trunk side by side, provided a comfortable platform on which there was plenty of room for us all; on which also I could be laid out—not quite so softly, perhaps, as in the tree-trunk of the previous day, but still with some degree of comfort. We got ourselves settled there only just in time. We were high enough up the tree to enable us to see over time ridge, and soon a party of soldiers came into sight, with two blood-hounds in front, each held in a leash, and eagerly straining forward. They came up to the spot where poor Tito had so unnecessarily shed his blood, but it had no appreciable effect in checking them. They smelt about for a moment, and uttered savage bays, I suppose at the smell of the blood. But they resumed the trail immediately, and followed it over the edge of the ridge and down to the water. There they stopped, but the soldiers waded in and encouraged them to cross. When they reached the other side, however, they halted and appeared to be at a loss. The soldiers said:

“They have turned up or down.”

The company immediately divided, each party taking a dog with them, one going up the river and the other down. Those who turned upwards presently came to the tree by which we had pulled ourselves out of the water, but the dog gave no sign, and the soldiers passed on. After a time they came back again on the other side of the stream, it apparently having occurred to them that we might not have crossed it after all. Then, on returning on the trail, they began to shout to the others, who had gone downwards, and then sent a man running after them, and soon we saw

that party also returning on the other side of the water. Then a consultation was held, and it was evident that they did not know what to do next.

Presently the officer in charge gave an order, and the men dispersed—evidently to search the neighbourhood; but it seemed to me that they went off very slowly and unwillingly. Some of them passed close underneath our tree, and once more we heard them talking about witchcraft, and declaring that it was useless to search for us, as the devil had evidently carried us off because we were heretics—which struck me as rather amusing on the part of men who had, at least for the time, openly renounced the Christian religion themselves, and practically bound themselves to worship only that fiend Martinez. They spoke also of the anger of Martinez, and his wild asseverations that at all costs we must be recaptured; they suggested that he was mad with terror, and indeed I think he may have been.

It seemed impossible that the idea that we must be hiding in a tree should not occur to them; yet apparently it did not. I believe that, if they had had the sense to bring some of the Indians with them, our little ruse would have been penetrated; but fortunately for us there was a good deal of jealousy and ill-feeling between these allies, and so Martinez had evidently determined to do the work with his own men. All day the soldiers patrolled up and down at intervals, evidently driven by their officer to keep moving, yet fully convinced that their task was a hopeless one, and continuing to pursue it half-heartedly only for the sake of being able to say that they had done something. At different times we caught scraps of conversation, but always to much the same effect—dread of the anger of Martinez, speculation as to what he would do, and suggestions and stories of the supernatural.

The day wore slowly on, and this time Tito dared not leave our post even for a moment, for the slightest motion of the leaves might possibly attract attention, with so many searchers wandering about eager to gain the reward which (we heard them say) Martinez had promised to anyone who should find us. The day before he had brought in a bunch or two of wild fruit, but to-day we could get nothing whatever, and both he and my father were suffering much from the pangs of hunger, for it was now nearly three days since they had had anything worth speaking of to eat. I myself was probably better without food for awhile in my condition of weakness, though now that I was somewhat better from the fever I had begun to feel some hunger. I suffered more from lack of water, for the fever returned slightly during the day; but there was nothing for it but to be still and take care not to show ourselves.

When the sun was nearing the horizon, the officer gathered his party together amid they departed down the hill, taking their dogs with them; but we could clearly detect the reluctance which they felt to go back and face the anger of Martinez with the report of failure. Fearing the possibility of some trick, we watched them well on their way before we ventured to leave our hiding-place, and then Tito hurried down to reconnoitre, and search for some food before darkness actually fell. He was fortunately successful in finding some guavas and wild bananas, and a little later some bread-fruit, and presently he dug up for us some kind of tubers which had a faintly sweet flavour.

I could take but little of these, but my father and Tito made a meal which, though hardly satisfactory, was at least a great improvement on the scanty fare of the previous day.

I was lowered carefully out of the tree, and we resumed our flight. When morning came again, we were on the shoulder of the mountain, and Tito once more climbed the highest tree in sight, in hope of gaining some information with regard to the movements of the soldiers. He was unable to see the camp, but after listening with the utmost care he came down convinced that we were not immediately menaced in any way—certainly not by the dogs, whose cries would have been

audible for a long distance in the calm morning air. Under these circumstances Tito advised continuing our flight for some time by day, and this was accordingly done. They pushed on, still beneath the shade of the trees, but now in a downward direction, until about eleven o'clock, when they decided to make a halt at the side of a tiny stream of water. My father and I lay down to sleep while Tito watched. As he saw nothing whatever that seemed in the least suspicious, he lay down to sleep in his turn, when my father woke an hour later.

At this time Tito ventured gently to wash off his paste of leaves and examine ray wounds, because he was now able to get some more leaves of the same kind, with which he replaced his previous dressing. He reported that they were all doing well—that is to say, as well as could be expected—even the feet; though I overheard him, when he thought he was out of ear-shot of me, expressing his doubts to my father as to whether I should ever really be able to walk again. On this day also for the first time we were able to talk in comfort, and I had the opportunity of hearing my father's story.

The explanation of the apparent miracle of his escape was in reality exceedingly simple. It appears that the Indians had made the mistake of tying his hands with a green raw-hide rope, and during the long night ride through the forest he had set himself by steady pressure gradually to stretch this as much as he could, until finally he could slip his hand through it. He was wise enough, however, not to let our Indian captors see this, and by straining slightly against it he easily contrived to give the notion that he was still tightly bound.

But he was all the time awaiting his opportunity, and when he saw the arrangement of Martinez's tent, and that the forest was so close behind it, it occurred to him that here was an opportunity of escape of which a bold man who moved with lightning rapidity might easily take advantage. He realised that he was for the moment abandoning his sons, and so he did not take the step until it was quite evident that Martinez could not be moved from his position. He said that he scarcely expected to be allowed even so much as a minute before the pursuit commenced, and that he regarded the whole affair as the most desperate of chances; but still there seemed to be literally nothing else to be done, and, as this was the only way, he took it.

As I have said, the whole thing was so unexpected, and the consequent confusion so great, that he really got five minutes' start, and made good use of it. He knew that he could not hope by mere running to tire out men who had horses at their disposal, so from the first as he ran he sought for a place to hide in. The pursuit had often come quite close to him, and he had been on the brink of discovery half-a-dozen times; somehow he just contrived to dodge his pursuers, and after a time the idea of tree-climbing was suggested to him by the fact that the various monkeys whom he startled as he moved from place to place invariably took at once to the trees, and as invariably vanished utterly from sight, even when he was only a few yards from them.

"If they can do this," he thought, "surely a man can do it also."

So before the searching soldiers came back again, he had already found himself a nest in one of the larger trees. When the soldiers had passed for the second time, and he thought he was safe for the moment, he was much alarmed to see a negro moving stealthily through the forest, evidently searching for something—for *him*, he greatly feared.

Indeed, this proved to be the case, for this was the faithful Tito, who had been aware of the attack upon the cabin, but had been cut off from return to it by the cordon of besieging Indians. He had lurked in the neighbourhood in the hope of being able to render some assistance to his master, had seen the capture and had run through the whole night on the track of the party. He had concealed himself in the edge of the forest, had witnessed his master's escape and Gerald's death, and had also seen something of what had happened to me. He was afraid to rejoin his

master while the soldiers were still in the woods, as they had established a sort of central meeting-point, at which their various parties reported progress, quite close to the tree which he had selected for his hiding-place.

As soon as the soldiers had finally withdrawn he descended, and began to quarter that part of the forest in search of his master, and though he did not actually find him, he came in sight of him, and as soon as my father was assured of his identity he called to him. Their joy at meeting was tempered by the dreadful news as to Gerald which Tito had to convey. Then they consulted as to what could be done, and decided that, heart-rending as it was, they could do nothing whatever during the daytime, but if I survived until the evening they cherished some hope of being able during the night to effect a rescue—as in fact they did.

Of course I told my story of the apparition of my brother, and Tito, I am sure, fully believed it, for he said:

“Master Gerald sure was an angel when he was on earth, and sure he is an angel now; and the good God sends His angels to help those who are suffering.”

My father was not so certain; all that he would permit himself was:

“Well, my boy, I do not know what to say; they do say that God sometimes allows the dead to return for His own good purposes, and of course there is the story of Samuel and the witch of Endor; and we hear too that some of the Saints have shown themselves. Anyhow, whether Gerald himself was there or not, we are surely right in saying that it was God who sent the vision to comfort you, for it came just at the right time, and it gave you the courage to endure until we came to rescue you.”

I need not tell in detail the further story of our flight. From that time on we travelled by day and rested by night, my father and Tito each watching in turn. We gradually worked our way down the other side of our mountain and round its base, advancing then with the greatest circumspection, lest we should fall foul of Martinez and his army; but fortunately we saw nothing of them, and we contrived each day to get something in the way of food, though it was only fruit and roots.

My great sorrow was that I must all the time be such a burden upon the others, because I was quite incapable of walking even a step, and this made our progress so slow. It may be that the frugal diet and the life in the open air was in reality the best thing for the cure of my wounds. Tito did well enough, but my father, who had had a touch of consumption in England, suffered from the changes in temperature and the lack of the clothing to which he was accustomed; for he had nothing but the dirty old *poncho* which had been given to him—now no longer dirty, for Tito had washed it thoroughly in a mountain stream. Tito was little better off, for he had only the shirt and light cotton trousers which he was wearing at the time of the attack; and I was distinctly worse off, for I had absolutely nothing at all!

I think it was on the eleventh day that, from some rising ground, we at last caught sight of the roof of a house. Promptly we made our way in that direction, and then my father and I hid ourselves, while Tito went ahead to reconnoitre. He found the place to be a *hacienda* or country-house, and as soon as he came into the presence of the owner and told his story to him, the good gentleman immediately manifested the greatest concern, and came hurrying out with Tito to see what could be done for us.

From that moment our troubles were over. Our worthy friend and his most kindly wife treated us with the utmost hospitality. The good lady was full of pity for my condition, though I was now far on the road to recovery, and insisted on my going to bed and having my feet dressed and bandaged in somewhat less primitive fashion. Loud were their denunciations of the inhumanity

of Martinez, when my story came to be told in detail. Our host, who, like so many others of the *hacendados*, lived an entirely secluded life on his own estates through the greater part of each year, had known nothing whatever of the presence of Martinez in his neighbourhood. Once in two months or so he usually sent his servant, or more usually a party of two or three servants, down to the seaport town, to bring his letters if there were any, and to purchase such stores as he could not provide on his own estate.

We had no idea as to what might have been happening during the days of our flight, and we rather feared that Martinez might have succeeded in taking the city unawares, so our host called together his servants and told them the news which we had brought, and asked for volunteers to go down to the coast and discover the condition of affairs. Several of his men immediately offered themselves for the service, and out of these he chose two young fellows, explaining that he did not wish to send more because it was impossible to say that the *hacienda* itself might not be attacked during their absence, and he desired to keep as large a garrison as he could. These two young men were then sent off upon their journey, with many charges to exercise the utmost vigilance, and even when they reached the town on no account to ride straight into it as was usual, lest they should find it in the occupation of the insurgents.

Our host told us that, if no accident happened to them, they might well be back in a week, and that the only thing we could do was to spend the intervening time with him; though he hoped indeed that, if the news which came to us was good, we would consent to honour his poor roof by a much longer stay. We thanked him heartily for his hospitable intent, but told him that as soon as possible we must get back to my mother, so that she might know that at least she was not deprived of both her sons and her husband. My father, indeed, had confided a letter for her to the care of the two messengers, telling her in outline what had happened, and that we two were now safe, and in the best of hands. Our host also had entrusted to them a letter to a friend of his, who was a high official in the town, telling him of the presence of Martinez and warning him to see at once to the defence of the town, if it were not already too late.

During that pleasant week we to a great extent recovered ourselves. The cough which had been troubling my father grew better, though indeed he never was quite free from it, and he finally died of consumption in England a few years later. I always felt that but for the villainous Martinez, and the exposure which he had forced upon us by his proceedings, my father might have survived for many years more. For myself, I seemed for the time to have lost my boyhood. I was unable to move about, but after all I did not want to do so, and I seemed to desire only to rest. Much of the time I spent in bed, though for some part of each day they always carried me down into the great sitting-room where I was generally laid upon a sort of settee, or sometimes they carried me out into the garden and put me in a long wicker-work chair under the trees.

I did not know whether to be glad or sorry when at last the messengers came back, bringing the reassuring news that the city knew nothing whatever of Martinez and of his movements. Our host's official friend had sent him a party of twenty soldiers to garrison the *hacienda* if it should be attacked, and meantime thanked him heartily for his warning, and stated that the city had been hastily put in a thorough state of defence, and that scouts had been sent into the interior to try to discover Martinez and his little army.

Our host and hostess pressed us urgently to stay with them until the attack was over and Martinez was defeated, for they felt quite sure that this would be the outcome of the struggle. My father felt, however, that it was his duty to be by his wife's side, and so, with many heartfelt thanks, he declined this kindly offer. Our friend had a palanquin constructed for me, and offered to send back with us to the coast the same two young men who had already once made the

journey. Then he pressed us also to take with us half the band of soldiers as an escort. My father would by no means consent to this, as he felt that while we were still uncertain as to the position of Martinez the *hacienda* might be attacked, and every man would be necessary for its defence; but he gladly accepted the offer of the two young servants to carry the litter, promising them a large reward when he should safely reach the coast.

Our host insisted about the soldiers, and eventually we had to compromise by allowing three of them to accompany us, and indeed they proved themselves both merry companions and very useful fellows, constantly relieving the servants in the carrying of the litter when they were tired, and so enabling us to make fairly constant progress instead of having to rest at least half of the time, as would otherwise have been the case. One of them, who was a clever man with his hands, contrived a scheme by means of which the litter could be slung between two horses, so that when we came to a long stretch of level ground we could make much easier and more rapid progress. In this way we journeyed along, meeting with no special adventures, and we finally reached our home on the sixth day from that on which we left the *hacienda*.

The mother met us, mourning deeply indeed for her lost son, yet devoutly thankful after such wild experiences to welcome her surviving son and her husband—safe at any rate, if not exactly sound. It was six weeks from the night of our escape from Martinez before I was able to set my feet to the ground, and even then for a long time I had to walk warily and but little at a time.

Exactly what had happened to Martinez and his plans we never clearly understood. My mother always believed that, because of the wicked murder of my brother, some sort of divine curse had fallen upon him, so that he was no longer capable of decisive action. My father was more disposed to think that our escape had disheartened him, because he supposed that we should certainly be able to convey to the coast town the warning of his presence, and so defeat his plan. Much later, vague rumours were afloat of disaffection among his followers, of rebellions against his cruelty, and of a general opinion among his men that his dash and good fortune had left him. However all this may be, the fact remains that that attack upon the seaport town was never delivered, and that Martinez instead disappeared into the interior with his followers, and that no authentic news was received of him for nearly three months.

Then came the tidings that he had attacked a small town away in the interior, and had occupied and fortified it, having killed all such of its inhabitants as refused to swear allegiance to him. As soon as this story was confirmed, all was activity in military circles. Such regiments as were available were got together and put on a war footing, and the Council of the town issued a call for volunteers, since the number of soldiers was but few, and they were very anxious that there should be not the slightest doubt as to the assembling of a sufficient force definitely to crush Martinez.

My father, though fretting much at the delay with regard to his railway, had made no attempt to engage any body of workmen, saying that he would be no party to the risking of any men's lives away there in the jungle, until both Martinez and his Indian allies were finally disposed of in some way. As soon as he heard of the formation of the volunteer bands my father promptly offered himself, though much against the wish of my mother. His services were at once accepted, and he was given command of a company in the regiment that was formed—principally, I think, because he was an Englishman, and because of the terrible story of the death of his son. This position he very willingly accepted, for the volunteers were chiefly gentlemen, some of whom he had known before. I, too, though hardly thoroughly cured yet, was very eager indeed to offer my services, and though my mother would not allow me to enroll myself as a soldier, she could not refuse me permission to ride along with my father.

With a final chapter to tell you what came of all this, and what happened to us on that expedition into the interior, I shall be able to bring my story to a close.

CHAPTER V

THE REVENGE

Through all that had happened I had never for a moment lost sight of my purpose—of my firm resolve to kill Martinez in revenge for the death of my brother. I had said no word of this either to my father or my mother; I kept it as a kind of pervertedly sacred thing in the recesses of my own mind. I wondered how it would be possible for me to do it, and when a way would open before me; but that some way would open, and that I should do it, I never had the slightest doubt, and when I heard of the formation of that volunteer corps I felt at once that here was my method, and that Providence was pointing out my path. Therefore it was that I immediately resolved to join it, and my mother's refusal to allow me to enroll myself did not trouble me in the least. I fell in with her wishes, of course; but I knew with a deadly certainty that it would nevertheless somehow be managed that I should accompany the column. And when, on starting out, my mother embraced me and adjured me to be careful to avoid all danger, I said to her, with a calm certainty which must have impressed her:

“Mother, you need not fear. I shall come back to you quite safe.”

I think I must have believed myself to be an instrument of divine vengeance; I moved through all those stirring scenes like a person in a dream, just as I had endured all through the ten days' march when I was being carried alternately by my father and by Tito, feeling little, caring for nothing, enduring all things, because I was all the time waiting for my day to come, waiting for the moment when my vengeance should leap into active life. A curious state of mind, I know—a very unhealthy state; I am not defending myself; I am merely trying to describe as faithfully as I can exactly what I felt.

In just the same state of mind I rode day after day on my pony, by my father's side, as the troops made their way through the forests in search of the insurgents. The details of those days of marching made no impression upon me; my mental vision was occupied only with one figure, that of Martinez, and regarded him with a steady, ever-burning, never-changing hate. Yet it was not so much even hatred as a calm certainty of doom—the knowledge that I should fulfil my destiny, and that that destiny was to slay this monster.

At last came the day when our guides told us that we were drawing near to the town which Martinez had occupied—that we might hope to come in sight of it by evening. Martinez, however, was ready for us. He had even come out to meet us, and arranged for us an ambush into which we promptly fell. For he had concealed his force in the forest upon our line of route, and they suddenly opened a tremendous fire upon us precisely when we least expected it.

Those Spanish-American troops are never very steady under fire, at the best of times; still less so when that fire comes as a terrifying surprise; and the front of our column wavered and crumpled up under it. Then was shown the advantage of a volunteer troop, whose members, as I have said, were mostly gentlemen by birth. Hearing the firing, and seeing the wavering of the men in front, my father shouted a command to his company, and in a moment we were moving steadily and swiftly forward, the rest of the volunteer regiment following hard on our heels. Instead of dashing into the little glade where the front ranks of our men were being shot down, or whence they were flying in disorder, we promptly scattered out on both sides and rushed through

the forest itself upon the hidden soldiers of Martinez, who, thus taken in flank, had to turn and defend themselves.

This charge of the volunteers rallied the regulars, and in a few moments they also were joining in the fray. But that was no organised battle, and rarely had we any opportunity of falling into serried ranks at all. It resolved itself into a series of hand-to-hand combats, fought out among the trees. Friend and foe were so inextricably mingled that it was not always easy to distinguish them, for though the volunteers looked trim enough, many of the Government soldiers were scarcely smarter in appearance than the ragged and ill-appointed free-lances of Martinez.

The rebels fought bravely, for they knew that they were fighting for their lives, as well as for all the fantastic rewards which Martinez had promised them. How far they really believed his stories of the fabulous wealth and power which awaited them, it is difficult to say; it may be that they fully accepted them, for most of them were ignorant enough to believe anything; but at any rate they knew very well that after their capture of the town and the murders that they had committed, no mercy would be shown to any of them who might fall into the hands of the Government. The Government General had hoped to have considerable superiority in numbers. Counting the Indians as well as the mutinous regiments, it is by no means certain that he had any superiority at all, but it was difficult to form any estimate in a fight that took place in so irregular a manner and amidst such unusual surroundings.

There were several open glades in the forest, and twice in the course of that amorphous struggle I took part in a charge, which in each case cleared the glade of the rebels. It is a very curious experience for one who is not used to warfare—to find oneself one of a body of men animated by a single thought, to look at all the faces round one and watch them set in grim determination, forgetting all else but the stern resolve to hurtle down upon the enemy, to trample them under-foot or to drive them away—and to wonder, half-startled, whether one's own face looks like that. Then comes the sharp command, the wild ordered rush onwards, and then the rattle of rifles or the clash of steel, the leaping over dead bodies, foe and friend alike, not even noticing which they are, full only of the one idea, to press on, press on. And then the glade is won, and we halt and look back for a moment to see heaps of dead, to see the green grass all trampled and red with blood; and yet there is no time for horror, no time for anything but still that one idea; where are they whom we must conquer?—let us press on, press on.

At least it was so with me. For the earlier part of that fight I kept by my father's side. Quite early my pony was shot and fell under me, but I sprang clear and seized the bridle of a riderless horse as he came past, sprang upon his back (he was far too tall for me) and turned him again into the fray. But in doing this I lost my father for a moment, and could not at once get back to his side. So I ranged through the battle, looking everywhere for the man whom I knew I should find.~ I took my share in the fighting, I suppose; I know that wherever I saw a rebel or an Indian I fired at him, and I think that few of my bullets missed their mark.

But presently my big horse fell, as the pony had done (I think he had been wounded when I first mounted him); and this time I was thrown to the earth with a jar, and it took me a few moments to recover my senses. The rifle which I had carried was injured in the fall; some part of its mechanism was bent, so that when I tried to fire it I could not. I cast it aside, and seized in its stead the nearest weapon that offered, a long naked sword which was lying on the ground in front of me—dropped, I suppose, by some officer as he fell dead, or who perhaps was merely wounded and had crawled aside. I did not stop to think of that; I seized this great sword (far too heavy in reality for me to wield) and started off again on foot, still seeking for what I knew I should find.

By this time the result of the battle was a foregone conclusion. Everywhere the Government troops were steadily driving back the insurgents, and many of the latter were already in flight. It was said afterwards, and I fully believe it, that this success was due to a great extent to the fiery valour of my father. The Colonel in command of the volunteer corps fell, badly wounded, early in the fight, and my father instantly took command and carried the regiment to victory. There were others in it of the same nominal rank as he, yet no one for a moment questioned his assumption of the lead. They think highly over there of the bravery and fighting qualities of the English, and so I suppose it seemed natural to them to follow an Englishman. At any rate they did so, and, civilian though my father was, without any experience in military matters, he led them with dauntless courage, and he led them to victory. If he lacked, as he must have done, knowledge of tactics, that lack mattered comparatively little in this strange hand-to-hand fight in the forest. What told there was personal courage and dash, and of those he had plenty.

I was still far from strong, and I had been racing about for some hours through the battle—and a battle is probably one of the most fatiguing things in the world; yet I had no thought of being tired, no time to feel tired—for no feeling, no thought could be allowed to distract me for an instant from the certainty that God would give my vengeance into my hand. Long I looked for Martinez everywhere, and but for that inner conviction I must have been disappointed. But I knew so surely that I should find him, and that all this vague fighting was a mere preliminary, that I never hesitated for a moment, never doubted for a moment; and at last I saw him.

He stood under a great tree with his back to it, and two of the Government soldiers were attacking him, and for the moment that little group seemed to be apart from all the rest. Perhaps it was only in my mind that they were apart, for I saw that one figure only; and yet I think it is true that there were only the dead for some yards around. The two soldiers were assailing him boldly, and he was defending himself with his sword—the same sword, I thought, with the hatred surging up within me, the same sword that had slain my brother. But he had been famed in earlier days as the best swordsman in the army—some said the best swordsman in South America; and, even while I looked, one of the attacking soldiers went down before him, and then quickly the other, and he stood alone with the light of battle in his eye.

And then—he saw me, as I was springing towards him. His face changed and there came over it a look of diabolical hatred, and yet at the same time, I am sure, a look of fear.

“What,” he shouted, “are you here? You have brought all this ill-luck upon me; you and your cursed father and brother!”

“Yes,” replied I, “I am here; and I shall kill you.”

I sprang straight at him; I might have shot him from a distance, but I meant to kill him with the sword, as he had killed Gerald. I had seen the fear in his eyes—I am sure of that; but now he turned upon me with a laugh of scorn, seeing that I was armed only with a clumsy old sword, and knowing himself a master of his weapon. In a moment we were fencing; I had learnt some fencing at school, yet I doubt whether that was of use to me at this critical moment. I fought by instinct and not by knowledge; yet I must have fought better than I knew, for even as our swords clashed together again and again I saw a change in his eyes; I saw the look of triumphant malice fade away and the haunting fear show itself again, I suppose because in some strange unexpected way he could not strike me down at once, because he found me more nearly a match for him than he could possibly have expected.

I think he was scarcely taller than I—I have said that he was a short man: but his reach was longer, and his familiarity with the weapon incomparably greater. My will was indomitable as ever, but my arm was rapidly tiring, and it was only by the most tremendous exertion that I could

move that unwieldy sword quickly enough to guard against his lightning-like blows and thrusts. I knew that slowly and surely he was beating down my guard, and that, if he once did that, my fate was sealed. At last, after a shower of mighty blows, came a lightning-like thrust at my heart. I parried, but my failing arm was some infinitesimal fraction of a second later than it should have been. I struck the blade down, but not quite far enough. It was turned from the heart at which it was aimed, but it ran into the fleshy part of my thigh. Springing back after the thrust, as a fencer does, Martinez caught his foot in a root of the tree and went over backwards, his sword falling from his hand. In a moment I leaped upon him, put my foot upon his breast and the point of my sword at his throat. He cried out for mercy.

“Mercy!” I said, jerkily perhaps, for I was panting from the terrible exertion of the fight; “what mercy did you show to my brother?”

And I pressed the point of the sword upon his throat.

Yet again he shrieked for mercy. Somehow in some previous part of the struggle the breast of my shirt had been torn open, and the little silver and ebony crucifix which my mother had fastened round my neck was hanging outwards as I stooped over him.

“Mercy!” he said, “for the sake of the Christ whose image you wear!”

A half laugh came from me to hear this renegade, who had tried to make me trample on the crucifix, now begging for his life in the name of that same Christ whose image he had profaned. But not for that would I be turned aside.

I had recovered my breath by now, and I drew back my arm to make the final thrust, when suddenly that arm was stayed. Once more beside me stood my brother, looking up earnestly into my face, and holding back with his little hand the arm that would have avenged him. This time at least it was no hallucination, for Martinez saw it too. I saw the awful look of terror in his eyes; I saw the sweat of fear break out upon his face as he groaned in horror. But I looked into the eyes of the dead. My brother’s hand was on my arm, and he was looking up gravely, earnestly, pleadingly, into my face. I could not kill his murderer now. As I threw down my sword and drew back with a strange emptiness in my heart, the most lovely and loving smile broke out over my brother’s face, and then once more he was gone. As I turned away from the prostrate Martinez, he drew a knife out of the leg of his long leather boot, and stabbed at me even as I was retiring. I sprang aside instinctively, and before he could rise to his feet a little knot of the Government soldiers came racing up and sprang upon him, wrested his knife from him and made him their prisoner.

Still with that strange empty feeling I turned on my heel, and was about to go I know not where, when I caught sight of the forbidding face of Antinahuel, taking aim at me with a rifle over the top of a bush. My movement was more instinctive than reasoned; with the quickness of long practice I drew out the revolver from my belt, and two reports sounded together. I felt a numbing blow in my right arm, and the pistol fell from it, to the ground; but before I myself sank down beside it I had time to note the horrible blue hole in Antinahuel’s forehead—blue for a moment, before the blood gushed out of it as he fell backwards. I myself fell also, for the blood was pouring from the wound in my thigh, in addition to the shock caused by the rifle bullet; and so for a time all knowledge of mundane affairs passed from me.

When I came to myself again it was dark night, and I lay for a time watching the stars, still hardly conscious, hardly able to think of my present situation and caring nothing for the future, conscious chiefly of one thing—an awful thirst produced no doubt by the great drain of blood from the body. I had suffered much at many periods of my story, as you know by this time; yet I think that nothing that I suffered was ever so terrible as that thirst while I lay helpless under the

stars. The night seemed to be years in length; sometimes I seemed to be unconscious for a few moments, and then I woke with the conviction that I must have slept through a day, and that another night had come upon me, and yet when I looked at the stars I saw that they had scarcely moved.

I lost all count of time, but somewhere amid what seemed the centuries I realised uncertainly that some lanterns were approaching, and presently with a start of joy I heard my father's voice, and saw his face bending over me. I cried to him for water, and in a moment he held a flask to my lips, and then I think I must have swooned again for pure joy that that thirst was allayed. Quickly now my wounds were bandaged and I was carried gently away from the field.

And here to all intents and purposes my story ends. Of what avail to tell of my slow nursing back to health and strength, of the thanks given both to my father and to me by the Government of the country, and the decorations it bestowed upon us for the victory which, it said in its politeness, was so largely due to our bravery? What need I say of that day a month later, when I stood silently watching amidst a mob howling out execrations, while Martinez was shot in the great square of the capital? The hatred had gone—gone utterly out of my life, wiped out of it by the touch of the dead. No, not of the dead, but of the living, for I had looked into my brother's eyes, and I knew that he lived and loved me still. And so I was content, though then I knew nothing of the beautiful fate which would bring my brother back to life fifteen years later in a country far away, which would bring him in that new body into my life again, which would enable us both to recognise one another, and to realise that death can never part those souls that truly love.