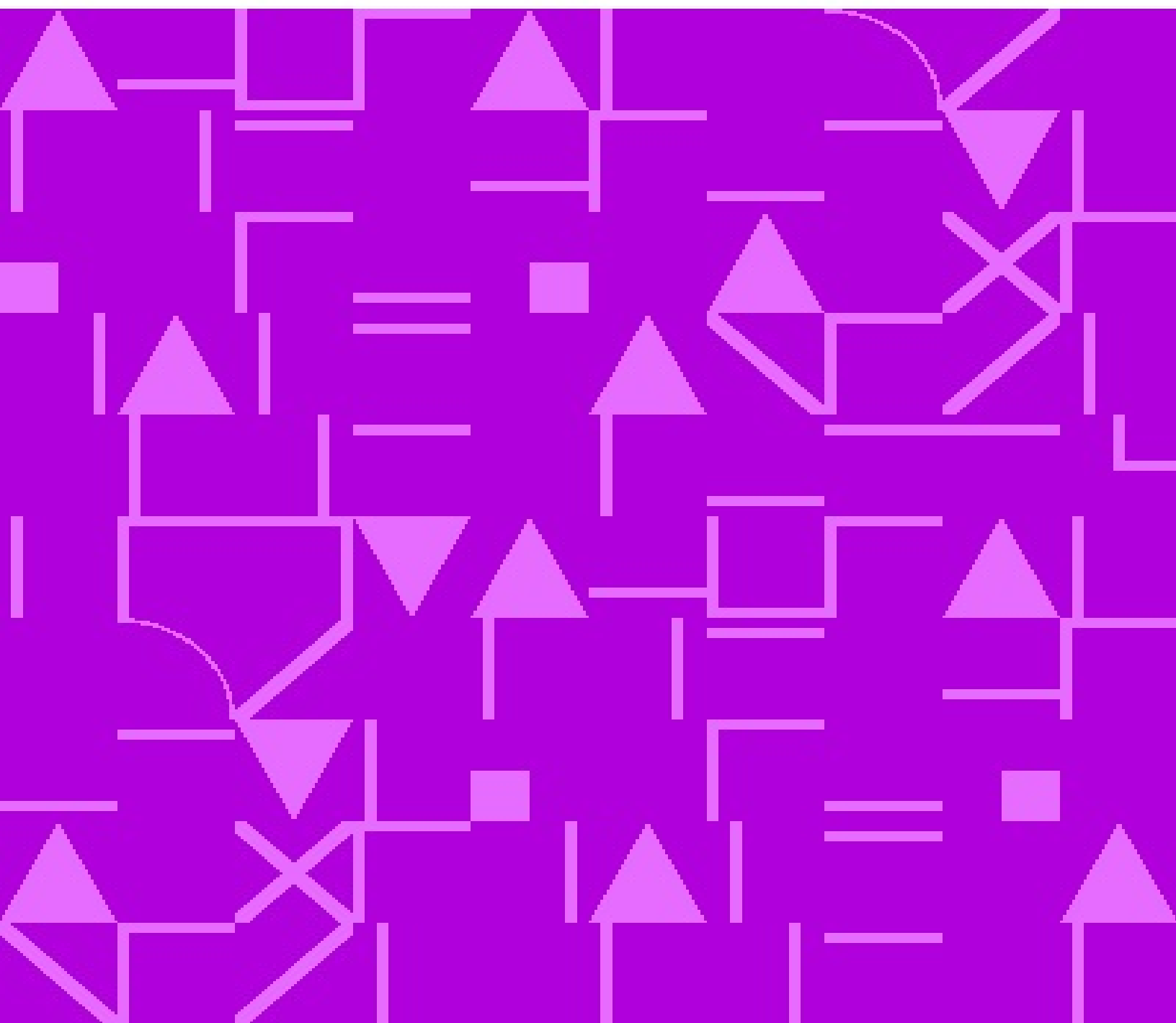


Afloat in the Forest; Or, A Voyage among the Tree-Tops

Mayne Reid



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*** START OF THIS PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK AFLOAT IN THE FOREST ***

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Captain Mayne Reid

"Afloat in the Forest"

"A Voyage among the Tree-Tops"

Chapter One.

The Brothers at Home.

Twenty years ago, not twenty miles from the Land's End, there lived a Cornish gentleman named Trevannion. Just twenty years ago he died, leaving to lament him a brace of noble boys, whose mother all three had mourned, with like profound sorrow, but a short while before.

“Squire” Trevannion, as he was called, died in his own house, where his ancestors for hundreds of years before him had dispensed hospitality. None of them, however, had entertained so profusely as he; or rather improvidently, it might be said, since in less than three months after his death the old family mansion, with the broad acres appertaining to it, passed into the hands of an alien, leaving his two sons, Ralph and Richard, landless, houseless, and almost powerless. One thousand pounds apiece was all that remained to them out of the wreck of the patrimonial estates. It was whispered that even this much was not in reality theirs, but had been given to them by the *very respectable* solicitor who had managed their father's affairs, and had furthermore *managed* to succeed him in the ownership of a property worth a rental of three thousand a year.

Any one knowing the conditions under which the young Trevannions received their two thousand pounds must have believed it to be a gift, since it was handed over to them by the family solicitor with the private understanding that they were to use it in pushing their fortunes elsewhere,—anywhere except in Cornwall!



The land-pirate who had plucked them—for in reality had they been plucked—did not wish them to stay at home, divested, as they were, of their valuable plumage. He had appropriated their fine feathers, and cared not for the naked bodies of the birds.

There were those in Cornwall who suspected foul play in the lawyer's dealings with the young Trevannions, among others, the victims themselves. But what could they, do? They were utterly ignorant of their late father's affairs,—indeed, with any affairs that did not partake of the nature of "sports." A solicitor "most respectable,"—a phrase that has become almost synonymous with rascality,—a regular church-goer,—accounts kept with scrupulous exactness,—a man of honest face, distinguished for probity of speech and integrity of heart,—what could the Trevannions do? What more than the Smiths and the Browns and the Joneses, who, notwithstanding their presumed greater skill in the ways of a wicked lawyer world, are duped every day in a similar manner. It is an old and oft-repeated story,—a tale too often told, and too often true,—that of the family lawyer and his confiding client, standing in the relationship of robber and robbed.

The two children of Squire Trevannion could do nothing to save or recover their paternal estate. Caught in the net of legal chicanery, they were forced to yield, as other squires' children have had to do, and make the best, of a bad matter,—forced to depart from a home that had been held by Trevannions perhaps since the Phoenicians strayed thitherward in search of their shining tin.

It sore grieved them to separate from the scenes of their youth; but the secret understanding with the solicitor required that sacrifice. By staying at home a still greater might be called for,—subsistence in penury, and, worse than all, in a humiliating position; for, notwithstanding the open house long kept by their father, his friends had disappeared with his guests. Impelled by these thoughts, the brothers resolved to go forth into the wide world, and seek fortune wherever it seemed most likely they should find it.

They were at this period something more than mere children. Ralph had reached within twelve months of being twenty. Richard was his junior by a couple of years. Their book-education had been good; the practice of manly sports had imparted to both of them a physical strength that fitted them for toil, either of the mind or body. They were equal to a tough struggle, either in the intellectual or material world; and to this they determined to resign themselves.

For a time they debated between themselves where they should go, and what do. The army and navy came under their consideration. With such patronage as their father's former friends could command, and might still exert in favour of their fallen fortunes, a commission in either army or navy was not above their ambition. But neither felt much inclined towards a naval or military life; the truth being, that a thought had taken shape in their minds leading them to a different determination.

Their deliberations ended by each of them proclaiming a resolve,—almost sealing it with a vow,—that they would enter into some more profitable, though perhaps less pretentious, employment than that of either soldiering or sailing; that they would toil—with their hands, if need be—until they should accumulate a sufficient sum to return and recover the ancestral estate from the grasp of the avaricious usurper. They did not know how it was to be done; but, young, strong, and hopeful, they believed it might be done,—with time, patience, and industry to aid them in the execution.

“Where shall we go?” inquired Richard, the younger of the two. “To America, where every poor man appears to prosper? With a thousand each to begin the world with, we might do well there. What say you, Ralph?”

“America is a country where men seem to thrive best who have *nothing* to begin the world with. You mean North America,—the United States,—I suppose?”

“I do.”

“I don't much like the United States as a home,—not because it is a republic, for I believe that is the only just form of government, whatever our aristocratic friends may say. I object to it simply because I wish to go south,—to some part of the tropical world, where one may equally be in the way of acquiring a fortune.”

“Is there such a place?”

“There is.”

“Where, brother?”

“Peru. Anywhere along the Sierra of the Andes from Chili to the Isthmus of Panama. As Cornish men we should adopt the specialty of our province, and become miners. The Andes mountains will give us that opportunity, where, instead of grey tin, we may delve for yellow gold. What say you to South America?”

“I like the thought of South America,—nothing would please me better than going there. But I must confess, brother, I have no inclination for the occupation you speak of. I had rather be a merchant than a miner.”

“Don’t let that *penchant* prevent you from selecting Peru as the scene of mercantile transactions. There are many Englishmen who have made fortunes in the Peruvian trade. You may hope to follow their example. We may choose different occupations and still be near each other. One thousand pounds each may give both of us a start,—you as a merchant of goods, I as a digger for gold. Peru is the place for either business. Decide, Dick! Shall we sail for the scenes rendered celebrated by Pizarro?”

“If you will it—I’m agreed.”

“Thither then let us go.”

In a month from that time the two Trevannions might have been seen upon a ship, steering westward from the Land’s End, and six months later both disembarked upon the beach of Callao,—*en route* first for Lima, thence up the mountains, to the sterile snow-crested mountains, that tower above the treasures of Cerro Pasco,—vainly guarded within the bosom of adamantine rocks.



Chapter Two.

The Brothers Abroad.

Ralph and Richard Trevannion. If it were so, a gap of some fifteen years—after the date of their arrival at Cerro Pasco—would have to be filled up. I decline to speak of this interval of their lives, simply because the details might not have any remarkable interest for those before whom they would be laid.

Suffice it to say, that Richard, the younger, soon became wearied of a miner's life; and, parting with his brother, he crossed the Cordilleras, and descended into the great Amazonian forest,—the “montaña,” as it is called by the Spanish inhabitants of the Andes. Thence, in company with a party of Portuguese traders, he kept on down the river Amazon, trading along its banks, and upon some of its tributary streams; and finally established himself as a merchant at its mouth, in the thriving “city” of Gran Pará.

Richard was not unsocial in his habits; and soon became the husband of a fair-haired wife,—the daughter of a countryman who, like himself, had established commercial relations at Pará. In a few years after, several sweet children called him “father,”—only two of whom survived to prattle in his ears this endearing appellation, alas! no longer to be pronounced in the presence of their mother.

Fifteen years after leaving the Land's End, Richard Trevannion, still under thirty-five years of age, was a widower, with two children,—respected wherever known, prosperous in pecuniary affairs,—rich enough to return home, and spend the remainder of his days in that state so much desired by the Sybarite Roman poet,—“otium cum dignitate.”

Did he remember the vow mutually made between him and his brother, that, having enough money, they would one day go back to Cornwall, and recover the ancestral estate? He did remember it. He longed to accomplish this design, he only awaited his brother's answer to a communication he had made to him on this very subject.

He had no doubt that Ralph's desire would be in unison with his own,—that his brother would soon join him, and then both would return to their native land,—perhaps to dwell again under the same roof that had sheltered them as children.

The history of the elder brother during this period of fifteen years, if less eventful, was not less distinguished by success. By steadily following the pursuit which had first attracted him to Peru, he succeeded in becoming a man of considerable means,—independent, if not wealthy.

Like his brother, he got married at an early period,—in fact, within the first year after establishing himself in Cerro Pasco. Unlike the latter, however, he chose for his wife one of the women of the country,—a beautiful Peruvian lady. She too, but a short while before, had gone to a better world, leaving motherless two pretty children, of twelve and fourteen years of age,—the elder of the two being a daughter.

Such was the family of Ralph Trevannion, and such the condition of life in which his brother's epistle reached him,—that epistle containing the proposal that they should wind lip their respective businesses, dispose of both, and carry their gains to the land that had given them birth.

The proposition was at once accepted, as Richard knew it would be. It was far from the first time that the thing had been discussed, epistolary fashion, between them; for letters were exchanged as often as opportunity permitted,—sometimes twice or thrice in the year.

In these letters, during the last few years of their sojourn in South America, the promise made on leaving home was mutually mentioned, and as often renewed on either side. Richard knew that his brother was as eager as himself to keep that well-remembered vow.

So long as the mother of Ralph's children was alive, he had not urged his brother to its fulfilment; but now that she had been dead for more than a year, he had written to say that the time had come for their return to their country and their home.

His proposal was, that Ralph, having settled his affairs in Peru,—which, of course, included the selling out of his share in the mines,—should join him, Richard, at Pará, thence to take ship for England. That instead of going round by Cape Horn, or across the Isthmus, by Panama, Ralph should make the descent of the great Amazon River, which traverse would carry him latitudinally across the continent from west to east.

Richard had two reasons for recommending this route. First, because he wished his brother to see the great river of Orellana, as he himself had done; and secondly, because he was still more desirous that his *own son* should see it.

How this last wish was to be gratified by his brother making the descent of the Amazon, may require explanation; but it will suffice to say that the son of Richard Trevannion was at that time residing with his uncle at the mines of Cerro Pasco.

The boy had gone to Peru the year before, in one of his father's ships,—first, to see the Great Ocean, then the Great Andes,—afterwards to become acquainted with the country of the Incas, and last, though not of least importance, to make the acquaintance of his own uncle and his two interesting cousins, the elder of whom was exactly his own age. He had gone to the Pacific side by sea. It was his father's wish he should return to the Atlantic side by land,—or, to speak more accurately, by *river*.

The merchant's wish was to be gratified. The miner had no desire to refuse compliance with his proposal. On the contrary, it chimed in with his own inclinations. Ralph Trevannion possessed a spirit adventurous as his brother's, which fourteen years of mining industry, carried on in the cold mountains of Cerro Pasco, had neither deadened nor chilled. The thought of once more returning to the scenes of his youth quite rejuvenated him; and on the day of receiving his brother's challenge to go, he not only accepted it, but commenced proceedings towards carrying the design into execution.

A month afterwards and he might have been seen descending the eastern slope of the

Cordilleras on mule-back, and accompanied by his family and followers; afterwards aboard a *balsa*,—one of those curious crafts used in the descent of the Huallaga; and later still on the *montaria*, upon the bosom of the great river itself.

With the details of his mountain travels, interesting as they may be, we have naught to do. No more with his descent of the Huallaga, nor his long voyage on the Amazon itself, in that up-river portion of the stream where it is called the “Marañon.” Only where it becomes the stupendous “Solimoës” do we join Ralph Trevannion on his journey, and remain with him as long as he is “Afloat in the Forest,” *or making a voyage among the tree-tops*.

Chapter Three.

The Galatea.

On an evening in the early part of December, a craft of singular construction might have been seen descending the Solimoës, and apparently making for the little Portuguese port of Coary, that lies on the southern side of the river.

When we say of singular construction, we mean singular to one unaccustomed to the navigation of Amazonian waters. There the craft in question was too common to excite curiosity, since it was nothing more than a *galatea*, or large canoe, furnished with mast and sail, with a palm-thatched cabin, or *toldo*, rising over the quarter, a low-decked locker running from bow to midships,—along each side of which were to be seen, half seated, half standing, some half-dozen dark-skinned men, each plying, instead of an oar, a paddle-blade.

Perhaps the most singular sight on board this embarkation was the group of animated beings who composed its crew and passengers. The former, as already stated, were dark-skinned men scantily clad,—in fact, almost naked, since a single pair of white cotton drawers constituted the complete costume of each.

For passengers there were three men, and a like number of individuals of younger age. Two of the men were white, apparently Europeans; the other was as black as soot could have made him,—unquestionably an African negro. Of the young people two were boys, not much differing in size, and apparently not much in age, while the third was a half-grown girl, of dark complexion, raven-coloured hair, and beautiful features.

One of the white men appeared to be, and was, the proprietor of the montaria, and the employer of its swarthy crew. He was Ralph Trevannion.

The young girl was his daughter, and bore her Peruvian mother's name, Rosa, more often pronounced by its diminutive of endearment, Rosita. The younger of the two boys—also of dark complexion—was his son Ralph; while the older, of true Saxon physiognomy and hue, was the son of his brother, also bearing his father's Christian name, Richard.

The second white man was unmistakably of European race,—so much so that any one possessing the slightest knowledge of the Hibernian type would at once have pronounced him a "Son of the Sod." A pure pug nose, a shock of curled hair of the clearest carrot colour, an eternal twinkle in the eye, a volume of fun lying open at each angle of the mouth, were all characteristics by which "Tipperary Tom"—for such was his *sobriquet*—might be remembered.

About the negro there was nothing special, more than that he was a pure negro, with enormously thick lips, flattened nose, long protruding heels, teeth white as hippopotamus ivory, and almost always set in a good-humoured grin. The darkey had been a sailor, or rather ship-steward, before landing in Peru. Thither had he strayed, and settled at Cerro Pasco after several years spent aboard ship. He was a native of Mozambique, on the eastern coast of Africa, to which circumstance was he indebted for the only name ever given him,—Mozey.

Both he and the Irishman were the servants of the miner, or rather his retainers, who served him in various ways, and had done so almost ever since his establishing himself among the rocks of Cerro Pasco.

The other creatures of the animated kingdom that found lodgment upon the craft were of various shapes, sizes, and species. There were quadrupeds, quadrumana, and birds,—beasts of the field, monkeys of the forest, and birds of the air,—clustering upon the cabin top, squatted in the hold, perched upon the gangway, the toldo, the yard, and the mast,—forming an epitomised menagerie, such as may be seen on every kind of craft that navigates the mighty Amazon.

It is not our design to give any description of the galatea's crew. There were nine of them,—all Indians,—four on each side acting as rowers, or more properly "paddlers," the ninth being the pilot or steersman, standing abaft the toldo.

Our reason for not describing them is that they were a changing crew, only attached to the craft for a particular stage of the long river voyage, and had succeeded several other similar sets since the embarkation of our voyagers on the waters of the upper Amazon. They had joined the galatea at the port of Ega, and would take leave of her at Coary, where a fresh crew of civilised Indians—"tapuyos"—would be required.

And they *were* required, but not obtained. On the galatea putting into the port of Coary, it was found that nearly every man in the place was off upon a hunting excursion,—turtle and cow-fish being the game that had called them out. Not a canoe-man could be had for love or money.

The owner of the galatea endeavoured to tempt the Ega crew to continue another stage. It was contrary to their habit, and they refused to go. Persuasion and threats were tried in vain. Coaxing and scolding proved equally unavailable; all except one remained firm in their refusal, the exception being an old Indian who did not belong to the Ega tribe, and who could not resist the large bribe offered by Trevannion.

The voyagers must either suspend their journey till the Coary turtle-hunters should return, or proceed without paddlers. The hunters were not expected for a month. To stay a month at Coary was out of the question. The galatea must go on manned by her own people, and the old Indian who was to act as pilot. Such was the determination of Ralph Trevannion. But for that resolve,—rash as it was, and ending unfortunately for him who made it,—we should have no story to tell.

Chapter Four.

Drifting with the Current.

The craft that carried the ex-miner, his family and following, once more floated on the broad bosom of the Solimoës. Not so swift as before, since, instead of eight paddlers, it was now impelled by only half the number,—these, too, with less than half the experience of the crew who had preceded them.

The owner himself acted as steersman, while the paddles were plied by “Tipperary Tom,” Mozey, the old Indian,—who, being of the Mundurucú tribe, passed by the name of “Munday,”—and Richard Trevannion.

The last, though by far the youngest, was perhaps the best paddler in the party. Brought up in his native place of Gran Pará, he had been accustomed to spend half his time either in or upon the water; and an oar or paddle was to him no novelty.

Young Ralph, on the contrary, a true mountaineer, knew nothing of either, and therefore counted for nothing among the crew of the galatea. To him and the little Rosa was assigned the keeping of the pets, with such other light duties as they were capable of performing.

For the first day the voyage was uninterrupted by any incident,—at least any that might be called unpleasant. Their slow progress, it is true, was a cause of dissatisfaction; but so long as they were going at all, and going in the right direction, this might be borne with equanimity. Three miles an hour was about their average rate of speed; for half of which they were indebted to the current of the river, and for the other half to the impulsion of their paddles.

Considering that they had still a thousand miles to go before reaching Gran Pará, the prospect of a protracted voyage was very plainly outlined before them.

Could they have calculated on making three miles an hour for every hour of the twenty-four, things would not have been bad. This rate of speed would have carried them to their destination in a dozen days,—a mere bagatelle. But they knew enough of river-navigation to disregard such data. They knew the current of the Solimoës to be extremely slow; they had heard of the strange phenomenon, that, run which way the river might, north, south, east, or west,—and it *does* keep bending and curving in all these directions,—the wind is almost always met with blowing *up stream*!

For this reason they could put no dependence in their sail, and would have to trust altogether to the paddles. These could not be always in the water. Human strength could not stand a perpetual spell, even at paddles; and less so in the hands of a crew of men so little used to them.

Nor could they continue the voyage at night. By doing so, they would be in danger of losing their course, their craft, and themselves!

You may smile at the idea. You will ask—a little scornfully, perhaps—how a canoe, or any other craft, drifting down a deep river to its destination, could possibly go astray. Does not the current point out the path,—the broad waterway not to be mistaken?

So it might appear to one seated in a skiff, and floating down the tranquil Thames, with its well-defined banks. But far different is the aspect of the stupendous Solimoës to the voyager gliding through its *Capo*.

I have made use of a word of strange sound, and still stranger signification. Perhaps it is new to your eye, as your oar. You will become better acquainted with it before the end of our voyage; for into the “Gapo” it is my intention to take you, where ill-luck carried the galatea and her crew.

On leaving Coary, it was not the design of her owner to attempt taking his craft, so indifferently manned, all the way to Pará. He knew there were several civilised settlements between,—as Barra at the mouth of the Rio Negro, Obidos below it, Santarem, and others. At one or other of these places he expected to obtain a supply of *tapuyos*, to replace the crew who had so provokingly forsaken him.

The voyage to the nearest of them, however, would take several days, at the rate of speed the galatea was now making; and the thought of being delayed on their route became each hour more irksome. The ex-miner, who had not seen his beloved brother during half a score of years, was impatient once more to embrace him. He had been, already, several months travelling towards him by land and water; and just as he was beginning to believe that the most difficult half of the journey had been accomplished, he found himself delayed by an obstruction vexatious as unexpected.

The first night after his departure from Coary, he consented that the galatea should lie to,—moored to some bushes that grew upon the banks of the river.

On the second night, however, he acted with less prudence. His impatience to make way prompted him to the resolution to keep on. The night was clear,—a full moon shining conspicuously above, which is not always the case in the skies of the Solimoës.

There was to be no sail set, no use made of the paddles. The crew were fatigued, and wanted rest and repose. The current alone was to favour their progress; and as it appeared to be running nearly two miles an hour, it should advance them between twenty and thirty miles before the morning.

The Mundurucú made an attempt to dissuade his “patron” from the course he designed pursuing; but his advice was disregarded,—perhaps because ill-understood,—and the galatea glided on.

Who could mistake that broad expanse of water—upon which the moon shone so clearly—for aught else than the true channel of the Solimoës? Not Tipperary Tom, who, in the second watch of the night,—the owner himself having kept the first,—acted as steersman of the galatea.

The others had gone to sleep. Trevannion and the three young people under the toldo; Mozey

and the Mundurucú along the staging known as the “hold.” The birds and monkeys were at rest on their respective perches, and in their respective cages,—all was silent in the galatea, and around,—all save the rippling of the water, as it parted to the cleaving of her keel.



Chapter Five.

The Galatea Aground.

Little experienced as he was in the art of navigation, the steersman was not inattentive to his duty. Previously to his taking the rudder, he had been admonished about the importance of keeping the craft in the channel of the stream, and to this had he been giving his attention.

It so chanced, however, that he had arrived at a place where there were two channels,—as if an island was interposed in the middle of the river, causing it to branch at an acute angle. Which of these was the right one? Which should be taken? These were the questions that occurred to Tipperary Tom.

At first he thought of awakening his master, and consulting him, but on once more glancing at the two channels, he became half convinced that the broader one must be the proper route to be followed.

“Bay Japers!” muttered he to himself. “Shure I can’t be mistaken. The biggest av the two ought to be the mane sthrame. Anyway, I won’t wake the masther. I’ll lave it to the ship to choose for hersilf.” Saying this he relaxed his hold upon the steering oar, and permitted the galatea to drift with the current.

Sure enough, the little craft inclined towards the branch that appeared the broader one; and in ten minutes’ time had made such way that the other opening was no longer visible from her decks. The steersman, confident of being on the right course, gave himself no further uneasiness; but, once more renewing his hold upon the steering oar, guided the galatea in the middle of the channel.

Notwithstanding all absence of suspicion as to having gone astray, he could not help noticing that the banks on each side appeared to be singularly irregular, as if here and there indented by deep bays, or reaches of water. Some of these opened out vistas of shining surface, apparently illimitable, while the dark patches that separated them looked more like clumps of trees half-submerged under water than stretches of solid earth.

As the galatea continued her course, this puzzling phenomenon ceased to be a conjecture; Tipperary Tom saw that he was no longer steering down a river between two boundary banks, but on a broad expanse of water, stretching as far as eye could reach, with no other boundary than that afforded by a *flooded forest*.

There was nothing in all this to excite alarm,—at least in the mind of Tipperary Tom. The Mundurucú, had he been awake, might have shown some uneasiness at the situation. But the Indian was asleep,—perhaps dreaming of some Mura enemy,—whose head he would have been happy to embalm.

Tom simply supposed himself to be in some part of the Solimoës flooded beyond its banks, as he had seen it in more places than one. With this confidence, he stuck faithfully to his steering

oar, and allowed the galatea to glide on. It was only when the reach of water—upon which the craft was drifting—began to narrow, or rather after it had narrowed to a surprising degree, that the steersman began to suspect himself of having taken the wrong course.

His suspicions became stronger, at length terminating in a conviction that such was the truth, when the galatea arrived at a part where less than a cable's length lay between her beam-ends and the bushes that stood out of the water on both sides of her. Too surely had he strayed from the "mane sthrame." The craft that carried him could no longer be in the channel of the mighty Solimoës!

The steersman was alarmed, and this very alarm hindered him from following the only prudent course he could have taken under the circumstances. He should have aroused his fellow-voyagers, and proclaimed the error into which he had fallen. He did not do so. A sense of shame at having neglected his duty, or rather at having performed it in an indifferent manner,—a species of regret not uncommon among his countrymen,—hindered him from disclosing the truth, and taking steps to avert any evil consequences that might spring from it.

He knew nothing of the great river on which they were voyaging. There *might* be such a strait as that through which the galatea was gliding. The channel might widen below; and, after all, he might have steered in the proper direction. With such conjectures, strengthened by such hopes, he permitted the vessel to float on.

The channel *did* widen again; and the galatea once more rode upon open water. The steersman was restored to confidence and contentment. Only for a short while did this state of mind continue. Again the clear water became contracted, this time to a very strip, while on either side extended reaches and estuaries, bordered by half-submerged bushes,—some of them opening apparently to the sky horizon, wider and freer from obstruction than that upon which the galatea was holding her course.

The steersman no longer thought of continuing his course, which he was now convinced must be the wrong one. Bearing with all his strength upon the steering oar, he endeavoured to direct the galatea back into the channel through which he had come; but partly from the drifting of the current, and partly owing to the deceptive light of the moon, he could no longer recognise the latter, and, dropping the rudder in despair, he permitted the vessel to drift whichever way the current might carry her!

Before Tipperary Tom could summon courage to make known to his companions the dilemma into which he had conducted them, the galatea had drifted among the tree-tops of the flooded forest, where she was instantly "brought to anchor."

The crashing of broken boughs roused her crew from their slumbers. The ex-miner, followed by his children, rushed forth from the toldo. He was not only alarmed, but perplexed, by the unaccountable occurrence. Mozey was equally in a muddle. The only one who appeared to comprehend the situation was the old Indian, who showed sufficient uneasiness as to its consequences by the terrified manner in which he called out: "The Gapo! The Gapo!"

Chapter Six.

The Monkey-Pots.

"The Gapo?" exclaimed the master of the craft. "What is it, Munday?"

"The Gapo?" repeated Tipperary Tom, fancying by the troubled expression on the face of the Indian that he had conducted his companions toward some terrible disaster. "Phwat is it, Manday?"

"Da Gapoo?" simultaneously interrogated the negro, the whites of his eyeballs shining in the moonlight. "What be dat?"

The Mundurucú made reply only by a wave of his hand, and a glance around him, as if to say, "Yes, the Gapo; you see we're in it."

The three interrogators were as much in the dark as ever. Whether the Gapo was fish, flesh, or fowl, air, fire, or water, they could not even guess. There was but one upon the galatea besides the Indian himself who knew the signification of the word which had created such a sensation among the crew, and this was young Richard Trevannion.

"It's nothing, uncle," said he, hastening to allay the alarm around him; "old Munday means that we've strayed from the true channel of the Solimoës, and got into the flooded forest,—that's all."

"The flooded forest?"

"Yes. What you see around us, looking like low bushes, are the tops of tall trees. We're now aground on the branches of a *sapucaya*,—a species of the Brazil-nut, and among the tallest of Amazonian trees. I'm right,—see! there are the nuts themselves!" As the young Paraense spoke, he pointed to some pericarps, large as cocoa-nuts, that were seen depending from the branches among which the galatea had caught. Grasping one of them in his hand, he wrenched it from the branch; but as he did so, the husk dropped off, and the prism-shaped nuts fell like a shower of huge hailstones on the roof of the *tol-do*. "Monkey-pots they're called," continued he, referring to the empty pericarp still in his hand. "That's the name by which the Indians know them; because the monkeys are very fond of these nuts."

"But the Gapo?" interrupted the ex-miner, observing that the expressive look of uneasiness still clouded the brow of the Mundurucú.

"It's the Indian name for the great inundation," replied Richard, in the same tranquil tone. "Or rather I should say, the name for it in the *lingoa-geral*."

"And what is there to fear? Munday has frightened us all, and seems frightened himself. What is the cause?"

"That I can't tell you, uncle. I know there are queer stories about the Gapo,—tales of strange

monsters that inhabit it,—huge serpents, enormous apes, and all that sort of thing. I never believed them, though the *tapuyos* do; and from old Munday's actions I suppose he puts full faith in them."

"The young patron is mistaken," interposed the Indian, speaking a patois of the *lingoa-geral*. "The Mundurucú does not believe in monsters. He believes in big serpents and monkeys,—he has seen them."

"But shure yez are not afeerd o' them, Manday?" asked the Irishman.

The Indian only replied by turning on Tipperary Tom a most scornful look.

"What is the use of this alarm?" inquired Trevannion. "The galatea does not appear to have sustained any injury. We can easily get her out of her present predicament, by lopping off the branches that are holding her."

"Patron," said the Indian, still speaking in a serious tone, "it may not be so easy as you think. We may get clear of the tree-top in ten minutes. In as many hours—perhaps days—we may not get clear of the Gapo. That is why the Mundurucú shows signs of apprehension."

"Ho! You think we may have a difficulty in finding our way back to the channel of the river?"

"Think it, patron! I am too sure of it. If not, we shall be in the best of good luck."

"It's of no use trying to-night, at all events," pursued Trevannion, as he glanced uncertainly around him. "The moon is sinking over the tree-tops. Before we could well get adrift, she'll be gone out of sight. We might only drift deeper into the maze. Is that your opinion, Munday?"

"It is, patron. We can do no good by leaving the place to-night. Wiser for us to wait for the light of the sun."

"Let all go to rest, then," commanded the patron, "and be ready for work in the morning. We need keep no lookout, I should think. The galatea is as safe here as if moored in a dry dock. She is *aground*, I take it, upon the limb of a tree! Ha! ha! ha!"

The thought of such a situation for a sailing craft—moored amid the tops of a tall tree—was of so ludicrous a nature as to elicit a peal of laughter from the patron, which was echoed by the rest of the crew, the Mundurucú alone excepted. His countenance still preserved its expression of uneasiness; and long after the others had sunk into unconscious sleep, he sat upon the stem of the galatea, gazing out into the gloom, with glances that betokened serious apprehension.

Chapter Seven.

The Gapo.

The young Paraense had given a correct, although not sufficiently explicit, account of the sort of place in which the galatea had gone “aground.”

That singular phenomenon known as the *Gapo* (or *Ygapo*), and which is one of the most remarkable characteristics of the great Amazonian region, demands a more detailed description. It is worthy of this, as a mere study of physical geography,—perhaps as pleasant a science as any; and furthermore, it is here absolutely necessary to the understanding of our tale. Without some comprehension of the circumstances that surrounded them, the hardships and sufferings endured, the adventures accomplished, and the perils passed by the crew of the strayed galatea, would appear as so many fabulous inventions, set forth to stimulate and gratify a taste for the merely marvellous. Young reader, this is not the aim of your author, nor does he desire it to be the end. On the contrary, he claims to draw Nature with a verisimilitude that will challenge the criticism of the naturalist; though he acknowledges a predilection for Nature in her wildest aspects,—for scenes least exposed to the eye of civilisation, and yet most exposed to its doubting incredulity.

There are few country people who have not witnessed the spectacle of a piece of woodland inundated by the overflow of a neighbouring stream. This flood is temporary; the waters soon subside into their ordinary channel, and the trees once more appear growing out of *terra firma*, with the green mead spreading on all sides around them. But a flooded forest is a very different affair; somewhat similar in character indeed, but far grander. Not a mere spinney of trees along the bank of a small stream; but a region extending beyond the reach of vision,—a vast tract of primeval woods,—the tall trees submerged to their very tops, not for days, nor weeks, but for months,—ay, some of them forever! Picture to your mind an inundation of this kind, and you will have some idea of the Gapo.

Extending for seventeen hundred miles along the banks of the Solimoës, now wider on the northern, now stretching farther back from the southern side, this semi-submerged forest is found, its interior almost as unknown as the crater-like caverns of the moon, or the icy oceans that storm or slumber round the Poles,—unknown to civilised man, but not altogether to the savage. The aboriginal of Amazonia, crouching in his canoe, has pierced this water-land of wonders. He could tell you much about it that is real, and much that is marvellous,—the latter too often pronounced fanciful by lettered *savans*. He could tell you of strange trees that grow there, bearing strange fruits, not to be found elsewhere,—of wonderful quadrupeds, and *quadrumana*, that exist only in the Gapo,—of birds brilliantly beautiful, and reptiles hideously ugly; among the last the dreaded dragon serpent, “Sucuruju.” He could tell you, moreover, of creatures of his own kind,—if they deserve the name of man,—who dwell continuously in the flooded forest, making their home on scaffolds among the tree-tops, passing from place to place in floating rafts or canoes, finding their subsistence on fish, on the flesh of the *manatee*, on birds, beasts, reptiles, and insects, on the stalks of huge water-plants and the fruits of undescribed trees, on monkeys, and sometimes upon *man*! Such Indians as have penetrated the vast water-land have brought strange tales out of it. We may give credence to them or

refuse it; but they, at least, are firm believers in most of the accounts which they have collected.

It is not to be supposed that the Gapo is impenetrable. On the contrary, there are several well-known waterways leading through it,—well-known, I mean, to the Indians dwelling upon its borders, to the *tapuyos*, whose business it is to supply crews for the galateas of the Portuguese traders, and to many of these traders themselves. These waterways are often indicated by “blazings” on the trees, or broken branches, just as the roads are laid out by pioneer settlers in a North American forest; and but for these marks, they could not be followed. Sometimes, however, large spaces occur in which no trees are to be seen, where, indeed, none grow. There are extensive lakes, always under water, even at the lowest ebb of the inundation. They are of all sizes and every possible configuration, from the complete circle through all the degrees of the ellipse, and not unfrequently in the form of a belt, like the channel of a river running for scores of miles between what might readily be mistaken for banks covered with a continuous thicket of low bushes, which are nothing more than the “spray” of evergreen trees, whose roots lie forty feet under water!

More frequently these openings are of irregular shape, and of such extent as to merit the title of “inland seas.” When such are to be crossed, the sun has to be consulted by the canoe or galatea gliding near their centre; and when he is not visible,—by no means a rare phenomenon in the Gapo,—then is there great danger of the craft straying from her course.

When within sight of the so-called “shore,” a clump of peculiar form, or a tree topping over its fellows, is used as a landmark, and often guides the navigator of the Gapo to the *igarita* of which he is in search.

It is not all tranquillity on this tree-studded ocean. It has its fogs, its gales, and its storms,—of frequent occurrence. The canoe is oft shattered against the stems of gigantic trees; and the galatea goes down, leaving her crew to perish miserably in the midst of a gloomy wilderness of wood and water. Many strange tales are told of such mishaps; but up to the present hour none have received the permanent record of print and paper.

Be it *our* task to supply this deficiency.

Chapter Eight.

The Echente.

It would not be true to say that the crew of the galatea were up with the sun. There was no sun to shine upon the gloomy scene that revealed itself next morning. Instead, there was a fog almost thick enough to be grasped with the hand. They were astir, however, by the earliest appearance of day; for the captain of the galatea was too anxious about his “stranded” craft to lie late abed.

They had no difficulty in getting the vessel afloat. A strong pull at the branches of the sapucaya, and then an adroit use of the paddles, carried the craft clear.

But what was the profit of this? Once out in the open water, they were as badly off as ever. Not one of them had the slightest idea of the direction they would take, even supposing they could find a clear course in any direction! A consultation was the result, in which all hands took part, though it was evident that, after the patron, most deference was paid to the Mundurucú. The young Paraense stood next in the scale of respect; while Tipperary Tom, beyond the account which he was called upon to give of his steersmanship, was not permitted to mingle his Hibernian brogue in the discussion.

Where was the river? That was the first problem to be solved, and of this there appeared to be no possible solution. There was no sun to guide them, no visible sky. Even had there been both, it would scarce have mended the matter. The steersman could not tell whether, on straying from the channel, he had drifted to the south or the north, the east or the west; and, indeed, an intellect less obtuse than that of Tipperary Tom might have been puzzled upon the point. It has been already mentioned, that the Solimoës is so tortuous as to turn to every point of the compass in its slow course. The mere fact that the moon was shining at the time could be of little use to Tipperary Tom, whose astronomy had never extended beyond the knowledge that there was a moon.

Where lay the river? The interrogatory was repeated a score of times, without receiving a satisfactory answer; though every one on board—the little Rosita excepted—ventured some sort of reply, most, however, offering their opinion with a doubting diffidence. The Mundurucú, although repeatedly appealed to, had taken small part in the discussion, remaining silent, his eyes moodily wandering over the water, seeking through the fog for some clue to their escape from the spot.

No one plied the paddles; they had impelled her out of sight of the sapucaya, now shrouded in the thick fog; but, as it was useless paddling any farther, all hands had desisted, and were now resting upon their oars. At this moment it was perceived that the galatea was in motion. The Mundurucú was the first to notice it; for his attention had for some time been directed to such discovery. For this reason had he cast his searching glances, now down into the turbid waters, and now out through the murky atmosphere. A thicket was discernible through the fog, but every moment becoming less distinct. Of course it was only a collection of tree-tops; but whatever it was, it soon became evident that the galatea was very slowly receding from it. On

discovering this, the Mundurucú displayed signs of fresh animation. He had been for some minutes lying upon his face, craning out over the gangway, and his long withered arms submerged in the water. The others occupied themselves in guessing what he was about; but their guesses had been to no purpose. Equally purposeless had appeared the actions of the Indian; for, after keeping his arm under water for a period of several minutes, he drew it in with a dissatisfied air, and once more arose to his feet. It was just then that he perceived the tree-tops, upon which he kept his eyes sharply fixed, until assured that the galatea was going away from them.

“*Hoola!*” he exclaimed, attempting to imitate the cry he had more than once heard issuing from the lips of Tipperary Tom. “*Hoola!* the river is out there!” As he spoke, he pointed towards the tree-tops.

It was the first confident answer to the all-important question.

“How can you tell that, Munday?” inquired the captain of the craft.

“How tell, patron? How tell day from night, the moon from the sun, fire from water? The Solimoës is there.” The Indian spoke with his arm still extended in the direction of the trees.

“We are willing to believe you,” rejoined Trevannion, “and will trust to your guidance; but pray explain yourself.”

“It’s all guess-work,” interpolated Tipperary Tom. “Ould Munday knows no more av fwat he’s talkin’ about than Judy Fitzcummons’s mother. I’ll warrant ye we come in from the t’other side.”

“Silence, Tom!” commanded his master. “Let us hear what Munday has to say. *You* have no right to contradict him.”

“Och, awance! An Indyen’s opinion prefarred before that ov a freeborn Oirishman! I wondher what nixt.” And as Tipperary completed his chapter of reproaches, he slank crouchingly under the shadow of the *todo*.

“So you think the river is there?” said Trevannion, once more addressing himself to the Mundurucú.

“The Mundurucú is sure of it, patron. Sure as that the sky is above us.”

“Remember, old man! It won’t do for us to make any mistake. No doubt we’ve already strayed a considerable distance from the channel of the Solimoës. To go again from it will be to endanger our lives.”

“The Mundurucú knows that,” was the laconic reply.

“Well, then, we must be satisfied of the fact, before we can venture to make a move. What proof can you give us that the river lies in that direction?”

“Patron! You know the month? It is the month of March.”

“Certainly it is. What of that?”

“The *echente*.”

“The *echente*? What is that?”

“The flood getting bigger. The water on the rise,—the Gapo still growing,—that is the *echente*.”

“But how should that enable you to determine the direction of the river?”

“It has done so,” replied the Indian. “Not before three months—in June—will come the *vasante*.”

“The *vasante*?”

“The *vasante*, patron: the fall. Then the Gapo will begin to grow less; and the current will be *towards* the river, as now it is *from* it.”

“Your story appears reasonable enough. I suppose we may trust to it. If so,” added Trevannion, “we had better direct our course towards yonder tree-tops, and lose no time in getting beyond them. All of you to your paddles, and pull cheerily. Let us make up for the time we have lost through the negligence of Tipperary Tom. Pull, my lads, pull!”

At this cheering command the four paddlers rushed to their places; and the galatea, impelled by their vigorous strokes, once more glided gayly over the bosom of the waters.

Chapter Nine.

An Impassable Barrier.

In a few moments the boat's bow was brought within half a cable's length of the boughs of the submerged trees. Her crew could see that to proceed farther, on a direct course, was simply impossible. With equal reason might they have attempted to hoist her into the air, and leap over the obstruction that had presented itself before them.

Not only were the branches of the adjoining trees interlocked, but from one to the other straggled a luxurious growth of creepers, forming a network so strong and compact that a steamer of a hundred horse-power would have been safely brought to a stand among its meshes. Of course no attempt was made to penetrate this impenetrable *chevaux de frise*; and after a while had been spent in reconnoitring it, Trevannion, guided by the counsel of the Mundurucú, ordered the galatea to go about, and proceed along the selvage of the submerged forest. An hour was spent in paddling. No opening. Another hour similarly employed, and with similar results!

The river might be in the direction pointed out by the Indian. No doubt it was; but how were they to reach it? Not a break appeared in all that long traverse wide enough to admit the passage of a canoe. Even an arrow could scarce have penetrated among the trees, that extended their parasite-laden branches beyond the border of the forest! By tacit consent of the patron, the paddlers rested upon their oars; then plied them once more; and once more came to a pause.

No opening among the tree-tops; no chance to reach the channel of the Solimoës. The gloomy day became gloomier, for night was descending over the Gapo. The crew of the galatea, wearied with many hours of exertion, ceased paddling. The patron did not oppose them; for his spirit, as well as theirs, had become subdued by hope long deferred. As upon the previous night, the craft was moored among the tree-tops, where her rigging, caught among the creepers, seemed enough to keep her from drifting away. But very different from that of the preceding night was the slumber enjoyed by her crew. Amidst the boughs of the sapucaya, there had been nothing to disturb their tranquillity, save the occasional shower of nuts, caused by the cracking of the dry shells, and the monkey-pots discharging their contents. Then was the galatea "grounded" upon a solitary tree, which carried only its own fruit. To-night she was moored in the middle of a forest,—at all events upon its edge,—a forest, not of the earth, nor the air, nor the water, but of all three,—a forest whose inhabitants might be expected to partake of a character altogether strange and abnormal. And of such character were they; for scarce had the galatea become settled among the tree-tops, when the ears of her crew were assailed by a chorus of sounds, that with safety might have challenged the choir of Pandemonium. Two alone remained undismayed,—Richard Trevannion and the Mundurucú.

"Bah!" exclaimed the Paraense, "what are you all frightened at? Don't you know what it is, uncle?"

"I know what it resembles, boy,—the Devil and his legions let loose from below. What is it, Dick?"

“Only the howlers. Don’t be alarmed, little Rosita!”

The little Peruvian, gaining courage from his words, looked admiringly on the youth who had called her “little Rosita.” Any one could have told that, from that time forward, Richard Trevannion might have the power to control the destinies of his cousin.

“The howlers! What are they?” inquired the old miner.

“Monkeys, uncle; nothing more. From the noise they make, one might suppose they were as big as buffaloes. Nothing of the kind. The largest I ever saw was hardly as stout as a deerhound, though he could make as much noise as a whole kennel. They have a sort of a drum in the throat, that acts as a sound-board. That’s what enables them to get up such a row. I’ve often heard their concert more than two miles across country, especially in prospect of an approaching storm. I don’t know if they follow this fashion in the Gapo; but if they do, from the way they’re going it now, we may look out for a trifling tornado.”

Notwithstanding the apparent unconcern with which young Trevannion declared himself, there was something in his manner that arrested the attention of his uncle. While pronouncing his hypothetical forecast of a storm, he had turned his glance towards the sky, and kept it fixed there, as if making something more than a transient observation. The fog had evaporated, and the moon was now coursing across the heavens, not against a field of cloudy blue, but in the midst of black, cumulus clouds, that every now and then shrouded her effulgence. A dweller in the tropics of the Western hemisphere would have pronounced this sign the certain forerunner of a storm; and so predicted the young Paraense. “We’ll have the sky upon us within an hour,” said he, addressing himself more especially to his uncle. “We’d better tie the galatea to the trees. If this be a *hurricane*, and she goes adrift, there’s no knowing where we may bring up. The likeliest place will be in the bottom of the Gapo.”

“The young patron speaks truth,” interposed Munday, his eyes all the while reading the signs of the heavens; “The Mundurucú knows by yonder yellow sky.”

As he spoke, the Indian pointed to a patch of brimstone-coloured clouds, conspicuous over the tops of the trees. There was no reason why Ralph Trevannion should not give credit to the two weather-prophets, who could have no personal motive in thus warning him. He yielded, therefore, to their solicitation; and in ten minutes more the galatea was secured among the tree-tops, as fast as cords could make her.



Chapter Ten.

A Tropical Tornado.

Notwithstanding the apparently complete security thus obtained for the craft, the Mundurucú did not seem to be easy in his mind. He had climbed up the mast to the yard, and, having there poised himself, sat gazing over the tops of the trees upon the patch of brimstone sky which was visible in that direction. The others all talked of going to sleep, except the young Paraense, who counselled them to keep awake. He, too, like the Mundurucú, was troubled with forebodings. He understood the weather-signs of the Solimoës, and saw that a storm was portending. Though the sun had not been visible during the whole day, it was now about the hour of his setting; and as if the storm had been waiting for this as a signal, it now boldly broke forth. A few quick puffs, with short intervals between them, were its precursors. These were soon followed by gusts, stronger, as well as noisier, in their advent; and then the wind kept up a continuous roaring among the tops of the trees; while above the thunder rolled incessantly, filling the firmament with its terrible voice. Deep darkness and the vivid glare of the lightning-flashes followed each other in quick succession. At one moment all was obscure around the crew of the galatea,—the sky, the trees, the water, even the vessel herself; in the next, everything was made manifest, to the distance of miles, under a brilliance garish and unearthly. To add to the unnatural appearance of things, there were other sounds than those of the thunder or the storm,—the cries of living creatures, strange and unknown. Birds they might be, or beasts, or reptiles, or all these, commingling their screams, and other accents of affright, with the sharp whistling of the wind, the hoarse rumbling of the thunder, and the continuous crashing of the branches.

The crew of the galatea were on the alert, with awe depicted on every face. Their fear was lest the craft should be blown away from her moorings, and carried out into the open water, which was now agitated by the fury of the storm. Almost under the first lashing of the wind, huge waves had sprung up, with white crests, that under the electric light gleamed fiercely along the yellow swell of the turbid water. Their anxiety was of short continuance; for almost on the instant of its rising, it became reality. Unfortunately, the tree to which the craft had been tied was one whose wood was of a soft and succulent nature,—a species of *melastoma*. Its branches were too brittle to bear the strain thus unexpectedly put upon them; and almost at the first onset of the tornado they began to give way, snapping off one after the other in quick succession. So rapid was the process of detachment, that, before fresh moorings could be made, the last cord had come away; and the galatea, like a greyhound loosed from the leash, shot out from among the tree-tops, and went off in wild career over the waves of the Gapo. Before any control could be gained over her by her terrified crew, she had made several cables' length into the open water, and was still sweeping onward over its seething surface. To turn her head towards the trees was clearly out of the question. The attempt would have been idle. Both wind and waves carried her in the opposite direction, to say nothing of the current, against which she had been already contending. The crew no longer thought of returning to the tree-tops, out of which they had been so unceremoniously swept: Their only chance of safety appeared to be to keep the craft, as well balanced as circumstances would permit, and run before the wind. Even this for a time seemed but a doubtful chance. The wind blew, not in

regular, uniform direction, but in short, fitful gusts, as if coming from every point of the compass; and the waves rolled around them as high as houses. In the midst of a chopping, purging sea, the galatea tumbled and pitched, now head, now stern foremost, at times going onward in mad career, and with headlong speed. The parrots and macaws upon the yard had as much as their strong claws could do to keep their perch; and the monkeys, cowering under the shelter of the *todo*, clung close to its timbers. Both birds and beasts mingled their terrified cries with the creaking of the galatea's timbers and the shouts of her crew. The Gapo threatened to engulf them. Every moment might be their last! And with this dread belief, scarce for a moment out of their minds, did our adventurers pass the remainder of that remarkable night, the galatea galloping onward, they could not tell whither. All they knew or could remember of that nocturnal voyage was, that the vessel kept upon her course, piloted only by the winds and waves,—at times tossing within deep troughs of turbulent water, at times poised upon the summits of ridge-like swells, but ever going onward at high speed, seemingly ten knots an hour!

For a long while they saw around them only open water, as of some great lake or inland sea. At a later hour, the lightning revealed the tops of submerged trees, such as those they had left behind; but standing out of the water in clumps or coppices, that appeared like so many islands. Amidst these they were carried, sometimes so close to the trees as to give them hopes of being able to grasp their boughs. Once or twice the rigging of the galatea brushed among the branches; and they used every effort to stay their runaway craft, and bring her to an anchorage. But in vain. The storm was stronger than the united strength of the crew. The twigs clutched with eager hands parted in twain, and the storm-driven vessel swept on amid the surging waters.

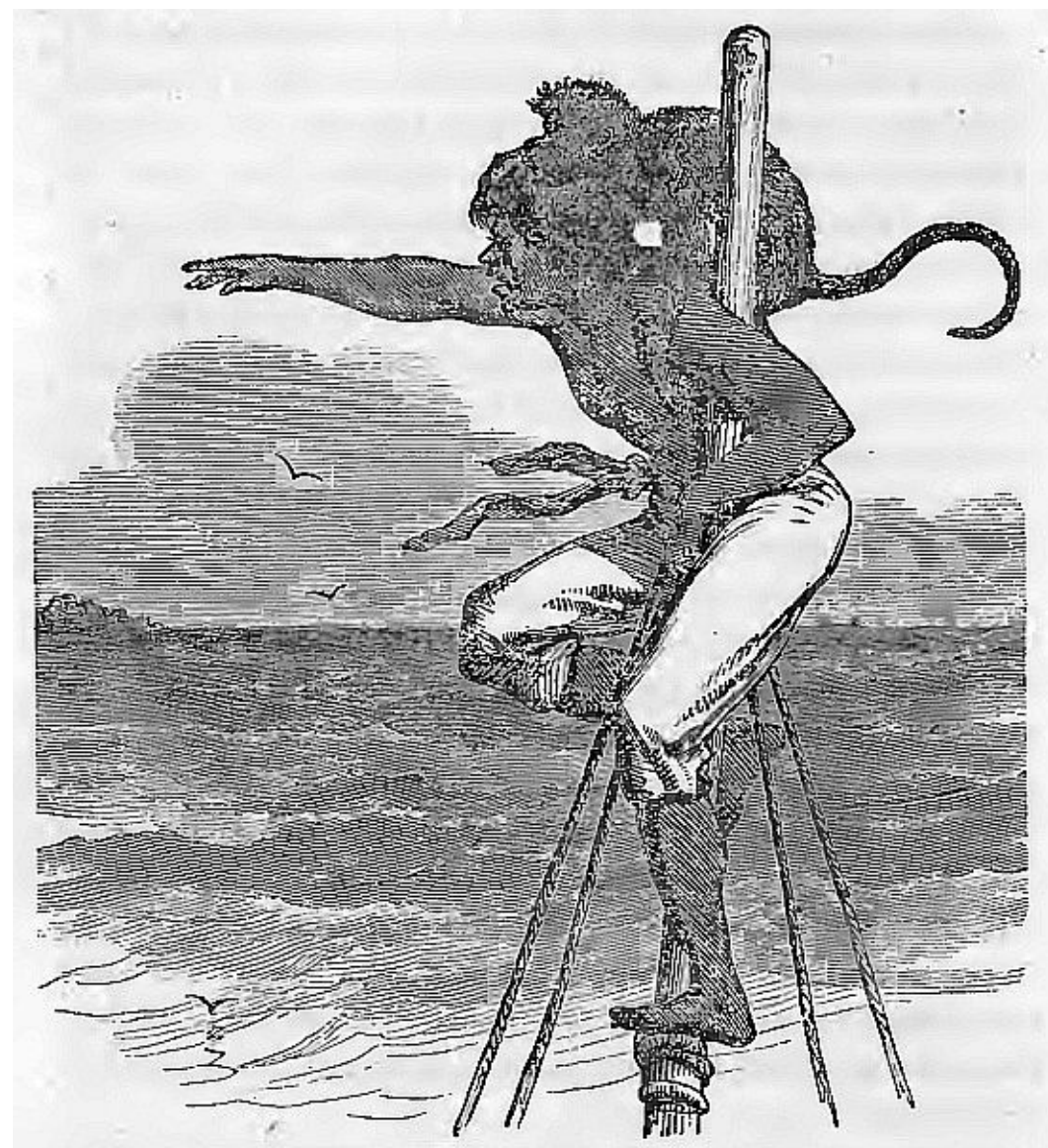
Daylight arrived at length, breaking through a red aurora, soon followed by a brilliant sunrise. This somewhat cheered our despairing adventurers. But the tempest was still raging with undiminished fury, the wind as loud and the waves as high as at any period throughout the night. Once more they were in the middle of a waste of waters, neither trees nor land in sight. Another great lake or inland sea? It could not be that over which they had been already carried? No. The wind was now blowing more steadily; and could it not have shifted? Even if it had, they had not returned through the archipelago of tree-top islands. They were in another opening of the Gapo. Munday was of this opinion, and that was proof sufficient to satisfy his companions. As we have said, the returning day did little to restore the confidence of the galatea's crew. The tornado still continued. Despite the sunlit sky, the storm showed no signs of abating; and the crazy craft gave tongue in every timber of her frail frame. The sounds were ominous to the ears of those who listened to them. It was too evident, that, unless there should soon come a lull, the galatea would go to the bottom. She had not been constructed to stand a strain like that to which she had been thus unexpectedly exposed, and an anchorage either to *terra firma* or the tree-tops would soon become necessary to her salvation. Her crew, convinced of this, were one and all upon the lookout, scanning the horizon as closely as the crested billows would admit. The Mundurucú had mounted to the top of the mast, where, with one of the monkeys that had perched itself on his shoulders, he clung with the tenacity of despair. All at once he was heard to cry out, the monkey mocking him in mimic tone.

“What is it, Munday? What do you see?” were the inquiries that reached him from below.

"Land," was the laconic reply.

"Land!" went up the echo from half a score of joyous voices.

"Maybe not land,—I mean the *terra firma*," pursued the observer, in a less confident tone. "It may be only the top of a thick forest like what we tried to penetrate yesterday. Whatever it is, patron, it seems along the whole edge of the sky. We are drifting towards it, straight as the wind can carry us."



"Thank God!" exclaimed Trevannion, "anything is better than this. If we can get once more among the tree-tops, we shall at least be saved from drowning. Thank God, children. We shall be preserved!"

The Indian descended from the mast, close followed by the monkey, whose serio-comic countenance seemed to say that he too was satisfied by the observation just made. Still careering madly onward before the tempest, the boat soon brought the tree-tops within view, and, after a brief debate, the conclusion was reached that it was only a submerged forest. But even this was better than buffeting about on the open billows,—every moment in danger of being swamped; and with a universal feeling of joy our adventurers perceived that their craft was drifting toward that dark line. They were powerless to control her course. Her rudder had

been unshipped during the night, and they could trust only to the tempest still raging to carry them to the confines of the forest. In full hope that this would be the result, they took no measures either to promote or frustrate the steering of the storm.



Chapter Eleven.

The Galatea Treed.

Tossed by the tempest, the galatea preserved her course towards the tree-tops, thus keeping up the spirits and confidence of her crew. Despite some divergences caused by an occasional contrary gust of wind, she kept an onward course, in due time arriving within such distance of the forest, that it was no longer doubtful about her drifting among the trees. In this there was a prospect of temporary safety at the least, and our adventurers had begun to congratulate themselves on the proximity of the event. Just then, a gigantic tree—it must have been gigantic to stand so high over its fellows, though it could scarce be fifty feet above the surface of the water—presented itself to their eyes. It stood solitary and alone, about a quarter of a mile from the edge of the forest, and as much nearer to the craft, still struggling through the wind-lashed water. Like that in the top of which they had first gone aground, it was a sapucaya,—as testified by the huge pericarps conspicuously suspended from its branches. High as may have been the inundation, its stem rose still higher, by at least ten feet; but half-way between the water's surface and the branches, the colossal trunk forked in twain,—each of the twin scions appearing a trunk of itself. Through the fork was the water washing at each heave of the agitated Gapo,—the waves with foaming crests mounting far up towards the top of the tree, as if aspiring to pluck the ripe fruit depending from its branches.

Towards this tree the galatea was now going as straight as if she had been steered by the finger of Destiny itself. There was no other power to control her,—at least none that was human. The wind, or destiny,—one of the two,—must determine her fate. The waves perhaps had something to do with it; since the next that followed lifted the galatea upon its curling crest, and lodged her in the sapucaya in such a fashion that her keel, just amidships, rested within the forking of the twin stems.

“Thank God!” exclaimed her owner, “we are safe now. Moored between two stanchions like these, neither the winds of heaven nor the waves of the great ocean itself could prevail against us. Make fast there! Make fast to the limbs of the tree! Tie her on both sides. These are no twigs to be snapped asunder. Hurrah! we are anchored at last!”

The gigantic stems of the sapucaya, rising on both sides above the beam-ends of the galatea, looked like the supporters of a graving-dock. It is true the craft still floated upon the bosom of a troubled water; but what of that? Once made fast to the tree, she could not be carried farther; therefore was she secure against wind and wave. The tornado might continue, but no longer to be a terror to the crew. These, partly relieved from their fears, hastened to obey the master's commands. Ropes were grasped, and, with hands still trembling, were looped around the stems of the sapucaya. All at once action was suspended by a loud crash, which was followed by a cry that issued simultaneously from the lips of all the crew; who, before its echoes could die away among the branches of the sapucaya, had become separated into two distinct groups!

The crash had been caused by the parting of the galatea's keel, which, resting in the fork of the tree, had broken amidships, on the subsidence of the wave that had heaved her into this

peculiar position. For a few seconds the two sections of the partly dissevered craft hung balanced between the air and the water, the fore-deck with its stores balancing the quarter with its *toldo*. But long before the beam was kicked, the occupants of both had forsaken them, and were to be seen, some of them clinging to the branches of the sapucaya, some struggling beneath against the storm and the current of the Gapo. By noble devotion on the part of those who could swim, the whole crew were placed beyond the reach of the waves upon the branches of the sapucaya, where, from their elevated position, they beheld the craft that had so long safely carried them parting in two and sinking out of sight.

Chapter Twelve.

A Dangerous Ducking.

Before the dismembered vessel quite disappeared under the storm-lashed waves, every individual of her crew had found a foothold upon the branches of the sapucaya. The tree, while causing the wreck of their vessel, had saved them from going with her to the bottom of the Gapo. For some time, however, they were far from feeling secure. They were in different parts of the tree, scattered all over it, just as they had been able to lay hold of the limbs and lift themselves above the reach of the swelling waves. Scarce two of them were in the same attitude. One stood erect upon a branch with arms around an upright stem; another sat astride; a third lay along a limb, with one leg dangling downwards. The young Paraense had taken post upon a stout *Iliana*, that threaded through the branches of the trees, and, with one arm around this and the other encircling the waist of his cousin, Rosita, he kept both the girl and himself in a position of perfect security. Young Ralph found footing on a large limb, while his father stood upon a still larger one immediately below. The pets, both birds and beasts, had distributed themselves in their affright, and were seen perched on all parts of the tree.

For a time there was no attempt made by any one to change his position. The tornado still continued, and it was just as much as any of them could do to keep the place already gained. There was one who did not even succeed in keeping his place, and this was Tipperary Tom. The Irishman had selected one of the lowest limbs, that stretched horizontally outward, only a few feet above the surface of the water. He had not exactly made choice of his perch, but had been flung upon it by the swelling wave, and, clutching instinctively, had held fast. The weight of his body, however, had bent the branch downward, and, after making several fruitless efforts to ascend to the stem, he had discovered that the feat was too much for him. There was no choice but to hold on to the bent branch or drop back into the boiling Gapo, that threatened from below to engulf him; terrified by the latter alternative, Tom exerted all his strength, and held on with mouth agape and eyes astare. Soon the tension would have proved too much for him, and he must have dropped down into the water. But he was not permitted to reach this point of exhaustion. A wave similar to that which had landed him on the limb lifted him off again, launching him out into the open water.

A cry of consternation came from the tree. All knew that Tipperary Tom was no swimmer; and with this knowledge they expected to see him sink like a stone. He did go down, and was for some moments lost to view; but his carrot-coloured head once more made its appearance above the surface, and, guided by his loud cries, his situation was easily discovered. He could only sink a second time to rise no more. Sad were the anticipations of his companions,—all except one, who had made up his mind that Tipperary Tom was not yet to die. This was the Mundurucú, who at the moment was seen precipitating himself from the tree, and then swimming out in the direction of the drowning man. In less than a score of seconds he was in the clutch of the Indian, who grasping him with one hand, with the other struck out for the tree.

By good fortune the swell that had swept Tipperary from his perch, or one wonderfully like it, came balancing back towards the sapucaya, bearing both Indian and Irishman upon its crest, landing them in the great fork where the galatea had gone to pieces, and then retiring without

them! It seemed a piece of sheer good fortune, though no doubt it was a destiny more than half directed by the arm of the Indian, whose broad palm appeared to propel them through the water with the power of a paddle.

To whatever indebted, chance or the prowess of the Mundurucú, certain it is that Tipperary Tom was rescued from a watery grave in the Gapo; and on seeing him along with his preserver safe in the fork of the tree, a general shout of congratulation, in which even the animals took part, pealed up through the branches, loud enough to be heard above the swishing of the leaves, the whistling of the wind, and the surging of the angry waters, that seemed to hiss spitefully at being disappointed of their prey.

Tom's senses had become somewhat confused by the ducking. Not so much, however, as to hinder him from perceiving that in the fork, where the wave had deposited him and his preserver, he was still within reach of the swelling waters; seeing this, he was not slow to follow the example of the Mundurucú, who, "swarming" up the stem of the tree, placed himself in a safe and more elevated position.

Chapter Thirteen.

A Consultation in the Tree-Top.

It would scarce be possible to conceive a situation more forlorn than that of the castaway crew of the galatea. Seated, standing, or astride upon the limbs of the sapucaya, their position was painful, and far from secure. The tempest continued, and it was with difficulty they could keep their places, every gust threatening to blow them out of the tree-top. Each clung to some convenient bough; and thus only were they enabled to maintain their balance. The branches, swept by the furious storm, creaked and crackled around them,—bending as if about to break under their feet, or in the hands that apprehensively grasped them. Sometimes a huge pericarp, big as a cannon-ball, filled with heavy fruits, was detached from the pendulous peduncles, and went *swizzing* diagonally through the air before the wind, threatening a cracked crown to any who should be struck by it. One of the castaways met with this bit of ill-luck,—Mozey the Mozambique. It was well, however, that he was thus distinguished, since no other skull but his could have withstood the shock. As it was, the ball rebounded from the close woolly fleece that covered the negro's crown, as from a cushion, causing him no further trouble than a considerable fright. Mozey's looks and exclamations were ludicrous enough, had his companions been inclined for laughter. But they were not; their situation was too serious, and all remained silent, fully occupied in clinging to the tree, and moodily contemplating the scene of cheerless desolation that surrounded them.

Till now, no one had speculated on anything beyond immediate safety. To escape drowning had been sufficient for their thoughts, and engrossed them for more than an hour after the galatea had gone down. Then a change began to creep over their spirits,—brought about by one observable in the spirit of the storm. It was, you remember, one of those tropical tempests, that spring up with unexpected celerity, and fall with equal abruptness. Now the tempest began to show signs of having spent itself. The tornado—a species of *cyclone*, usually of limited extent—had passed on, carrying destruction to some other part of the great Amazonian plain. The wind lulled into short, powerless puffs, and the comparatively shallow waters of the Gapo soon ceased to swell. By this time noon had come, and the sun looked down from a zenith of cloudless blue, upon an expanse of water no more disturbed, and on branches no longer agitated by the stormy wind.

This transformation, sudden and benign, exerted an influence on the minds of our adventurers perched upon the sapucaya. No longer in immediate danger, their thoughts naturally turned to the future; and they began to speculate upon a plan for extricating themselves from their unfortunate dilemma.

On all sides save one, as far as the eye could scan, nothing could be seen but open water,—the horizon not even broken by the branch of a tree. On the excepted side trees were visible, not in clumps, or standing solitary, but in a continuous grove, with here and there some taller ones rising many feet above their fellows. There could be no doubt that it was a forest. It would have gratified them to have believed it a thicket, for then would they have been within sight and reach of land. But they could not think so consistently with their experience. It resembled too exactly that to which they had tied the galatea on the eve of the tempest, and they conjectured

that what they saw was but the “spray” of a forest submerged. For all that, the design of reaching it as soon as the waters were calm was first in their minds.

This was not so easy as might be supposed. Although the border of the verdant peninsula was scarce a quarter of a mile distant, there were but two in the party who could swim across to it. Had there existed the materials for making a raft, their anxiety need not have lasted long. But nothing of the kind was within reach. The branches of the sapucaya, even if they could be broken off, were too heavy, in their green growing state, to do more than to buoy up their own ponderous weight. So a sapucaya raft was not to be thought of, although it was possible that, among the tree-tops which they were planning to reach, dead timber might be found sufficient to construct one. But this could be determined only after a reconnoissance of the submerged forest by Richard Trevannion and the Mundurucú, who alone could make it.

To this the patron hardly consented,—indeed, he was not asked. There seemed to be a tacit understanding that it was the only course that could be adopted; and without further ado, the young Paraense, throwing off such of his garments as might impede him, sprang from the tree, and struck boldly out for the flooded forest. The Mundurucú, not being delayed by the necessity of stripping, had already taken to the water, and was fast cleaving his way across the open expanse that separated the solitary sapucaya from its more social companions.

Chapter Fourteen.

A Fracas Heard from Afar.

The castaways watched the explorers until they disappeared within the shadowy selvage. Then, having nothing else to do, they proceeded to make themselves as comfortable as circumstances would permit, by selecting for their seats the softest branches of the sapucaya. To be sure there was not much choice between the limbs, but the great fork, across which the galatea had broken, appeared to offer a position rather better than any other. As the swell was no longer to be dreaded, Trevannion descended into the fork, taking little Rosa along with him, while the others sat on higher limbs, holding by the branches or stout lianas growing above them. At best their situation was irksome, but physical inconvenience was hardly felt in their mental sufferings. Their reflections could not be other than painful as they contemplated the future. Their shelter in the sapucaya could be only temporary, and yet it might continue to the end of their lives. They had no assurance that they might be able to get out of it at all; and even if they should succeed in reaching the other trees, it might be only to find them forty feet deep in water. The prospect was deplorable and their forebodings gloomy.

For nearly an hour they exchanged no word. The only sound heard was an occasional scream from one of the pet birds, or the jabbering of the monkeys, of which there had been five or six, of different kinds, on the galatea. Two only had found refuge on the tree,—a beautiful little *Ouistiti*, and a larger one, of the genus *Ateles*, the black Coaita. The others, chained or otherwise confined, had gone down with the galatea. So, too, with the feathered favourites, of many rare and beautiful kinds, collected during the long voyage on the Upper Amazon, some of which had been bought at large prices from their Indian owners, to carry across the Atlantic. The caged had perished with the wreck, others by the tornado, and, like the *quadrumanus*, only two of the birds had found an asylum on the tree. One was a splendid hyacinthine macaw, the *Araruna* of the Indians (*Macrocerus hyacinthinus*); the other a small paroquet, the very tiniest of its tribe, which had long divided with the little ouistiti the affections of Rosa.

About an hour had elapsed since the departure of the swimming scouts, with no signs of their return. The party cast anxious glances towards the place where they had last been seen, listening for any sounds from the thicket that concealed them. Once or twice they fancied they heard their voices, and then they were all sure they heard shouts, but mingling with some mysterious sounds in a loud, confused chorus. The coaita heard, and chattered in reply; so, too, did the ouistiti and paroquet; but the macaw seemed most disturbed, and once or twice, spreading its hyacinthine wings, rose into the air, and appeared determined to part from its *ci-devant* protectors. The call of Ralph, whose especial pet it was, allured it back to its perch, where, however, it only stayed in a state of screaming uncertainty. There was something strange in this behaviour, though in the anxiety of the hour but little heed was paid to it; and as the voices soon after ceased, the araruna became tranquillised, and sat quietly on the roost it had selected.

Once more, however, the shouting and strange cries came pealing across the water, and again the araruna gave evidence of excitement. This time the noise was of shorter duration, and soon terminated in complete tranquillity. Nearly two hours had now expired, and the countenances of

all began to wear an expression of the most sombre character. Certainly they had heard the voices of Richard and the Mundurucú mingling with those unearthly sounds. There was time enough for them to have gone far into the unknown forest, and return. What could detain them? Their voices had been heard only in shouts and sharp exclamations, that proclaimed them to be in some critical, perhaps perilous situation. And now they were silent! Had they succumbed to some sad fate? Were they dead?

Chapter Fifteen.

The Jararaca.

There are bodily sensations stronger than many mental emotions. Such are hunger and thirst. The castaways in the tree-top began to experience both in an extreme degree. By good fortune, the means of satisfying them were within reach. With a “monkey-cup” emptied of its triangular kernels they could draw up water at will, and with its contents conquer the cravings of hunger. At his father’s request, and stimulated by his own sensations, Ralph began climbing higher, to procure some of the huge fruit-capsules suspended—as is the case with most South American forest-trees—from the extremities of the branches. The boy was a bold and skilful climber among the crags and cliffs of his native Cordilleras. Still a tree did not come amiss to him, and in a twinkling he had ascended to the top branches of the sapucaya, the macaw making the ascent with him, perched upon his crown. All at once the bird began to scream, as if startled by some terrible apparition; and without losing an instant, it forsook its familiar place, and commenced fluttering around the top of the tree, still continuing its cries. What could be the cause? The boy looked above and about him, but could discover nothing. The screams of the araruna were instantly answered by the little paroquet in a tiny treble, but equally in accents of terror, while both the coaita and ouistiti, chattering in alarm, came bounding up the tree. The paroquet had already joined the macaw, and, as if in imitation of its great congener, flew fluttering among the top branches, in a state of the wildest excitement! Guided by the birds, that kept circling around one particular spot, the boy at length discovered the cause of the alarm; and the sight was one calculated to stir terror.

It was a serpent coiled around a liana that stretched diagonally between two branches. It was of a yellowish-brown colour, near to that of the liana itself; and but for its smooth, shining skin, and the elegant convolutions of its body, might have been mistaken for one parasite entwining another. Its head, however, was in motion, its long neck stretched out, apparently in readiness to seize upon one of the birds as soon as it should come within striking distance.

Ralph was not so much alarmed. A snake was no uncommon sight, and the one in question was not so monstrous as to appear very formidable. The first thought was to call off the birds, or in some way get them out of reach of the snake; for the imprudent creatures, instead of retreating from such a dangerous enemy, seemed determined to fling themselves upon its fangs, which Ralph could see erect and glistening, as at intervals it extended its jaws. The little paroquet was especially imprudent, recklessly approaching within a few inches of the serpent, and even alighting on the liana around which it had warped itself. Ralph was ascending still higher, to take the bird in his hand, and carry it clear of the danger, when his climbing was suddenly arrested by a shout from Mozey, the Mozambique, that proclaimed both caution and terror. “Fo’ you life doant, Mass’r Raff!” cried the negro, following up his exclamation of warning. “Fo’ you life doant go near um! You no know what am dat ar snake? It am de *Jararaca*!”

“Jararaca!” mechanically rejoined Ralph.

“Ya—ya—de moas pisenous sarpin in all de valley ob de Amazon. I’s hear de Injine say so a score ob times. Come down, Mass’r! come down!”

Attracted by the screaming of the birds and the chattering of the monkeys, the others listened attentively below. But upon the negro's quick cry of warning, and the dialogue that ensued, Trevannion ascended higher, followed by Tipperary Tom,—Rosa remained alone below, in the fork where her father had left her. Trevannion, on coming in sight of the snake, at once recognised it as all that Mozey had alleged,—the most poisonous of the Amazon valley,—a species of *Craspedocephalus*. He knew it from having seen one before, which the Mundurucú had killed near Coary, and had described in similar terms,—adding that its bite was almost instantly fatal, that it will attack man or beast without any provocation, that it can spring upon its enemy from a distance, and, finally, that it was more feared than any other creature in the country, not excepting the jaguar and jacaré!

The appearance of the reptile itself was sufficient to confirm this account. Its flat triangular head, connected with the body by a long thin neck, its glittering eyes and red forking tongue, projected at intervals more than an inch beyond its snout, gave the creature a monstrous and hideous aspect. It looked as if specially designed to cause death and destruction. It was not of great size,—scarcely six feet long, and not thicker than a girl's wrist; but it needed not bulk to make it dangerous. No one knew exactly what to do. All were without arms, or weapons of any kind. These had long since gone to the bottom of the Gapo; and for some minutes no movement was made except by young Ralph, who on being warned of his danger, had hastened to descend the tree. The birds were left to themselves, and still continued screaming and fluttering above. Up to this time the snake had remained motionless, except his oscillating head and neck. Its body now began to move, and the glittering folds slowly to relax their hold upon the liana.

"Great God! he is coming down the tree!" The words had hardly left Trevannion's lips before the snake was seen crawling along the liana, and the next moment transferring its body to a branch which grew slantingly from the main trunk. This was soon reached; and then, by means of another liana lying parallel to it, the reptile continued its descent. All those who stood by the trunk hastily forsook the perilous place, and retreated outward along the branches. The jararaca seemed to take no note either of their presence or flight, but continued down the limb towards the fork of the main stem, where stood little Rosa. "O heavens!" cried Trevannion, in a voice of anguish, "my child is lost!"

The girl had risen to her feet, being already fearful of the danger threatening her friends above; but on looking up, she beheld the hideous reptile coming straight towards her. Her situation was most perilous. The liana by which the snake was descending rose right up from the fork of the sapucaya. The child was even clasping it in her hand, to keep herself erect. The reptile could not pass without touching her. In fact, it must pass over her person to get down from the tree. There was no likelihood of its gliding on without striking her. Its well-known character—as the most malicious of venomous serpents—forbade the supposition. The snake was scarce ten feet above her head, still gliding onward and downward! It was at this crisis that her father had given voice to that despairing exclamation. He was about to scramble down to the trunk, with the design of launching himself upon the serpent, and grappling it with his naked hands, reckless of consequences, when a sign from Mozey, accompanied by some words quickly spoken, caused him to hesitate.

"No use, Mass'r!" cried the negro, "no use,—you be too late. Jump, lilly Rosy!" he continued,

calling to the child in a loud, commanding voice. "It's you only chance. Jump into de water, an ole Mozey he come down sabe you. Jump!" To stimulate the child by his example, the negro, with his last word, sprang out from his branch and plunged into the water. In an instant he was upon the surface again, continuing his cries of encouragement. Rosa Trevannion was a girl of spirit; and, in this fearful alternative, hesitated not a moment to obey. Short as was the time, however, it would have proved too long had the snake continued its descent without interruption. Fortunately it did not. When its hideous head was close to the child's hand, where the latter grasped the liana, it suddenly stopped,—not to prepare itself for the fatal dart, but because the negro's heavy fall had splashed much water against the tree, sprinkling child and jararaca too. It was the momentary surprise of this unexpected shower-bath that had checked the serpent, while Rosa dropped down into the Gapo, and was caught by her sable preserver.

Chapter Sixteen.

Hold On!

Mozey's noble conduct elicited a cry of admiration. It was the more noble as the negro was a poor swimmer, and therefore risked his own life. But this produced another effect, and in the shout there was no tone of triumph. The child was perhaps only rescued from the reptile to be swallowed with her preserver by a monster far more; voracious, the ingulfing Gapo. Nor was it yet certain that she had been saved from the serpent. The jararaca is a snake eminently amphibious, alike at home on land or at sea. It might follow, and attack them in the water. Then, too, it would have a double advantage; for while it could swim like a fish, Mozey could just keep himself afloat, weighted as he was with his powerless burden. In view of this, Trevannion's heart was filled with most painful anxiety, and for some time neither he nor any beside him could think what course to pursue. It was some slight relief to them to perceive that the snake did not continue the pursuit into the water; for on reaching the fork of the tree it had thrown itself into a coil, as if determined to remain there.

At first there appeared no great advantage in this. In its position, the monster could prevent the swimmers from returning to the tree; and as it craned its long neck outward, and looked maliciously at the two forms struggling below, one could have fancied that it had set itself to carry out this exact design. For a short time only Trevannion was speechless, and then thought, speech, and action came together. "Swim round to the other side!" he shouted to the negro. "Get under the great branch. Ho, Tom! You and Ralph climb aloft to the one above. Tear off the liana you see there, and let it down to me. Quick, quick!"

As he delivered these instructions, he moved out along the limb with as much rapidity as was consistent with safety, while Tipperary and Ralph climbed up to carry out his commands. The branch taken by Trevannion himself was that to which he had directed the negro to swim, and was the same by which Tipperary Tom had made his first ascent into the tree, and from which he had been washed off again. It extended horizontally outward, at its extremity dipping slightly towards the water. Though in the swell caused by the tornado it had been at intervals submerged, it was now too far above the surface to have been grasped by any one from below. The weight of Trevannion's body, as he crept outward upon it, brought it nearer to the water, but not near enough for a swimmer to lay hold. He saw that, by going too far out, the branch would not bear his own weight, and might snap short off, thus leaving the swimmers in a worse position than ever. It was for this reason he had ordered the untwining of the creeper that was clinging above. His orders were obeyed with the utmost alacrity by Tom and Ralph, as if their own lives depended on the speed. Almost before he was ready to receive it, the long liana was wrenched from its tendril fastenings, and came straggling down over the branch on which he sat, like the stay of a ship loosened from her mast-head.



Meanwhile Mozey,—making as much noise as a young whale, blowing like a porpoise, spurting and spitting like an angry cat,—still carrying the child safe on his shoulders, had arrived under the limb, and, with strokes somewhat irregularly given and quickly repeated, was doing his very best to keep himself and her above water. It was evident to all, that the over-weighted swimmer was wellnigh exhausted; and had not the end of the long Iliana plumped down in the nick of time, the Mozambique must indubitably have gone to the bottom, taking his charge with him. Just in time, however, the tree-cable came within his clutch, and, seizing it with all his remaining strength, Rosa relieved him of her weight by laying hold herself, and the two were drawn up into the tree amidst cries of “Hold on! hold on!” ending in general congratulation.

Chapter Seventeen.

The Paroquet.

Alas! there was one circumstance that hindered their triumph from being complete. The jararaca was still in the tree. So long as this terrible tenant shared their abode, there could be neither confidence nor comfort. There it lay coiled upon its scaly self, snugly ensconced in the fork below, with skin glittering brightly, and eyes gleaming fiercely in the golden sunlight that now fell slantingly against the tree. How long would the monster remain in this tranquil attitude, was the question that presented itself to the minds of all, as soon as the first transport of their joy had subsided. It was evident it had no intention of taking to the water, though it could have done so without fear. No doubt the sapucaya was its habitual haunt; and it was not likely to forsake it just to accommodate some half-score of strange creatures who had chosen to intrude. Surely some time or other it would re-ascend the tree, and then—?

But all speculations on this point were soon interrupted. The little paroquet, which had shown such excitement on first discovering the snake, had been quiet while all were engaged in the salvage of Mozey and the child. Now that a certain quietness had been restored, the bird was seen returning to the jararaca for the supposed purpose of renewing its impotent attack. For some minutes it kept fluttering over the serpent, now alighting upon a branch, anon springing off again, and descending to one lower and nearer to the jararaca, until it had almost reached its head. Strange to say, there appeared no hostility in the bird's movements; its actions betrayed rather the semblance of fear, confirmed by the tremulous quivering of its frame whenever it came to rest upon a perch. The spectators' suspicion was further strengthened by the little creature's continued cries. It was not the angry chattering by which these birds usually convey their hostility, but a sort of plaintive screaming that betokened terror. At each flight it approached closer to the serpent's forked tongue, and then retreated, as if vacillating and irresolute.

The reptile meanwhile exhibited itself in a hideous attitude; yet a deep interest enchained the spectators. Its head had broadened, or flattened out to twice the natural dimensions; the eyes seemed to shoot forth twin jets of fire, while the extensile tongue, projected from a double row of white, angular teeth, appeared to shine with phosphorescent flame. The bird was being *charmed*, and was already under the serpent's fascination.

How could the pretty pet be saved? Young Ralph, noticing the despair upon his sister's face, was half inclined to rush down the tree, and give battle to the jararaca; and Tipperary Tom—whose general hostility to snakes and reptiles had a national and hereditary origin—purposed doing something to avert the paroquet's fast-approaching fate. Trevannion, however, was too prudent to permit any interference, while the negro appeared only anxious that the magic spectacle should reach its termination. It was not cruelty on his part. Mozey had his motives, which were soon after revealed, proving that the brain of the African is at times capable of conception equal, if not superior, to his boasted Caucasian brother. There was no interruption. The end was not far off. By slow degrees, the bird appeared to grow exhausted, until its wings could no longer sustain it. Then, as if paralysed by a final despair, it pitched itself right into the mouth of the reptile, whose jaws had been suddenly extended to receive it! There was a slight

flutter of the wings, a tremulous motion of the body, and the self-immolated creature appeared to be dead. The serpent, half uncoiling itself, turned its head towards the tree, and, once more opening its jaws, permitted the now lifeless paroquet to escape from their clasp, and drop quietly into the crotch formed by the forking of the stem.



Chapter Eighteen.

The Lliana Unloosed.

The spectators of this little tragedy of animal life had hitherto prudently refrained from taking part in it. Curiosity now exerted an equal effect in preventing their interference; and without speech or motion they sat on their respective perches to observe the *finale* of the drama, which evidently had not ended with the death of the paroquet. That was but the beginning of the end, for the prey was yet to be devoured. Though provided with a double row of teeth, it is well-known that animals of the reptile kind do not masticate their food. These teeth, set trenchantly, as is commonly the case, are intended only to capture the living prey, which enters the stomach afterwards by a process termed deglutition. At the spectacle of just such a process, with all its preliminary preparations, were the group in the sapucaya now to be present,—the principal performer being apparently unconscious of, or at all events unconcerned at, their presence.

Having deposited the dead bird in the fork of the tree, the serpent changed its coiled attitude into one that would give it a chance of filling its belly with less inconvenience. There was not room for it to extend itself fully; and, in default of this, the tail was allowed to drop down along the stem of the tree, at least two thirds of the body remaining in a horizontal position. Having arranged itself apparently to its satisfaction, it now directed its attention to the paroquet. Once more taking the dead bird between its teeth, it turned it over and over until the head lay opposite to its own, the body aligned in a longitudinal direction. The jaws of the snake were now widely extended, while the tongue, loaded with saliva, was protruded and retracted with great rapidity. The serpent continued this licking process until the short feathers covering the head of the bird, as also its neck and shoulders, seemed to be saturated with a substance resembling soap or starch. When a sufficient coating had been laid on to satisfy the instincts of the serpent, the creature once more opened its jaws, and, making a sudden gulp, took in the head of the paroquet, with the neck and shoulders. For a time no further action was perceptible. Yet a movement was going on: and it was to assure himself of this that the Mozambique was so attentive.

We have said that he had a motive for permitting the pet to be sacrificed, which was now on the eve of being revealed to his companions. They all saw that there was something upon his mind, and eagerly anticipated the revelation. Just as the jararaca had succeeded in bolting the anterior portion of the paroquet,—that is, the head, neck, and shoulders,—Mozey rose from his seat, stole towards the stem of the tree, and let himself down toward the fork, without saying a word. His purpose, however, was manifest the moment after, for he stretched out his right hand, clutched the jararaca around the small of the neck, and flung the serpent—no longer capable of defending itself—far out into the waters of the Gapo! The monster, with its feathered morsel still in its mouth, sank instantly, to be seen no more; so thought Mozey and his associates in the sapucaya.

But, as the event proved, they had hastened to an erroneous conclusion. Scarce had their triumphant cheer echoed across the silent bosom of the Gapo, when the paroquet was observed floating upon the water; and the snake, having ejected the half-swallowed pill, was once more upon the surface, swimming with sinuous but brisk windings of its body in rapid

return to the tree. The situation seemed more alarming than ever. The fiend himself could hardly have shown a more implacable determination.

To all appearance the jararaca was now returning to take revenge for the insult and disappointment to which it had been subjected. Mozey, losing confidence in his own cunning, retreated up the tree. He perceived, now that it was too late, the imprudence of which he had been guilty. He should have permitted the snake to proceed a step further in the process of deglutition, until the disgorging of the paroquet, against the grain of its feathers, should have become impossible. He had been too hasty, and must now answer the consequences. Sure enough, the serpent returned to the sapucaya and commenced reascending, availing itself of the liana, by which all of its enemies had effected their ascent. In a few seconds it had mounted into the fork, and, still adhering to the parasite, was continuing its upward way.

“O heavens!” ejaculated Trevannion, “one of us must become the prey of this pitiless monster! What can be done to destroy it?”

“Dar’s a chance yet, Mass’r,” cried Mozey, who had suddenly conceived a splendid thought. “Dar’s a chance yet. All ob you lay hold on de creepin’ vine, an’ pull um out from de tree. We chuck de varmint back into the water. Now den,—all togedder! Pull like good uns!”

As the negro spoke, he seized the liana, by which the serpent was making its spiral ascent, and put out all his strength to detach it from the trunk of the sapucaya. The others instantly understood his design, and grasping the parasite, with a simultaneous effort tried to tear it off. A quick jerk broke the liana loose; and the jararaca, shaken from its hold, was sent whirling and writhing through the air, till it fell with a plunging noise upon the water below. Once more a triumphant cheer went up through the sapucaya branches, once more to be stifled ere it had received the answer of its own echoes; for the jararaca was again seen upon the surface, as before, determinedly approaching the tree.

It was a sight for despair. There was something supernatural in the behaviour of the snake. It was a monster not to be conquered by human strength, nor circumvented by human cunning. Was there any use in continuing the attempt to subdue it? Mozey, a fatalist, felt half disposed to submit to a destiny that could not be averted; and even Tipperary Tom began to despair of the power of his prayers to Saint Patrick. The ex-miner, however, as well acquainted with the subterraneous regions as with upper earth, had no superstition to hinder him from action, and, instead of desponding he at once adopted the proper course. Catching hold of the creeper, that had already been loosened from the trunk, and calling upon the others to assist him, he tore the creeper entirely from the tree, flinging its severed stem far out upon the water. In a moment after, the snake came up, intending to climb into the sapucaya, as no doubt it had often done before. We wonder what were its feelings on finding that the ladder had been removed, and that an ascent of the smooth trunk of the sapucaya was no longer possible, even to a tree snake! After swimming round and round, and trying a variety of places, the discomfited jararaca turned away in apparent disgust; and, launching out on the bosom of the Gapo, swam off in the direction of the thicket,—on the identical track that had been taken by Richard and the Mundurucú.

Chapter Nineteen.

Serpent Fascination.

It was some time before Trevannion and his companions in misfortune could recover from the excitement and awe of their adventure. They began to believe that the strange tales told them of the Gapo and its denizens had more than a substratum of truth; for the protracted and implacable hostility shown by the snake, and its mysterious power over the bird, seemed surely supernatural. Trevannion reflected on the singular behaviour of the jararaca. That a reptile of such contemptible dimensions should exhibit so much cunning and courage as to return to the attack after being repeatedly foiled, and by an enemy so far its superior in strength and numbers, together with its hideous aspect, could not fail to impress him with a feeling akin to horror, in which all those around him shared. The very monkeys and birds must have felt it; for when in the presence of snakes, they had never before exhibited such trepidation and excitement. Long after the serpent had been pitched for the second time into the water, the coaita kept up its terrified gibbering, the macaw screamed, and the tiny ouistiti, returning to Rosa's protection,—no longer to be shared with its late rival,—sat trembling in her lap, as if the dreaded reptile were still within dangerous proximity.

This feeling was but temporary, however. Trevannion was a man of strong intellect, trained and cultivated by experience and education; and after a rational review of the circumstances, he became convinced that there was nothing very extraordinary, certainly nothing supernatural, in what transpired. The jararaca—as he had heard, and as everybody living on the Amazon knew—was one of the most venomous of serpents, if not the most venomous of all. Even the birds and beasts were acquainted with this common fact, and dreaded the reptile accordingly, not from mere *instinct*, but from actual knowledge possessed and communicated in some mysterious way to one another. This would account for the wild terror just exhibited, which in the case of the paroquet had come to a fatal end. There was a mystery about this for which Trevannion could not account. The power which the serpent appeared to have obtained over the bird, controlling its movements without any apparent action of its own, was beyond comprehension. Whether or not it be entitled to the name given it,—*fascination*, certainly it is a fact,—one that has been repeatedly observed, and to which not only birds, but quadrupeds, have been the victims; and not only by ordinary observers, but by men skilled in the knowledge of nature, who have been equally at a loss to account for it by natural causes. But this link in the chain of incidents, though mysterious, was not new nor peculiar to this situation. It had been known to occur in all countries and climes, and so soon ceased to excite any weird influence on the mind of Trevannion.

For the other circumstances that had occurred there was an explanation still more natural. The jararaca, peculiarly an inhabitant of the Gapo lands, had simply been sunning itself upon the sapucaya. It may have been prowling about in the water when overtaken by the tornado; and, not wishing to be carried away from its haunt, had sought a temporary shelter in the tree, to which an unlucky chance had guided the galatea. Its descent was due to the behaviour of the birds, which, after having for a time tantalised it,—provoking its spite, and in all likelihood its hungry appetite,—had temporarily suspended their attack, returning down the tree with Ralph and the negro. It was in pursuit of them, therefore, it had forsaken its original perch. The

commotion caused by its descent, but more especially the ducking it had received, and the presence of the two human forms in the water below, had induced it to halt in the forking of the tree, where shortly after its natural prey again presented itself,—ending in an episode that was to it an ordinary occurrence. The choking it had received in the hands of the negro, and its unexpected immersion, had caused the involuntary rejection of the half-swallowed morsel. In the opaque water it had lost sight of the bird, and was returning to the sapucaya either in search of its food, or to reoccupy its resting-place.

It is well-known that the jararaca has no fear of man, but will attack him whenever he intrudes upon its domain. The Indians assert that it will even go out of its way for this purpose, unlike the rattlesnake and other venomous reptiles, which rarely exert their dangerous power except in self-defence. So this jararaca reascended the sapucaya undismayed by the human enemies it saw there, one or more of whom might have become its victims but for the timely removal of the Iliana ladder.

On this review of facts and fancies, the equanimity of our adventurers was nearly restored. At all events, they were relieved from the horrible thoughts of the supernatural, that for a time held ascendancy over them. Their hunger and thirst again manifested themselves, though little Rosa and her preserver no longer suffered from the last. In their short excursion both had been repeatedly under water, and had swallowed enough to last them for that day at least. Yet they were in want of food, and Ralph once more climbed the tree to obtain it. He soon possessed himself of half a dozen of the huge nut capsules, which were tossed into the hands of those below, and, water being drawn up in one of the emptied shells, a meal was made, which if not hearty, was satisfactory. The group could do no more than await the return of their absent companions; and with eyes fixed intently and anxiously upon the dark water, and beneath the close-growing trees, they watched for the first ripple that might betoken their coming.



Chapter Twenty.

The Water Arcade.

We must leave for a time the castaways in the tree-top, and follow the fortunes of the two swimmers on their exploring expedition.

On reaching the edge of the submerged forest, their first thought was to clutch the nearest branch, and rest themselves by clinging to it. They were no longer in doubt as to the character of the scene that surrounded them, for their experience enabled them to comprehend it.

“The Gapo!” muttered Munday, as they glided in under the shadows. “No dry land here, young master,” he added, clutching hold of a liana. “We may as well look out for a roost, and rest ourselves. It’s full ten fathoms deep. The Mundurucú can tell that by the sort of trees rising over it.”

“I didn’t expect anything else,” rejoined young Trevannion, imitating his companion by taking hold of a branch and climbing up. “My only hope is that we may find some float timber to ferry the others across. Not that there’s much in it if we do. How we’re to find our way out of this mess is more than either you or I can tell.”

“The Mundurucú never despairs,—not even in the middle of the Gapo,” was the Indian’s proud reply.

“You have hope, then? You think we shall find timber enough for a raft to carry us clear of the inundation.”

“No!” answered the Indian. “We have got too far from the channel of the big river. We shall see no floating trees here,—nothing to make a raft that would carry us.”

“Why then did we come here, if not for the purpose of finding dead timber for that object?”

“Dead timber? No! If that was our errand, we might go back as we’ve come,—empty-handed. We shall float all the people over here without that. Follow me, young master. We must go farther into the Gapo. Let old Munday show you how to construct a raft without trees, only making use of their fruit.”

“Lead on!” cried the Paraense. “I’m ready to assist you; though I haven’t the slightest conception of what you mean to do.”

“You shall see presently, young master,” rejoined Munday, once more spreading himself to swim. “Come on! follow me! If I’m not mistaken, we’ll soon find the materials for a raft,—or something that will answer as well for the present. Come along, there! Come!”—and he launched himself into the water.

Trevannion followed his example, and, once more consigning himself to the flood, he swam on in the Indian’s wake. Through aisles dimmed with a twilight like that of approaching night, along

arcades covered with foliage so luxuriant as to be scarce penetrable by the rays of a tropic sun, the two swimmers, the Indian ever in advance, held their way.

To Richard Trevannion the Mundurucú was comparatively a stranger, known only as a *tapuyo* employed by his uncle in the management of the galatea. He knew the tribe by rumours even more than sinister. They were reputed in Pará to be the most bloodthirsty of savages, who took delight not only in the destruction of their enemies, but in keeping up a ghastly souvenir of hostility by preserving their heads. In the company of a Mundurucú, especially in such a place,—swimming under the sombre shadows of a submerged forest,—it can scarce be wondered at that the youth felt suspicion, if not actual fear. But Richard Trevannion was a boy of bold heart, and bravely awaited the *dénouement* of the dismal journey.

Their swim terminated at length, and the Indian, pointing to a tree, cried out: “Yonder—yonder is the very thing of which I was in search. Hoo-hoo! Covered with sipos too,—another thing we stand in need of,—cord and pitch both growing together. The Great Spirit is kind to us, young master.”

“What is it?” demanded Richard. “I see a great tree, loaded with climbers as you say. But what of that? It is green, and growing. The wood is full of sap, and would scarce float itself; you can’t construct a raft out of that. The sipos might serve well enough for rope; but the timber won’t do, even if we had an axe to cut it down.”

“The Mundurucú needs no axe, nor yet timber to construct his raft. All he wants here is the sap of that tree, and some of the sipos clinging to its branches. The timber we shall find on the sapucaya, after we go back. Look at the tree, young master! Do you not know it?”

The Paraense, thus appealed to, turned his eyes toward the tree, and scanned it more carefully. Festooned by many kinds of climbing plants, it was not so easy to distinguish its foliage from that of the parasites it upheld; enough of the leaves, however, appeared conspicuous to enable him to recognise the tree as one of the best known and most valuable to the inhabitants, not only of his native Pará, but of all the Amazonian region, “Certainly,” he replied, “I see what sort of tree it is. It’s the *Seringa*,—the tree from which they obtain caoutchouc. But what do you want with that? You can’t make a raft out of India-rubber, can you?”

“You shall see, young master; you shall see!”

During this conversation the Mundurucú had mounted among the branches of the *seringa*, calling upon his companion to come after him, who hastily responded to the call.



Chapter Twenty One.

The Syringe-Tree.

The tree into whose top the swimmers had ascended was, as Richard had rightly stated, that from which the caoutchouc, or India-rubber, is obtained. It was the *Siphonia elastica*, of the order *Euphorbiaceae*, of the Amazonian valley. Not that the *Siphonia* is the only tree which produces the world-renowned substance, which has of late years effected almost a revolution in many arts, manufactures, and domestic economies of civilised life. There are numerous other trees, both in the Old and New World, most of them belonging to the famed family of the figs, which in some degree afford the caoutchouc of commerce. Of all, however, that yielded by the *Siphonia elastica* is the best, and commands the highest price among dealers. The young Paraense called it *Seringa*, and this is the name he had been accustomed to hear given to it. *Seringa* is simply the Portuguese for syringe, and the name has attached itself to the tree, because the use which the aborigines were first observed to make of the elastic tubes of the caoutchouc was that of squirts or syringes, the idea being suggested by their noticing the natural tubes formed by the sap around twigs, when flowing spontaneously from the tree. For syringes it is employed extensively to this day by Brazilians of all classes, who construct them by moulding the sap, while in its fluid state, into pear-shaped bottles, and inserting a piece of cane in the long neck.

The caoutchouc is collected in the simplest way, which affords a regular business to many Amazonians, chiefly native Indians, who dispose of it to the Portuguese or Brazilian traders. The time is in August, when the subsidence of the annual inundation permits approach to the trees; for the *Seringa* is one of those species that prefer the low flooded lands, though it is not altogether peculiar to the Gapo. It grows throughout the whole region of the Amazon, wherever the soil is alluvial and marshy. The India-rubber harvest, if we may use the term, continues throughout the dry months, during which time very large quantities of the sap are collected, and carried over to the export market of Pará. A number of trees growing within a prescribed circle are allotted to each individual, whose business it is—man, woman, or boy—to attend to the assigned set of trees; and this is the routine of their day's duty.

In the evening the trees are tapped; that is, a gash or incision is made in the bark,—each evening in a fresh place,—and under each is carefully placed a little clay cup, or else the shell of an *Ampullasia*, to catch the milky sap that oozes from the wound. After sunrise in the morning, the “milkers” again revisit the scene of operations, and empty all the cups into a large vessel, which is carried to one common receptacle. By this time the sap, which is still of a white colour, is of the consistency of cream, and ready for moulding. The collectors have already provided themselves with moulds of many kinds, according to the shape they wish the caoutchouc to assume, such as shoes, round balls, bottles with long necks, and the like. These are dipped into the liquid, a thin stratum of which adheres to them, to be made thicker by repeated immersions, until the proper dimensions are obtained. After the last coat has been laid on, lines and ornamental tracings are made upon the surface, while still in a soft state; and a rich brown colour is obtained by passing the articles repeatedly through a thick black smoke, given out by a fire of palm-wood,—several species of these trees being specially employed for this purpose. As the moulds are usually solid substances, and the shoes, balls, and bottles are

cast *on*, and not *in* them, it may be wondered how the latter can be taken off, or the former got out. King George would have been as badly puzzled about this, as he was in regard to the apples in the pudding. The idea of the Amazonian aboriginal, though far more ingenious, is equally easy of explanation. His bottle-moulds are no better than balls of dried mud, or clay; and so too, the lasts upon which he fashions the India-rubber shoes. Half an hour's immersion in water is sufficient to restore them to their original condition of soft mud; when a little scraping and washing completes the manufacture, and leaves the commodity in readiness for the merchant and the market.

The *Seringa* is not a tree of very distinguished appearance, and but for its valuable sap might be passed in a forest of Amazonia, where so many magnificent trees meet the eye, without eliciting a remark. Both in the colour of its bark and the outline of its leaves it bears a considerable resemblance to the European ash,—only that it grows to a far greater size, and with a stem that is branchless, often to the height of thirty or forty feet above the ground. The trunk of that on which the Mundurucú and his companion had climbed was under water to that depth, else they could not so easily have ascended. It was growing in its favourite situation,—the Gapo,—its top festooned, as we have said, with scores of parasitical plants, of many different species, forming a complete labyrinth of limbs, leaves, fruits, and flowers.

Chapter Twenty Two.

A Battle with Birds.

Scarce had the Paraense succeeded in establishing himself on the tree, when an exclamation from his companion, higher up among the branches, caused him to look aloft. "Hoo-hoo!" was the cry that came from the lips of the Mundurucú, in a tone of gratification.

"What is it, Munday?"

"Something good to eat, master?"

"I'm glad to hear it. I feel hungry enough in all conscience; and these sapucaya nuts don't quite satisfy me. I'd like a little fish or flesh meat along with them."

"It's neither," rejoined the Indian. "Something as good, though. It's fowl! I've found an arara's nest."

"O, a macaw! But where is the bird? You haven't caught it yet?"

"Haven't I?" responded the Mundurucú, plunging his arm elbow-deep into a cavity in the tree-trunk; and dragging forth a half-fledged bird, nearly as big as a chicken. "Ah, a nest! young ones! Fat as butter too!"

"All right. We must take them back with us. Our friends in the sapucaya are hungry as we, and will be right glad to see such an addition to the larder."

But Richard's reply was unheard; for, from the moment that the Mundurucú had pulled the young macaw out of its nest, the creature set up such a screaming and flopping of its half-fledged wings, as to fill all the woods around. The discordant ululation was taken up and repeated by a companion within the cavity; and then, to the astonishment of the twain, half a score of similar screaming voices were heard issuing from different places higher up in the tree, where it was evident there were several other cavities, each containing a nest full of young araras.

"A regular breeding-place, a macaw-cot," cried Richard, laughing as he spoke. "We'll get squabs enough to keep us all for a week!"

The words had scarce passed his lips, when a loud clangour reverberated upon the air. It was a confused mixture of noises,—a screaming and chattering,—that bore some resemblance to the human voice; as if half a score of Punches were quarrelling with as many Judys at the same time. The sounds, when first heard, were at some distance; but before twenty could have been counted, they were uttered close to the ears of the Mundurucú, who was highest up, while the sun became partially obscured by the outspread wings of a score of great birds, hovering in hurried flight around the top of the seringa. There was no mystery about the matter. The newcomers were the parents of the young macaws—the owners of the nests—returning from a search for provender for their pets, whose piercing cries had summoned them in all haste to

their home. As yet, neither the Indian nor his young companion conceived any cause for alarm. Foolish indeed to be frightened by a flock of birds! They were not allowed to indulge long in this comfortable equanimity; for, almost on the moment of their arrival above the tree, the united parentage of araras plunged down among the branches, and, with wing, beak, and talons, began an instant and simultaneous attack upon the intruders. The Indian was the first to receive their onset. Made in such a united and irresistible manner, it had the effect of causing him to let go the chick, which fell with a plunge into the water below. In its descent it was accompanied by half a dozen of the other birds,—its own parents, perhaps, and their more immediate friends,—and these, for the first time espying a second enemy farther down, directed their attack upon him. The force of the assailants was thus divided; the larger number continued their onslaught upon the Indian, though the young Paraense at the same time found his hands quite full enough in defending himself, considering that he carried nothing in the shape of a weapon, and that his body, like that of his comrade, was altogether unprotected by vestments. To be sure, the Mundurucú was armed with a sharp knife, which he had brought along with him in his girdle; but this was of very little use against his winged enemies; and although he succeeded in striking down one or two of them, it was done rather by a blow of the fist than by the blade.

In a dozen seconds both had received almost as many scratches from the beaks and talons of the birds, which still continued the combat with a fury that showed no signs of relaxation or abatement. The Paraense did not stay either to take counsel or imitate the example of his more sage companion, but, hastily bending down upon the limb whereon he had been maintaining the unequal contest, he plunged headforemost into the water. Of course a “header” from such a height carried him under the surface; and his assailants, for the moment missing him, flew back into the tree-top, and joined in the assault on Munday. The latter, who had by this become rather sick of the contest, thinking of no better plan, followed his comrade’s example. Hastily he flung himself into the flood, and, first diving below the surface, came up beside the Paraense, and the two swam away side by side in silence, each leaving behind him a tiny string of red; for the blood was flowing freely from the scratches received in their strange encounter.

Chapter Twenty Three.

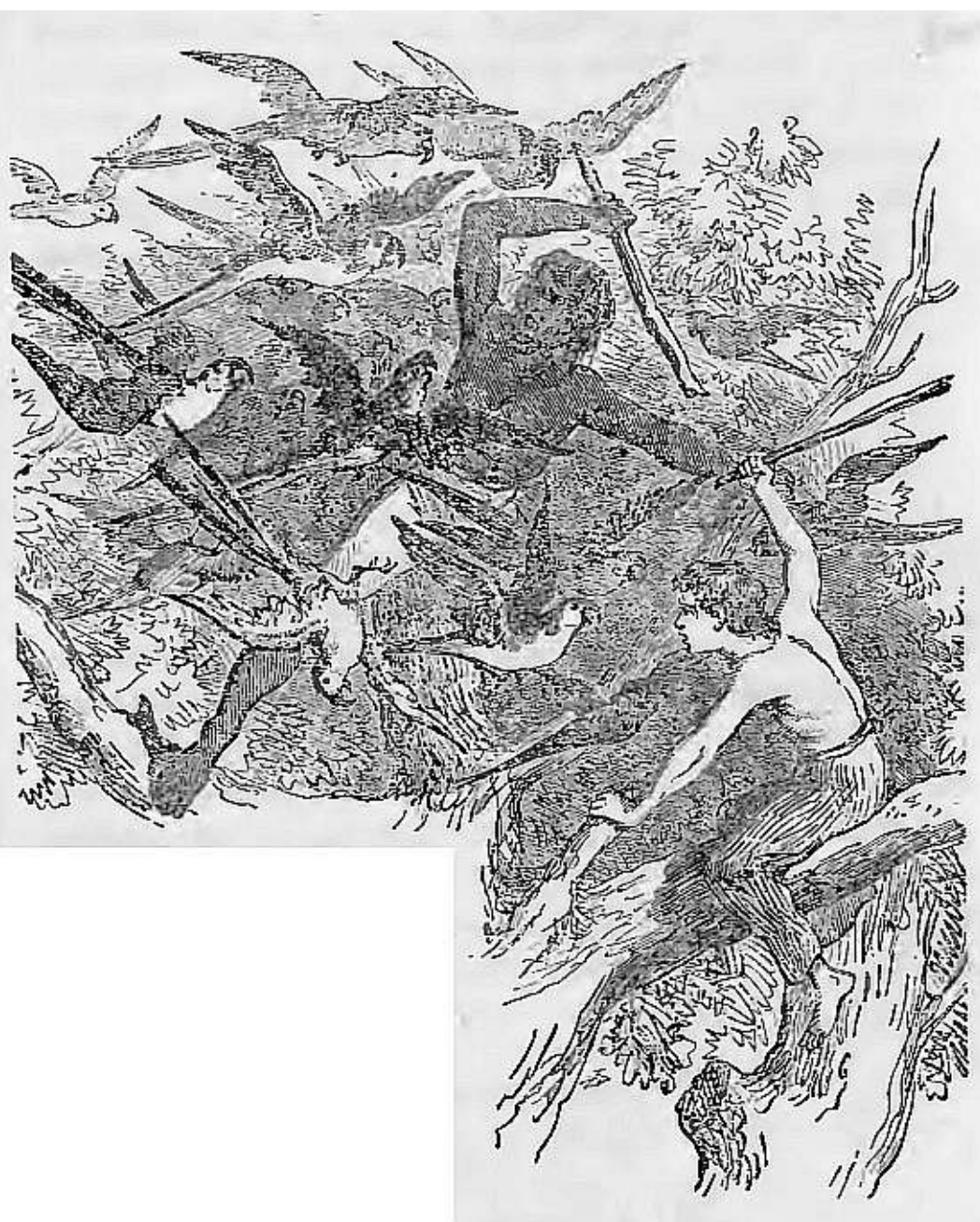
A Contest with Cudgels.

Our discomfited adventurers did not swim far from the seringá, for the birds did not follow them. Satisfied with seeing the burglars fairly beyond the boundaries of their domicile, the tenants of the tree returned to their nests, as if to ascertain what amount of damage had been done. In a short time the commotion had almost subsided, though there was heard an occasional scream,—the wail of the bereaved parents; for the helpless squab, after struggling a while on the surface of the water, had gone suddenly out of sight. There was no danger, therefore, of further molestation from their late assailants, so long as they should be left in quiet possession of the seringá, and therefore there was no further necessity for the two swimmers to retreat. A new intention had shaped itself in Munday's mind by this time, and he expressed his determination to return, to the surprise of the youth, who asked his purpose.

"Partly the purpose for which we first climbed it, and partly," added he, with an angry roll of his almond-shaped eyes, "to obtain revenge. A Mundurucú is not to be bled in this fashion, even by birds, without drawing blood in return. I don't go out from this *igarapé* till I've killed every arara, old as well as young, in that accursed tree, or chased the last of them out of it. Follow, and I'll show you how."

The Indian turned his face towards the thicket of tree-tops forming one side of the water arcade, and with a stroke or two brought himself within reach of some hanging parasites, and climbed up, bidding Richard follow. Once more they were shut in among the tops of what appeared to be a gigantic mimosa. "It will do," muttered the Mundurucú drawing his knife and cutting a stout branch, which he soon converted into a cudgel of about two feet in length. This he handed to his companion, and then, selecting a second branch of still stouter proportions, fashioned a similar club for himself.

"Now," said he, after having pruned the sticks to his satisfaction, "we're both armed, and ready to give battle to the araras, with a better chance of coming off victorious. Let us lose no time. We have other work to occupy us, and your friends will be impatient for our return." Saying this, he let himself down into the water, and turned towards the seringá. His *protégé* made no protest, but followed instantly after. Tightly clutching their cudgels, both reascended the seringá, and renewed the battle with the birds. The numbers were even more unequal than before; but this time the advantage was on the side of the intruders.



Striking with their clubs of heavy acacia-wood, the birds fell at every blow, until not one arara fluttered among the foliage. Most of these had fallen wounded upon the water; a few only, seeing certain destruction before them, took flight into the far recesses of the flooded forest. The Mundurucú, true to his promise, did not leave a living bird upon the tree.

One after another, he hauled the half-fledged chicks from their nests; one after another, twisted their necks; and then, tying their legs together with a sipo, he separated the bunch into two equally-balanced parts, hanging it over a limb of the tree. "They can stay there till ee come back, which will be soon. And now let us accomplish the purpose for which we came here!" Laying aside the club that had made such havoc among the macaws, he drew the knife from his girdle. Selecting a spot on one of the larger limbs of the seringá, he made an incision in the bark, from which the milky juice immediately flowed.

He had made provision against any loss of the precious fluid in the shape of a pair of huge monkey-pots, taken from a sapucaya while on the way, and which had been all the while lying in their place of deposit in a network of parasites. One of these he gave Richard, to hold under the tap while he made a second incision upon a longer limb of the seringá. Both nutshells were

quickly filled with the glutinous juice, which soon began to thicken and coagulate like rich cream. The lids were restored to their places, and tied on with sipos, and then a large quantity of this natural cordage was collected and made up into a portable shape. This accomplished, the Mundurucú signified his intention of returning to the castaways; and, after apportioning part of the spoil to his companion, set out on the way they had come. The young Paraense swam close in his wake, and in ten minutes they had re-traversed the igarápe, and saw before them the bright sun gilding the Gapo at its embouchure, that appeared like the mouth of some subterraneous cavern.

Chapter Twenty Four.

Chased by a Jacaré.

A few more strokes would have carried the swimmers clear of the water arcade. Richard was already congratulating himself on the prospect of escaping from the gloomy shadow, when all at once his companion started, raised his head high above the surface, and gazed backward along the dark arcade. As he did so, an exclamation escaped him, which only could be one of alarm. "A monster!" cried the Mundurucú.

"A monster! What sort? where?"

"Yonder,—just by the edge of the igarápe,—close in to the trees,—his body half hid under the hanging branches."

"I see something like the trunk of a dead tree, afloat upon the water. A monster you say, Munday? What do you make it out to be?"

"The body of a big reptile,—big enough to swallow us both. It's the *Jacaré-uassú*. I heard its plunge. Did not you?"

"I heard nothing like a plunge, except that made by ourselves in swimming."

"No matter. There was such a noise but a moment ago. See! the monster is again in motion. He is after us!"

The dark body Richard had taken for the drifting trunk of a tree was now in motion, and evidently making direct for himself and his companion. The waves, undulating horizontally behind it, proclaimed the strokes of its strong, vertically flattened tail, by which it was propelled through the water.

"The jacaré-uassú!" once more exclaimed the Mundurucú, signifying that the reptile was the great alligator of the Amazon.

It was one of the largest size, its body showing full seven yards above the water, while its projecting jaws, occasionally opened in menace or for breath, appeared of sufficient extent to swallow either of the swimmers.

It was idle for them to think of escaping through the water. At ease as they both were in this element, they would have proved but clumsy competitors with a cayman, especially one of such strength and natatory skill as belong to the huge reptile in pursuit of them. Such a swimming-match was not to be thought of, and neither entertained the idea of it.

"We must take to the trees!" cried the Indian, convinced that the alligator was after them. "The Great Spirit is good to make them grow so near. It's the only chance we have for saving our lives. To the trees, young master,—to the trees!"

As he spoke, the Mundurucú faced towards the forest; and, with quick, energetic strokes, they glided under the hanging branches. Most nimbly they climbed the nearest, and, once lodged upon a limb, were safe; and on one of the lowest they “squatted,” to await the approach of the jacaré. In about three seconds the huge saurian came up, pausing as it approached the spot where the two intended victims had ascended out of its reach. It seemed more than surprised,—in fact, supremely astonished; and for some moments lay tranquil, as if paralysed by its disappointment. This quietude, however, was of short duration; for soon after, as if conscious of having been tricked, it commenced quartering the water in short diagonal lines, which every instant was lashed into foam by a stroke of its powerful tail.

“Let us be grateful to the Great Spirit!” said the Indian, looking down from his perch upon the tree. “We may well thank him for affording us a safe refuge here. It’s the jacaré-uassú, as I said. The monster is hungry, because it’s the time of flood, and he can’t get food so easily. The fish upon which he feeds are scattered through the Gapo, and he can only catch them by a rare chance. Besides, he has tasted our blood. Did you not see him sup at it as he came up the igarápe? He’s mad now, and won’t be satisfied till he obtains a victim,—a man if he can, for I can tell by his looks he’s a man-eater.”

“A man-eater! What mean you by that?”

“Only that this jacaré has eaten men, or women as likely.”

“But how can you tell that?”

“Thus, young master. His bigness tells me of his great age. He has lived long, and in his time visited many places. But what makes me suspect him to be a man-eater is the eagerness with which he pursued us, and the disappointment he shows at not getting hold of us. Look at him now!”

Certainly there was something peculiar both in the appearance and movements of the jacaré. Young Trevannion had never seen such a monster before, though alligators were plenteous around Pará, and were no rare sight to him. This one, however, was larger than any he had ever seen, more gaunt or skeleton-like in frame, with a more disgusting leer in its deep-sunken eyes, and altogether more unearthly in its aspect. The sight of the hidden saurian went far to convince him that there was some truth in the stories of which he had hitherto been sceptical. After all, the Gapo might contain creatures fairly entitled to the appellation of “monsters.”

Chapter Twenty Five.

A Saurian Digression.

It would be difficult to conceive a more hideous monster than this upon which Richard Trevannion and his comrade gazed. In fact, there is no form in nature—scarce even in the imagination—more unpleasing to the eye than that of the lizard, the serpent's shape not excepted. The sight of the latter may produce a sensation disagreeable and akin to fear; but the curving and graceful configuration, either at rest or in motion, and the smooth, shining skin, often brilliantly coloured in beautiful patterns, tend to prevent it from approaching the bounds of horror. With the saurian shape it is different. In it we behold the type of the horrible, without anything to relieve the unpleasant impression. The positive, though distant, resemblance to the human form itself, instead of making the creature more seemly, only intensifies the feeling of dread with which we behold it. The most beautiful colouring of the skin, and the gentlest habits, are alike inefficacious to remove that feeling. You may look upon the tree-lizard, clothed in a livery of the most vivid green; the *Anolidæ*, in the bright blue of turquoise, in lemon and orange; you may gaze on the chameleon when it assumes its most brilliant hues,—but not without an instinctive sense of repugnance. True, there are those who deny this, who profess not to feel it, and who can fondle such pets in their hands, or permit them to play around their necks and over their bosoms. This, however, is due to habit, and long, familiar acquaintance.

Since this is so with the smaller species of the lizard tribe, even with those of gay hues and harmless habits, what must it be with those huge saurians that constitute the family of the *Crocodylidae*, all of which, in form, colour, habits, and character, approach the very extreme of hideousness. Of these gigantic reptiles there is a far greater variety of species than is generally believed,—greater than is known even to naturalists. Until lately, some three or four distinct kinds, inhabiting Asia, Africa, and America, were all that were supposed to exist. Recent exploration reveals a very different condition, and has added many new members to the family of the *Crocodylidae*.

It would be safe to hazard a conjecture, that, when the world of nature becomes better known, the number of species of these ugly amphibia, under the various names of gavials, crocodiles, caymans, and alligators, all brothers or first-cousins, will amount to two score. It is the very close resemblance in appearance and general habits that has hitherto hindered these different kinds from being distinguished. Their species are many; and, if you follow the naturalists of the anatomic school, so too are the genera; for it pleases these sapient theorists to found a genus on almost any species,—thus confounding and rendering more difficult the study it is their design to simplify. In the case of the *Crocodylidae* such subdivision is absolutely absurd; and a single genus—certainly two at the most—would suffice for all purposes, practical or theoretical. The habits of the whole family—gavials and alligators, crocodiles, caymans, and jacarés—are so much alike, that it seems a cruelty to separate them. It is true the different species attain to very different sizes; some, as the *curúa*, are scarce two feet in length, while the big brothers of the family, among the gavials, crocodiles, and alligators, are often ten times as long.

It is impossible to say how many species of *Crocodylidae* inhabit the waters of the South American continent. There are three in the Amazon alone; but it is quite probable that in some

of its more remote tributaries there exist other distinct species, since the three above mentioned do not all dwell in the same portion of this mighty stream. The Amazonian Indians speak of many more species, and believe in their existence. No doubt the Indians are right.

In the other systems of South American waters, as those of the La Plata, the Orinoco, and the Magdalena, species exist that are not known to the Amazon. Even in the isolated water deposits of Lake Valencia Humboldt discovered the bava, a curious little crocodile not noted elsewhere. The three Amazonian reptiles, though having a strong resemblance in general aspect, are quite distinct as regards the species. In the curious and useful dialect of that region, understood alike by Indians and Portuguese, they are all called “Jacarés,” though they are specifically distinguished as the *Jacaré-uassú* the *Jacaré-tinga*, and the *Jacaré-curúa*. Of the first kind was that which had pursued the two swimmers, and it was one of the largest of its species, full twenty-five feet from the point of its bony snout to the tip of its serrated tail. No wonder they got out of its way!

Chapter Twenty Six.

Treed by an Alligator.

For a time the two refugees were without fear or care. They knew they were out of reach, and, so long as they kept to their perch, were in no danger. Had it been a jaguar instead of a jacaré, it would have been another thing; but the amphibious animal could not crawl up the trunk of a tree, nor yet ascend by the hanging limbs or lianas. Their only feeling was that of chagrin at being stopped on their way back to their companions in the sapucaya, knowing that their return would be impatiently expected. They could by shouting have made themselves heard, but not with sufficient distinctness to be understood. The matted tree-tops intervening would have prevented this. They thought it better to be silent, lest their shouts might cause alarm. Richard hoped that the alligator would soon glide back to the haunt whence it had sallied, and leave them at liberty to continue their journey, but the Mundurucú was not so sanguine.

There was something in the behaviour of the jacaré he did not like, especially when he saw it quartering the water as if in search of the creatures that had disappeared so mysteriously.

“Surely it won’t lie in wait for us?” was the first question put by his companion. “You don’t think it will?”

“I do, young master, I do. That is just what troubles the Mundurucú. He may keep us here for hours,—perhaps till the sun goes down.”

“That would be anything but pleasant,—perhaps more so to those who are waiting for us than to ourselves. What can we do?”

“Nothing at present. We must have patience, master.”

“For my part, I shall try,” replied the Paraense; “but it’s very provoking to be besieged in this fashion,—separated by only a few hundred yards from one’s friends, and yet unable to rejoin or communicate with them.”

“Ah! I wish the *Curupira* had him. I fear the brute is going to prove troublesome. The Mundurucú can read evil in his eye. Look! he has come to a stand. He sees us! No knowing now when he will grow tired of our company.”

“But has it sense enough for that?”

“Sense! Ah! cunning, master may call it, when he talks of the jacaré. Surely, young master, you know that,—you who are a Paraense born and bred? You must know that these reptiles will lie in wait for a whole week by a bathing-place, watching for a victim,—some helpless child, or even a grown man, who has been drinking too much *cashaca*. Ah yes! many’s the man the jacaré has closed his deadly jaws upon.”

“Well, I hope this one won’t have that opportunity with us. We mustn’t give it.”

“Not if we can help it,” rejoined the Indian. “But we must be quiet, young master, if we expect to get out of this fix in any reasonable time. The jacaré has sharp ears, small though they look. He can hear every word we are saying; ay, and if one were to judge by the leer in his ugly eye, he understands us.”

“At all events, it appears to be listening.”

So the conversation sank to silence, broken only by an occasional whisper, and no gesture even made communication, for they saw the leering look of the reptile fixed steadily upon them. Almost two hours passed in this tantalising and irksome fashion.

The sun had now crossed the meridian line, and was declining westward. The jacaré had not stirred from the spot. It lay like a log upon the water, its lurid eyes alone proclaiming its animation. For more than an hour it had made no visible movement, and their situation was becoming insupportable.

“But what can we do?” asked Richard, despairingly.

“We must try to travel through the tree-tops, and get to the other side. If we can steal out of his sight and hearing, all will be well. The Mundurucú is angry with himself; he didn’t think of this before. He was fool enough to hope the jacaré would get tired first. He might have known better, since the beast has tasted blood. That or hunger makes him such a stanch sentinel. Come, young master!” added the Indian, rising from his seat, and laying hold of a branch. “We must make a journey through the tree-tops. Not a word,—not a broken bough if you can help it. Keep close after me; watch what I do, and do you exactly the same.”

“All right, Munday,” muttered the Paraense. “Lead on, old boy! I’ll do my best to follow you.”

Chapter Twenty Seven.

An Aqua-Arboreal Journey.

It may appear strange, incredible, absurd, that such a journey, for however short a distance, should have been attempted by human beings. No doubt to many it *will* appear so, and be set down as ludicrously improbable. Twenty minutes passed in the shadowy gloom of a South American forest would strip the idea of travelling among the tree-tops of much of its improbability. In many places such a feat is quite possible, and comparatively easy,—perhaps not so “easy as rolling off a log,” but almost as much so as climbing to the top of one. In the great *montaña* of the Amazon there are stretches of forest, miles in extent, where the trees are so matted and interlaced as to form one continuous “arbour,” each united to its immediate neighbours by natural stays and cables, to which the meshes formed by the rigging of a ship are as an open network in comparison. In the midst of this magnificent luxuriance of vegetable life, there are birds, beasts, and insects that never set foot upon the ground;—birds in a vast variety of genera and species; beasts—I mean quadrupeds—of many different kinds; insects of countless orders; quadrumana that never touched *terra firma* with any of their four hands; and, I had almost added, *man*. He, too, if not exclusively confining himself to the tops of these forest-trees, may make them habitually his home, as shall be seen in the sequel.

It was no great feat, then, for the Mundurucú and his acolyte to make a short excursion across the “spray” of the forest, since this is the very timber that is so tied together. There was even less of danger than in a tract of woods growing upon the highlands or “Campos.” A fall into the Gapo could only entail a ducking, with a brief interruption of the journey.

It does not follow that their progress must be either swift or direct. That would depend upon the character of the trees and their parasites,—whether the former grew close together, and whether the latter were numerous and luxuriant, or of scanty growth. To all appearance, Nature in that spot had been beneficent, and poured forth her vegetable treasures profusely.

The Indian, glancing through the branches, believed there would be no more difficulty in getting to the other side of the belt of timber that separated them from the open water, than in traversing a thicket of similar extent. With this confidence he set forth, followed by his less experienced companion. Both began and continued their monkey-like march in the most profound silence.

They knew that it was possible and easy for the alligator to bear them company; for although they were forced to pass through an almost impervious thicket, down on the water it was altogether different. There was nothing to impede the progress of the saurian, huge as it was, except the trunks of the trees.

To tell the truth, it was a toilsome trip, and both the travellers were weary of it long before coming within sight of the open water on the opposite side. Often were they compelled to carry their own weight on the strength of their arms, by hoisting themselves from tree to tree. Many a *détour* had they to make, sometimes on account of the impenetrable network of creepers, and sometimes because of open water, that, in pools, interrupted their route.

The distance to be traversed was not over two hundred yards. At starting they knew not how far, but it proved about this measure. If they had made their calculation according to time, they might have estimated it at half a score of miles. They were a good hour and a half on the journey; but the delay, with all its kindred regrets, was forgotten, when they saw the open water before them, and soon after found themselves on the selvage of the submerged forest.



Chapter Twenty Eight.

A Timely Warning.

On arriving among the outside frees, our explorers, homeward bound, saw something to cheer them,—something besides the bright sun and the shining waters of the Gapo. It was the sapucaya, still bearing its stupendous fruit, the friends they had left behind them. The Paraense appeared to be counting them, as if to make sure that all were still safe upon the tree. Perhaps he was only intent on the discovery of one, or, having discovered, was feeding his eyes upon her form, slender and graceful in the distance. He would have shouted to apprise them of the safety of himself and companion, had not a sign from the latter, accompanied by a few muttered words, counselled him to hold his peace.

“Why not, Munday?”

“Not a word, young master. We are not yet out of the woods; the jacaré may hear us.”

“We left it far behind in the igarápe.”

“Ah, true! Who knows where he may be now? Not the Mundurucú. The monster may have followed us. Who knows? He may be at this moment within twenty yards, waiting for us to come back into the water.”

As he spoke, the Indian looked anxiously behind him. He could discover no cause of alarm. All was still under the shadow of the trees. Not even a ripple could be seen upon the sombre surface of the water.

“I think we’ve given it the slip,” remarked Richard.

“It looks so,” responded the Indian. “The Mundurucú hears no sound, sees no sign. The jacaré should still be in the igarápe.”

“Why should we delay any longer? Several hours have elapsed since we left the sapucaya. My uncle and everybody else will be out of all patience. They will be distracted with sheer anxiety. They look as if they were. Though we have a good view of them, I don’t suppose they see us. If they did, they would be hailing us, that’s certain. Let us take to the water, and rejoin them.”

The Mundurucú, after looking once more to the rear, and listening for a few moments, replied, “I think we may venture.”

This was the cue for young Trevannion, and, lowering himself from the limb on which he was supported, the two almost at the same instant committed themselves to the flood. Scarce had they touched the water when their ears were assailed by a shout that came pealing across the Gapo. It neither startled nor surprised them, for they could not fail to comprehend its meaning. It was a cheer sent forth from the sapucaya, announcing their reappearance to the eyes of their anxious companions. Stimulated by the joyous tones, the two swimmers struck boldly out into the open water.

Richard no longer thought of looking behind him. In a hasty glance directed towards the sapucaya, as he rose after his first plunge upon the water, he had seen something to lure him on, at the same time absorbing all his reflections. He had seen a young girl, standing erect within the fork of the tree, throw up her arms as if actuated by some sudden transport of joy. What could have caused it but the sight of him?

The mind of the Mundurucú was far differently employed. His thoughts were retrospective, not prospective. So, too, were his glances. Instead of looking forward to inquire what was going on among the branches of the sapucaya, he carried his beardless chin upon his shoulder, keeping his eyes and ears keenly intent to any sight or sound that might appear suspicious behind him. His caution, as was soon proved, was neither unnatural nor superfluous, nor yet the counsel given to his companion to swim as if some swift and terrible pursuer were after him; for although the Indian spoke from mere conjecture, his words were but too true.

The swimmers had traversed about half the space of open water that lay between the sapucaya and the submerged forest. The Indian had purposely permitted himself to fall into the wake of his companion, in order that his backward view might be unobstructed. So far, no alligator showed itself behind them, no enemy of any kind; and in proportion as his confidence increased, he relaxed his vigilance. It seemed certain the jacaré had given up the chase. It could not have marked their movements among the tree-tops, and in all likelihood the monster was still keeping guard near the opening of the igarápe. Too happy to arrive at this conclusion, the Indian ceased to think of a pursuit, and, after making an effort, overtook the young Paraense, the two continuing to swim abreast. As there no longer appeared any reason for extraordinary speed, the swimmers simultaneously suspended the violent exertions they had been hitherto making, and with relaxed stroke kept on towards the sapucaya.

It was fortunate for both that other eyes than their own were turned upon that stretch of open water. Had it not been so, the silent swimmer, far swifter than they, coming rapidly up in their rear, might have overtaken them long before reaching the tree. The shout sent forth from the sapucaya, in which every voice bore a part, warned them of some dread danger threatening near. But for late experience, they might not have known on which side to look for it; but, guided by this, they instinctively looked back. The jacaré, close behind, was coming on as fast as his powerful tail, rapidly oscillating from side to side, could propel him. It was fortunate for the two swimmers they had heard that warning cry in time. A score of seconds made all the difference in their favour, all the difference between life and death. It was their destiny to live, and not die then in the jaws of the jacaré. Before the ugly reptile, making all the speed in its power, could come up with either of them, both, assisted by willing hands, had climbed beyond its reach, and could look upon it without fear from among the branches of the sapucaya.

Chapter Twenty Nine.

Improvised Swimming-Belts.

The huge saurian swam on to the tree,—to the very spot where Richard and the Mundurucú had climbed up, at the forking of the stem. On perceiving that its prey had for a second time got clear, its fury seemed to break all bounds. It lashed the water with its tail, closed its jaws, with a loud clattering, and gave utterance to a series of sounds, that could only be compared to a cross between the bellowing of a bull and the grunting of a hog.

Out in the open light of the sun, and swimming conspicuously upon the surface of the water, a good view of the reptile could now be obtained; but this did not improve the opinion of it already formed by Richard. It looked, if possible, uglier than when seen in shadow; for in the light the fixed leer of its lurid eye, and the ghastly blood-coloured inside of the jaws, at intervals opened, and showing a triple row of terrible teeth, were more conspicuous and disgusting. Its immense bulk made it still more formidable to look upon. Its body was full eight yards in length, and of proportionate thickness,—measuring around the middle not less than a fathom and a half; while the lozenge-like protuberances along its spine rose in pointed pyramids to the height of several inches.

No wonder that little Rosa uttered a shriek of terror on first beholding it; no wonder that brave young Ralph trembled at the sight. Even Trevannion himself, with the negro and Tipperary Tom, regarded the reptile with fear. It was some time before they felt sure that it could not crawl up to them. It seemed for a time as if it meant to do so, rubbing its bony snout against the bark, and endeavouring to clasp the trunk with its short human-like arms. After several efforts to ascend, it apparently became satisfied that this feat was not to be performed, and reluctantly gave up the attempt; then, retreating a short distance, began swimming in irregular circles around the tree, all the while keeping its eye fixed upon the branches.

After a time, the castaways only bent their gaze upon the monster at intervals, when some new manoeuvre attracted their notice. There was no immediate danger to be dreaded from it; and although its proximity was anything but pleasant, there were other thoughts equally disagreeable, and more important, to occupy their time and attention. They could not remain all their lives in the sapucaya; and although they knew not what fortune awaited them in the forest, beyond, they were all anxious to get there.

Whether it was altogether a flooded forest, or whether there might not be some dry land in it, no one could tell. In the Mundurucú's opinion it was the former: and in the face of this belief, there was not much hope of their finding a foot of dry land. In any case, the forest must be reached, and all were anxious to quit their quarters on the sapucaya, under the belief that they would find others more comfortable. At all events, a change could not well be for the worse.

Munday had promised them the means of transport, but how this was to be provided none of them as yet knew. The time, however, had arrived for him to declare his intentions, and this he proceeded to do; not in words, but by deeds that soon made manifest his design.

It will be remembered that, after killing the macaws, he had tapped the seringa, and “drawn” two cups full of the sap,—that he had bottled it up in the pots, carefully closing the lids against leakage. It will also be remembered, that he had provided himself with a quantity of creepers, which he had folded into a portable bundle. These were of a peculiar sort,—the true sipos of the South American forest, which serve for all purposes of cordage, ropes ready made by the hand of Nature. On parting from the seringa, he had brought these articles along with him, his companion carrying a share of the load. Though chased by the jacaré, and close run too, neither had abandoned his bundle,—tied by sipos around the neck,—and both the bottled caoutchouc and the cordage were now in the sapucaya. What they were intended for no one could guess, until it pleased the Indian to reveal his secret; and this he at length did, by collecting a large number of nuts from the sapucaya,—Ralph and Richard acting as his aides,—emptying them of their three-cornered kernels, restoring the lids, and then making them “water-proof” by a coating of the caoutchouc.

Soon all became acquainted with his plans, when they saw him bind the hollow shells into bunches, three or four in each, held together by sipos, and then with a stronger piece of the same parasite attach the bunches two and two together, leaving about three feet of the twisted sipos between.

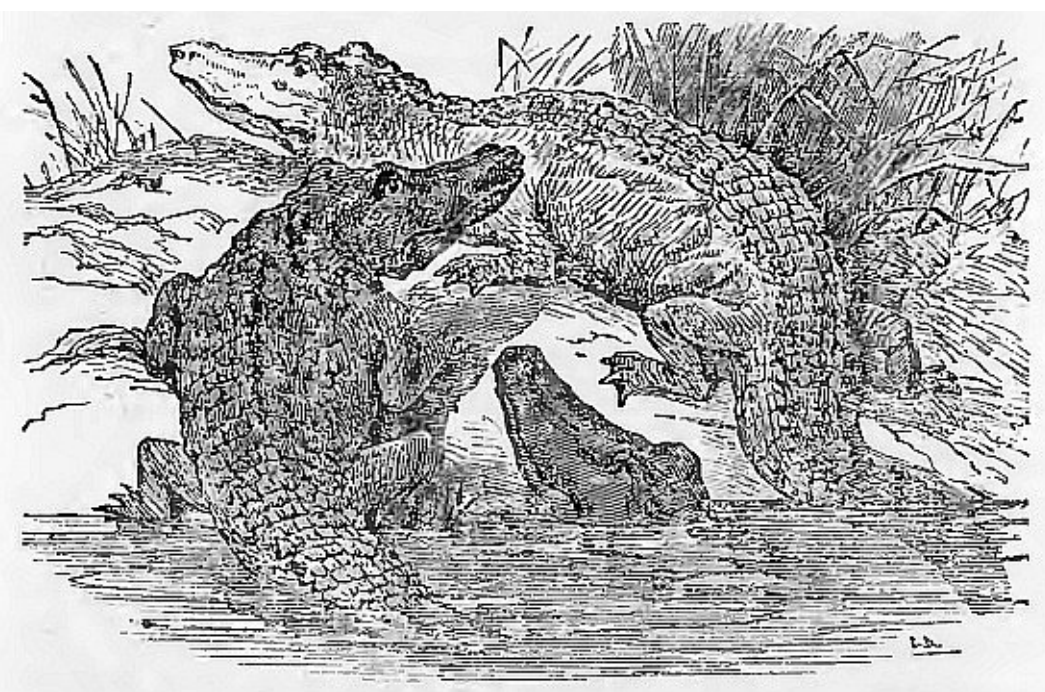
“Swimming-belts!” cried Ralph, now for the first time comprehending the scheme. Ralph was right. That was just what the Mundurucú had manufactured,—a set of *swimming-belts*.

Chapter Thirty.

Alligator Lore.

For an hour the castaways remained in the tree, chafing with impatience and chagrin that their awful enemy still kept his savage watch for them in the Gapo below, gliding lazily to and fro, but ever watching them with eager, evil eye. But there was no help for it; and by way of possessing their souls in more patience, and making time pass quicker, they fell to conversing on a subject appropriate to the occasion, for it was the jacaré itself, or rather alligators in general. Most of the questions were put by Trevannion, while the answers were given by the Mundurucú, whose memory, age, and experience made him a comprehensive cyclopaedia of alligator lore.

The Indian, according to his own account, was acquainted with live or six different kinds of jacaré. They were not all found in one place, though he knew parts of the country where two or three kinds might be found dwelling in the same waters; as, for instance, the jacaré-uassú (great alligator), the same as was then besieging them, and which is sometimes called the black jacaré, might often be seen in the same pool with the jacaré-tinga, or little alligator. Little jacaré was not an appropriate name for this last species. It was four feet long when full grown, and he knew of others, as the jacaré-curúa, that never grew above two. These kinds frequented small creeks, and were less known than the others, as it was only in certain places they were found. The jacarés were most abundant in the dry season. He did not suppose they were really more numerous, only that they were then collected together in the permanent lakes and pools. Besides, the rivers were then lower, and as there was less surface for them to spread over, they were more likely to be seen. As soon as the *echente* commenced, they forsook the channels of the rivers, as also the standing lakes, and wandered all over the Gapo. As there was then a thousand times the quantity of water, of course the creatures were more scattered, and less likely to be encountered. In the *vasante* he had seen half-dried lakes swarming with jacarés, as many as there would be tadpoles in a frog-pond. At such times he had seen them crowded together, and had heard their scales rattling, as they jostled one another, at the distance of half a mile or more. In the countries on the lower part of the Solimoës, where many of the inland lakes become dry during the *vasante*, many jacarés at that season buried themselves in the mud, and went to sleep. They remained asleep, encased in dry, solid earth, till the flood once more softened the mud around them, when they came out again as ugly as ever. He didn't think that they followed this fashion everywhere; only where the lakes in which they chanced to be became dry, and they found their retreat to the river cut off. They made their nests on dry land, covering the eggs over with a great conical pile of rotten leaves and mud.



The eggs of the jacaré-uassú were as large as cocoa-nuts, and of an oval shape. They had a thick, rough shell, which made a loud noise when rubbed against any hard substance. If the female were near the nest, and you wished to find her, you had only to rub two of the eggs together, and she would come waddling towards you the moment she heard the noise. They fed mostly on fish, but that was because fish was plentiest, and most readily obtained. They would eat flesh or fowl,—anything that chanced in their way. Fling them a bone, and they would swallow it at a gulp, seizing it in their great jaws before it could reach the water, just as a dog would do. If a morsel got into their mouth that wouldn't readily go down, they would pitch it out, and catch it while in the air, so as to get it between their jaws in a more convenient manner.

Sometimes they had terrific combats with the jaguars; but these animals were wary about attacking the larger ones, and only preyed upon the young of these, or the jacaré-tingas. They themselves made war on every creature they could catch, and above all on the young turtles, thousands of which were every year devoured by them. They even devoured their own children,—that is, the old males did, whenever the *mai* (mother) was not in the way to protect them. They had an especial preference for dogs,—that is, as food,—and if they should hear a dog barking in the forest, they would go a long way over land to get hold of him. They lie in wait for fish, sometimes hiding themselves in the weeds and grass till the latter come near. They seized them, if convenient, between their jaws, or killed them with a stroke of the tail, making a great commotion in the water. The fish got confused with fright, and didn't know which way to swim out of the reptile's reach. Along with their other food they ate stones, for he had often found stones in their stomach. The Indian said it was done that the weight might enable them to go under the water more easily.

The *Capilearas* were large animals that furnished many a meal to the jacarés; although the quadrupeds could swim very fast, they were no match for the alligator, who can make head with rapidity against the strongest current. If they could only turn short, they would be far more dangerous than they are; but their neck was stiff, and it took them a long while to get round, which was to their enemies' advantage. Sometimes they made journeys upon land. Generally they travelled very slowly, but they could go much faster when attacked, or pursuing their prey. Their tail was to be especially dreaded. With a blow of that they could knock the breath out of a

man's body, or break his leg bone. They liked to bask in the sun, lying along the sand-banks by the edge of the river, several of them together, with their tails laid one on the other. They would remain motionless for hours, as if asleep, but all the while with their mouths wide open. Some said that they did this to entrap the flies and insects that alighted upon their tongue and teeth, but he (the Mundurucú) didn't believe it, because no quantity of flies would fill the stomach of the great jacaré. While lying thus, or even at rest upon the water, birds often perched upon their backs and heads,—cranes, ibises, and other kinds. They even walked about over their bodies without seeming to disturb them. In that way the jacarés could not get at them, if they wished it ever so much.

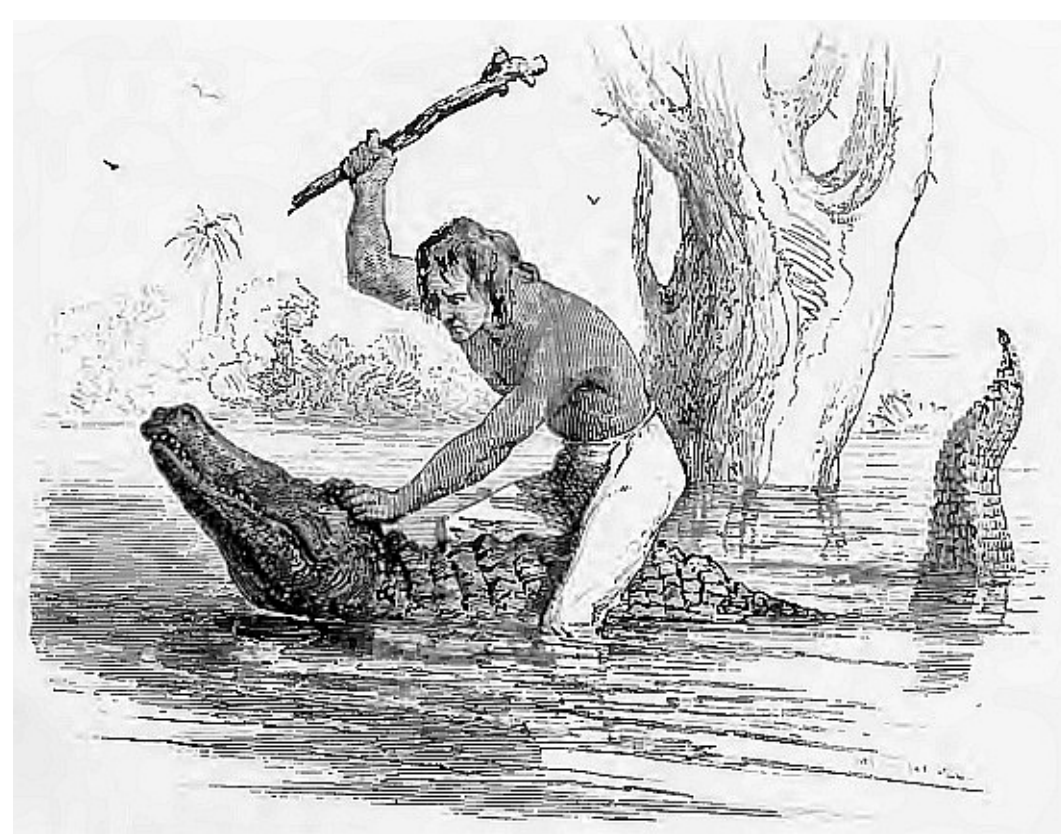
There were some jacarés more to be dreaded than others. These were the man-eaters, such as had once tasted human flesh. There were many of them,—too many,—since not a year passed without several people falling victims to the voracity of these reptiles. People were used to seeing them every day, and grew careless. The jacarés lay in wait in the bathing-places close to villages and houses, and stole upon the bathers that had ventured into deep water. Women, going to fetch water, and children, were especially subject to their attack. He had known men, who had gone into the water in a state of intoxication, killed and devoured by the jacaré, with scores of people looking helplessly on from the bank, not twenty yards away. When an event of this kind happened, the people armed themselves *en masse*, got into their *montarias* (canoes), gave chase, and usually killed the reptile. At other times it was left unmolested for months, and allowed to lie in wait for a victim.

The brute was *muy ladim* (very cunning). That was evident enough to his listeners. They had only to look down into the water, and watch the movements of the monster there. Notwithstanding its ferocity, it was at bottom a great coward, but it knew well when it was master of the situation. The one under the sapucaya believed itself to be in that position. It might be mistaken. If it did not very soon take its departure, he, the Mundurucú, should make trial of its courage, and then would be seen who was master. Big as it was, it would not be so difficult to subdue for one who knew how. The jacaré was not easily killed, for it would not die outright till it was cut to pieces. But it could be rendered harmless. Neither bullet nor arrow would penetrate its body, but there were places where its life could be reached,—the throat, the eyes, and the hollow places just behind the eyes, in front of the shoulders. If stabbed in any of these tender places, it must go under. He knew a plan better than that; and if the brute did not soon raise the siege, he would put it in practice. He was getting to be an old man. Twenty summers ago he would not have put up with such insolence from an alligator. He was not decrepit yet. If the jacaré consulted its own safety, it would do well to look out.

Chapter Thirty One.

A Hide upon a Reptile.

After thus concluding his long lecture upon alligators, the Indian grew restless, and fidgeted from side to side. It was plain to all, that the presence of the jacaré was provoking him to fast-culminating excitement. As another hour passed, and the monster showed no signs of retiring, his excitement grew to a degree so intense, as to be no longer withheld from seeking relief in action. So the Mundurucú hastily uprose, flinging aside the swimming-belts hitherto held in his hands. Everything was put by except his knife, and this, drawn from his *tanga*, was now held tightly in his grasp.



“What mean you, Munday?” inquired Trevannion, observing with some anxiety the actions of the Indian. “Surely you are not going to attack the monster? With such a poor weapon you would have no chance, even supposing you could get within striking distance before being swallowed up. Don’t think of such a thing!”

“Not with this weapon, patron,” replied the Indian, holding up the knife; “though even with it the Mundurucú would not fear to fight the jacaré, and kill him, too. Then the brute would go to the bottom of the Gapo, taking me along. I don’t want a ducking like that, to say nothing of the chances of being drowned. I must settle the account on the surface.”

“My brave fellow, don’t be imprudent! It is too great a risk. Let us stay here till morning. Night will bring a change, and the reptile will go off.”

“Patron! the Mundurucú thinks differently. That jacaré is a man-eater, strayed from some of the villages, perhaps Coary, that we have lately left. It has tasted man’s blood,—even ours, that of

your son, your own. It sees men in the tree. It will not retire till it has gratified its ravenous desires. We may stay in this tree till we starve, and from feebleness drop, one by one, from the branches.”

“Let us try it for one night?”

“No, patron,” responded the Indian, his eyes kindling with a revengeful fire, “not for one hour. The Mundurucú was willing to obey you in what related to the duty for which you hired him. He is no longer a *tapuyo*. The galatea is lost, the contract is at an end, and now he is free to do what he may please with his life. Patron!” continued the old man, with an energy that resembled returning youth, “my tribe would spurn me from the *malocca* if I bore it any longer. Either I or the jacaré must die!”

Silenced by the singularity of the Indian’s sentiment and speech, Trevannion forbore further opposition. No one knew exactly what his purpose was, though his attitude and actions led all to believe that he meant to attack the jacaré. With his knife? No. He had negated this question himself. How then? There appeared to be no other weapon within reach. But there was, and his companions soon saw there was, as they sat silently watching his movements. The knife was only used as the means of procuring that weapon, which soon made its appearance in the form of a *macana*, or club, cut from one of the lianas,—a *bauhinia* of heaviest wood, shaped something after the fashion of a “life-preserver,” with a heavy knob of the creeper forming its head, and a shank about two feet long, tapering towards the handle. Armed with this weapon, and restoring the knife to his *tango*, the Indian came down and glided out along the horizontal limb already known to our story. To attract the reptile thither was not difficult. His presence would have been a sufficient lure, but some broken twigs cast upon the water served to hasten its approach to the spot. In confidence the jacaré came on, believing that by some imprudence, or misadventure, at least one of those it had marked for its victims was about to drop into its hungry maw. One did drop,—not into its maw, or its jaws, but upon its back, close up to the swell of its shoulders. Looking down from the tree, his companions saw the Mundurucú astride upon the alligator, with one hand, the left, apparently inserted into the hollow socket of the reptile’s eye, the other raised aloft, grasping the *macana*, that threatened to descend upon the skull of the jacaré. It *did* descend,—crack!—crash!—crackle! After that there was not much to record. The Mundurucú was compelled to slide off his seat. The huge saurian, with its fractured skull, yielded to a simple physical law, turned over, showing its belly of yellowish white,—an aspect not a whit more lovely than that presented in its dark dorsal posterior. If not dead, there could be no doubt that the jacaré was no longer dangerous; and as its conqueror returned to the tree, he was received with a storm of “Vivas” to which Tipperary Tom added his enthusiastic Irish “Hoor-raa!”

Chapter Thirty Two.

Taking to the Water.

The Mundurucú merited congratulation, and his companions could not restrain their admiration and wonder. They knew that the alligator was only assailable by ordinary weapons—as gun, spear, or harpoon—in three places; in the throat, unprotected, except by a thin, soft integument; in the hollow in front of the shoulders, and immediately behind the bony socket of the eyes; and in the eyes themselves,—the latter being the most vulnerable of all. Why had the Indian, armed with a knife, not chosen one of these three places to inflict a mortal cut or stab?

“Patron,” said the Indian, as soon as he had recovered his breath, “you wonder why the Mundurucú took all that trouble for a *macana*, while he might have killed the jacaré without it. True, the knife was weapon enough. *Pa terra!* Yes. But it would not cause instant death. The rascal could dive with both eyes scooped out of their sockets, and live for hours afterwards. Ay, it could have carried me twenty miles through the Gapo, half the distance under water. Where would old Munday have been then? Drowned and dead, long before the jacaré itself. Ah, patron, a good knock on the hollow of its head is the best way to settle scores with a jacaré.”

And as if all scores had been now settled with this fellow, the huge saurian, to all appearance dead, passed unheeded out of sight, the current of the Gapo drifting it slowly away. They did not wait for its total disappearance, and while its hideous body, turned belly upward, with its human-like hands stiffly thrust above the surface, was yet in sight, they resumed their preparations for vacating a tenement of which all were heartily tired, with that hopeful expectancy which springs from a knowledge that the future cannot be worse than the present. Richard had reported many curious trees, some bearing fruits that appeared to be eatable, strung with lianas, here and there forming a network that made it easy to find comfort among their branches. If there had been nothing else to cheer them, the prospect of escaping from their irksome attitudes was of itself sufficient; and influenced by this, they eagerly prepared for departure.

As almost everything had been already arranged for ferrying the party, very little remained to be done. From the hermetically closed monkey-cups the Mundurucú had manufactured five swimming-belts,—this number being all that was necessary, for he and the young Paraense could swim ten times the distance without any adventitious aid. The others had their share of empty shells meted out according to their weight and need of help. Rosa’s transport required particular attention. The others could make way themselves, but Rosa was to be carried across under the safe conduct of the Indian.

So when every contingency had been provided for, one after another slipped down from the fork, and quietly departed from a tree that, however uncomfortable as a residence, had yet provided them with a refuge in the hour of danger.

Chapter Thirty Three.

A Half-Choked Swimmer.

Munday led off, towing little Rosa after him by a sipo, one end fastened to his girdle, and the other around her waist. Trevannion followed close behind, Ralph a little farther off, with Richard keeping abreast of his cousin and helping him along. Mozey swam next; Tipperary Tom, who was last to leave the tree, brought up the rear. The ouistiti had found a berth on the shoulders of young Ralph, who, buoyed up by a good supply of air-vessels, swam with his back above water. As for the macaw and coaita, the desperate circumstances in which our adventurers were placed rendered it not only inconvenient, but out of the question, to trouble themselves with such pets; and it had been agreed that they must be abandoned. Both, therefore, were left upon the tree. With the macaw it was a matter of choice whether it should stay there. By simply spreading out its great hyacinthine wings it could keep pace with its *ci-devant* protectors; and they had hardly left the tree, when the bird, giving a loud scream, sprang from its perch, hovered a moment in the air, and then, flying down, alighted on Mozey's wool-covered cranium, making him hide his astonished head quickly under water. The arara, affrighted at having wetted its feet, instantly essayed to soar up again; but its curving talons, that had clutched too eagerly in the descent, had become fixed, and all its attempts to detach them were in vain. The more it struggled, the tighter became the tangle; while its screams, united with the cries of the negro, pealed over the water, awaking far echoes in the forest. It was sometime before Mozey succeeded in untwisting the snarl that the arara had spun around its legs, and not until he had sacrificed several of his curls was the bird free to trust once more to its wings.

We have said, that by some mystic influence the big monkey had become attached to Tipperary Tom, and the attachment was mutual. Tom had not taken his departure from the tree without casting more than one look of regret back among the branches, and under any other circumstances he would not have left the coaita behind him. It was only in obedience to the inexorable law of self-preservation that he had consented to the sacrifice. The monkey had shown equal reluctance at parting, in looks, cries, and gestures. It had followed its friend down to the fork, and after he had slipped into the water it appeared as if it would follow him, regardless of both instinct and experience, for it could not swim. These, however, proved strong enough to restrain its imprudence, and after its protector had gone it stood trembling and chattering in accents that proclaimed the agony of that unexpected separation. Any one listening attentively to its cries might have detected in the piteous tones the slightest commingling of reproach. How could it be otherwise to be thus deserted? Left to perish, in fact; for although the coaita was perfectly at home upon the sapucaya, and could live there as long as the nuts lasted, there was not the slightest chance of its getting away from the tree. It must stay there till the *vasante*, till the flood fell, and that would not be for months. Long before that it must undoubtedly perish, either by drowning or starvation.

Whether or not these unpleasant forebodings passed through the monkey's wits, and whether they nerved it, may never be known. Certainly something seemed to stimulate the creature to determination; for instead of standing any longer shivering in the fork of the tree, it turned suddenly, and, darting up the trunk, ran out upon one of the horizontal branches. To go directly from the sapucaya to the forest, it was necessary to pass under this limb; and Tipperary Tom,

following in the wake of the others, had taken this track. He was already far out from the stem of the tree, almost clear of the overhanging branches, and half oblivious of the painful parting, when a heavy body, pouncing upon his shoulders, caused both him and his empty shells to sink some feet under the water; for just like old Munday on the alligator had the monkey come down upon Tipperary Tom. The affrighted Irishman, on rising to the surface, sputtered forth a series of cries, at the same time endeavouring to rid himself of the unexpected rider on his back. It was just at this crisis, too, that the macaw had managed to make good its footing in the fleece of the negro. Mozey, however, was the first to get clear of his incubus; and then all eyes were directed towards Tipperary Tom and the clinging coaita, while peals of laughter resounded from every lip.

Mozey had enfranchised himself by sacrificing a few tufts of his woolly hair, but the task was not so easy for Tom. In fact, it proved altogether impracticable; for the coaita had curled its prehensile tail around his neck in a knot that would have made a hangman envious. The more he tugged at it, the more it tightened; and had the Irishman been left to himself, it would have no doubt ended in his being strangled outright, a fate he began to dread. At this crisis he heard the Mundurucú shout to him across the water to leave the coaita alone, as then it would relax its hold. Fortunately for himself, Tom had the prudence to obey this well-timed counsel; and although still half suffocated by the too cordial embrace of his pet, he permitted it to have its own way, until, having approached the forest, the monkey relaxed its hold, and sprang up among the branches.

Chapter Thirty Four.

A Supper of Broiled Squab.

Guided by the Mundurucú, the swimmers entered the water arcade before described, and proceeded on to the tree that had furnished the caoutchouc for their swimming-belts. The siphonia, so late the scene of strife and querulous complainings, was now silent as the tomb; not a living arara was in sight or within hearing. The few old birds that had survived the club conflict had forsaken the spot, betaking themselves to some distant part of the forest, perhaps out of the Gapo altogether, to mourn over nests laid desolate, over chicks seized and instantly destroyed by ruthless hands. Only the young were there, suspended in a bunch from the branches. The Mundurucú mounted first, taking his charge along with him; and then all the others climbed up into the tree, where the macaw and the monkey—one upon wing, the other by a passage through the tree-tops in speed almost equalling the flight of a bird—had already arrived.

Farther progress for that night was no part of their purpose. It would have been as idle as imprudent. The sun was already level with their gaze, and to have forsaken their perch at that hour would have been like leaving a good inn for the doubtful chances of the road. The seringá, with its thickly trellised limbs, offered snug quarters. Upon its network of parasites it was possible to repose; there were hammocks woven by the hand of Nature, and, rude as they might be, they were a pleasant improvement on their couches of the preceding night.

The tree contained other proofs of its hospitality. The fat fledglings suspended upon it promised a supper not to be despised; for none of the party was a stranger to macaw flesh, and, as those were young and tender, eyes sparkled and mouths watered on beholding them. No one expected that they were to be eaten raw, though there was more than one in the party whose appetite had become sharp enough for this. The Mundurucú would have shown but slight squeamishness at swallowing one of the squabs as it was, while to Mozey it would have signified less. Even Tipperary Tom declared his readiness to set about supping without further preparation.

The semi-cannibal appetites of his companions were controlled by Trevannion, who commenced talking of a fire. How was it to be made? How could the chicks be cooked? His questions did not remain long unanswered. The Indian, eager to meet the wishes of his employer, promised that they should be gratified.

“Wait a bit, patron,” said he. “In ten minutes’ time you shall have what you want, a fire; in twenty, roast arara.”

“But how?” asked the patron. “We have no flint nor steel, any of us; and if we had, where find the tinder?”

“Yonder!” rejoined the Mundurucú. “You see yonder tree on the other side of the igarápe?”

“That standing out by itself, with smooth, shining bark, and hoary, handlike leaves? Yes, I see it.

What of it?"

"It is the *embaüba*, patron; the tree that feeds the lazy sloth, the *Ai*."

"O, then it is that known as the *Cecropia peltata*. True, its crown of peltate leaves declares the species. But we were talking of fire, Munday. Can you obtain it from the cecropia?"

"In ten minutes, patron, the Mundurucú will draw sparks from that tree, and make a fire too, if he can only obtain from it a dry branch, one without sap, decayed, dead. You shall see."

So saying, he swam out towards the cecropia. On reaching this, he scaled it like a squirrel, and was soon among its silvery fronds, that spread palm-like over the water. Soon the snapping of a breaking branch was heard, and shortly after the Indian came gliding down the tree, and, holding the piece of cecropia above his head, swam with one hand towards the caoutchouc, which he once more ascended. On rejoining his companions, they saw that the stick he had secured was a bit of dry, dead wood, light, and of porous texture, just such as might be easily ignited. Not caring to make any secret of his design, he confirmed his companions in their conjecture by informing them that the *embaüba* was the wood always employed by his people, as well as the other tribes in Amazonia, when they wished to make a fire; and saying this, he proceeded without further delay to make them acquainted with the proper way. Strange to say, it proved to be the friction process, often described as practised in remote corners of the world, and by savage tribes who could never have held the slightest communication with one another. Who taught them this curious mode of creating fire? Who inducted the Indian of the Amazon, and the aboriginal of Borneo, into the identical ideas of the *sumpitan* and *gradatána*,—both blow-guns alike? Who first instructed mankind in the use of the bow? Was it instinct? Was it wisdom from on high?

While Trevannion was reflecting on this strange theme, the Mundurucú had shaped a long spindle from a slender branch which he had cut from some hard wood growing near; and, whirling it between the palms of his hands, in less than ten minutes, as he had promised, sparks appeared in the hollowed stick of the cecropia. Dry leaves, twigs, and bark had been already collected, and with these a flame was produced, ending in a fire, that soon burned brightly in one of the forks of the *seringa*. Over this the young macaws, supported on spits, were soon done brown; and a supper of roast arara, with parched sapucaya nuts, proved anything but a despicable meal to the party who partook of it.

Chapter Thirty Five.

Once More in the Water.

Our adventurers passed a tolerable night among the sipos of the seringa. They might have slept more soundly but for apprehensions about the future that intruded even into their dreams. Morning brought no relief, for then reality itself appeared ruder than the visions of fancy in their slumbers. They had cold macaw for breakfast,—remains of the preceding night's roast, which had been kept up as long as the fire was alight, and carefully preserved, to serve for a future occasion. It was just sunrise, and as soon as the meal was over, they consulted seriously how to extricate themselves from their unpleasant and perilous position,—how to work a deliverance from the jaws of the Gapo. Whereabouts in this strange region were they? How far had they entered it? They could not even frame a guess of the distance traversed by the galatea before she had come to grief in the fork of the sapucaya. It might be twenty miles, it might be fifty; who could tell? They only knew that the ill-fated vessel had been drifting away from the Solimoës, and deep into the solitudes of the Gapo. They knew they must be many miles from the banks of the Solimoës, and, from his hydrographic knowledge, already tested, the old tapuyo could tell its direction. But it was no longer a question of getting back to the channel of the great river. On the contrary, the object now was to reach solid land. It would be worse than idle to seek the Solimoës without the means of navigating it; for, even should the stream be reached, it would be one chance in a thousand to get within hail of a passing vessel. Almost as well might such be looked for in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean. They were now bent on discovering the shortest route to the mainland that bordered this inundated region. This should be found in the direction opposite to that in which the river lay. It might not, but the probabilities were in favour of that hypothesis. They had but little difficulty in determining the way to take. The index already pointed out by the Indian was still to be depended upon.

The *echente* was still going on. The current was from the river, if not with absolute directness, yet with enough to point out the bearing of the Solimoës. The land might be many miles distant,—farther than the river itself,—but there was no alternative but to reach it or die. But how reach it? That was the question. They could hardly hope to swim the whole distance, for it must be great. A raft? This too was talked of. But how was a raft to be constructed? Among the tops of those water-loving trees there could scarce be found a stick light enough to have floated itself, let alone the carrying of a ponderous cargo. Out of such heavy timber there would be but little chance of their constructing a raft, and the idea was abandoned almost as soon as broached. But Munday's proposal met the approbation of all. The water arcade chanced to continue in the direction they should take. Why not once more make use of the swimming-belts, that had already done such good service, and effect a further exploration of the flooded forest? The proposition was too reasonable to be rejected. It was unanimously accepted; and, without more ado, our adventurers descended from the siphonia, and began to traverse the strait. The macaw and monkey kept their company as before, but no longer needed to make themselves a burden to their protectors, since both could travel through the tree-tops as the swimmers passed below.

Chapter Thirty Six.

The Igarápe.

They needed no pilot to point out their course. There could be no danger of straying from it. The strait they were following was of that kind known as an igarápe, which, in the language of the Amazonian Indian, means literally “the path of the canoe,”—*igarité* being the name of the craft most used in the navigation of the Gapo. The strait itself might have been likened to a canal, running through a thicket, which formed on both sides a colossal hedge, laced together by an impenetrable network of parasitical plants. Unlike a canal, however, it was not of uniform breadth, here and there widening into little openings that resembled lakes, and again narrowing until the tree-tops stretching from each side touched one another, forming underneath a cool, shadowy arcade.

Up this singular waterway our adventurers advanced, under the guidance of the bordering line of verdure. Their progress was necessarily slow, as the two who could swim well were compelled to assist the others; but all were aided by a circumstance that chanced to be in their favour,—the current of the Gapo, which was going in the same direction with themselves. Herein they were greatly favoured, for the flow of the flood corresponded very nearly with the course of the igarápe; and, as they advanced, they might have fancied themselves drifting down the channel of some gently flowing stream. The current, however, was just perceptible; and though it carried them along, it could not be counted on for any great speed. With it and their own exertions they were enabled to make about a mile an hour; and although this rate might seem intolerably slow, they were not discontented, since they believed themselves to be going in the right direction. Had they been castaways in mid-ocean, the case would have been different. Such tardy travelling would have been hopeless; but it was otherwise in the forest sea that surrounded them. On one side or the other they could not be more than fifty miles from real dry land, and perhaps much less. By going right, they might reasonably hope to reach it, though detained upon the way. It was of the utmost importance, however, that the direction should be known and followed. A route transverse to it might take them a thousand miles, either way, through a flooded forest,—westward almost to the foot of the Andes,—eastward to the mouth of the Amazon! The experienced tapuyo, knowing all this, was extremely cautious in choosing the course they were now pursuing. He did not exactly keep in the line indicated by the flow of the flood. Although the *echente* was still going on, he knew that its current could not be at right angles to that of the river, but rather obliques to it; and in swimming onward he made allowance for this oblique, the igarápe fortunately trending at a similar inclination.

Several hours were spent in slowly wending along their watery way, the swimmers occasionally taking a rest, stretched along the surface of the water, supported by hanging lianas or the drooping branches of the trees. At noon, however, a longer halt was proposed by the guide, to which his followers gladly gave consent. All were influenced by a double desire,—to refresh themselves not only by a good rest, but by making a meal on the cold roast macaws, several of which were strapped upon the shoulders of the tapuyo. A tree with broad, spreading branches offered a convenient place, and, climbing into it, they took their seats to await the distribution of the dinner, which was committed to the care of the ex-steward, Mozey.

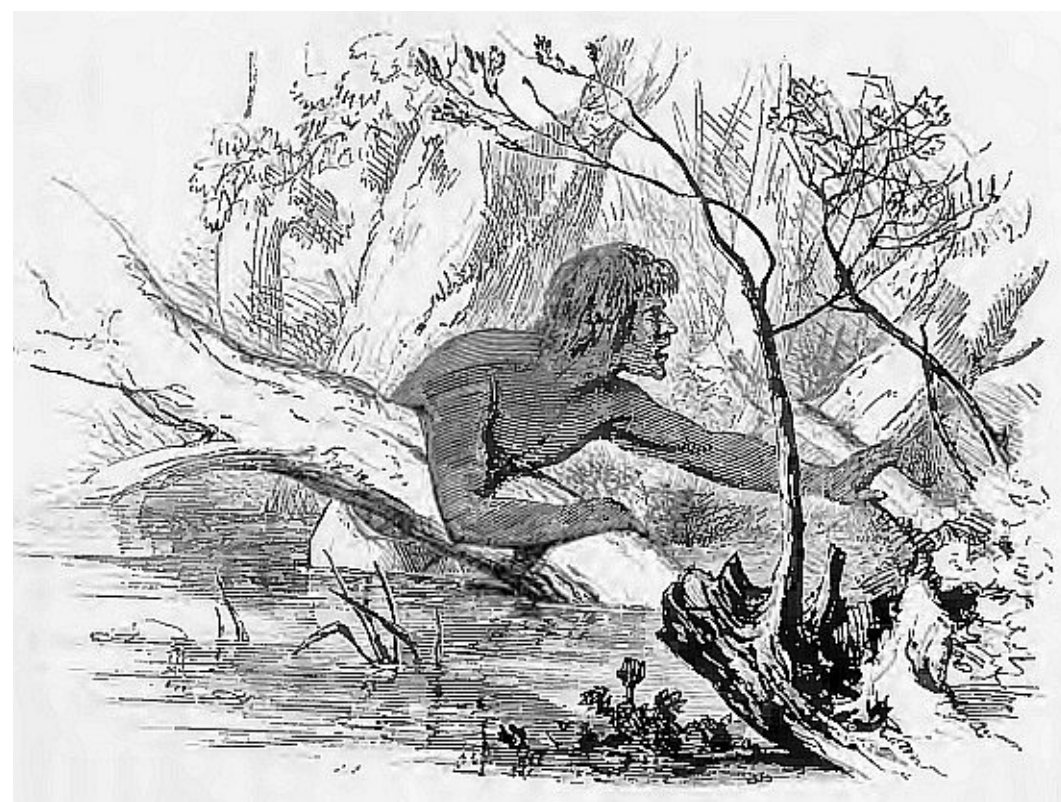
Chapter Thirty Seven.

About Humming-Birds.

Previous to ascending their dining-tree, the swimmers had been more than six hours in the water, and, as nearly as they could guess, had made about that number of miles. They congratulated themselves on having met with no hostile inhabitants of the Gapo, for the jararaca and jacaré, with the perils encountered while in the presence of these two dangerous reptiles, were fresh enough in their remembrance to inspire them with continual fear. All along the way, the Indian had been constantly upon the alert. Nothing had occurred to cause them alarm, though many strange sounds had been heard, and strange creatures had been seen. Most of these, however, were of a character to cheer rather than affright them. The sounds were mostly musical,—the voices of birds,—while the creatures seen were the birds themselves, many of beautiful forms and bright plumage, perched upon the tree-tops, or winging their way overhead. Conspicuous among them were the tiny winged creatures called humming-birds, with which the Gapo abounded. During their swim they had seen several distinct species of these lovely little sprites, flashing like meteors over the surface of the water, or darting about through the tree-tops like sparks of glistening light. They appeared to be the gnomes and elves of the place.

While eating dinner, our adventurers were favoured with an excellent opportunity of observing the habits of these graceful and almost microscopic creatures. A tree stood near, whose top was surmounted by a parasite,—a species of bignonia,—in full blossom, that with its array of sweet-scented flowers completely covered the tree, almost concealing the green foliage underneath. Over this flowery spot hundreds of humming-birds were hovering, now darting from point to point, anon poised upon swiftly whirring wings in front of an open flower, their tiny beak inserted into the corolla, therefrom to extract the savoury honey. There were several species of them, though none of them of large size, and all looking more like insects than birds. But for the swiftness of their motions, they might have passed for a swarm of wild bees (*meliponae*) disporting themselves among the flowers. Ralph and Rosa were delighted with the spectacle, though it was not new to them, for the warmer valleys of the Andes, through which they had passed in approaching the headwaters of the Amazon, were the favourite *habitat* of the humming-birds, and there a greater number of species exist than in Amazonia itself. What was new to them, however, and to the rest of the party as well, was some information imparted by the tapuyo while they sat conversing after dinner. He said that there were two kinds of these birds, which, although alike in size, beauty, bright plumage, and many other respects, were altogether distinct in their habits and ways of life. By two kinds he did not mean two species, for there were many, but two sets of species, or groups, as the Indian would have called them, had he been a student of ornithology. One set, he said,—and the several species then before their eyes belonged to it,—lived upon the juice of the flowers, and this was their only food. These frequented such open *campos* as those on the southern side of the Solimoës, and along the rivers running into it from that direction. They were also common in plantations, and other places where clearings had been made, or where the forest was thin and scattering, because there only could they find a sufficiency of flowers. It was only at times that they made excursions into the great water-forest, when some of the sipo plants were in blossom, just as

the one before them was at that time. The species they saw did not belong to the Gapo. They had only strayed there upon a roving excursion, and would soon return to the mainland,—the treeless regions. The kinds that frequented the great forest never went out of it, and cared nothing about flowers. If seen hovering around a tree in blossom, it was only because they were in pursuit of insects, which had been attracted thither in search of the sweet juices. Upon these the forest humming-birds regularly preyed, making their exclusive diet upon flies, which they caught as much among the foliage as the flowers, darting upon the insects whenever they perched upon the leaves, and snapping them up either from the upper or under side. They built their nests upon the tips of the palm-leaves, choosing the side that was inward towards the tree, from which they suspended them. They were purse-shaped, and composed of fibres closely woven together with a thick lining of a fine, soft silk-cotton, taken from the fruit of a tree called *samaüma*. They did not come much into the sun, like the other kinds, but kept more in the shade, and might be often met whirring about in the aisles of the forest. Sometimes they would poise themselves in the air, right in front of a person passing through among the tree-trunks, and, after remaining till the intruder's face would be within a few feet of them, would fly on in advance of him, and again come to a pause in the same way, repeating the manoeuvre several times in succession. All these things, averred the observant Indian, made the humming-birds that kept constantly to the forest very different from those that only visited it upon occasions, and therefore, in his opinion, they were of two distinct kinds. And his opinion was the correct one, founded on observations already made by the ornithologist, and which have resulted in the classification of the humming-birds into two great groups, the *Trochilinae* and *Phaethorninae*.



Chapter Thirty Eight.

A Cul-de-Sac.

Notwithstanding the pleasant theme that formed the subject of their after-dinner discourse, it was not long continued. Both those who took part in it and those who listened were too anxious about their situation to enjoy even the most interesting conversation. As soon, therefore, as they felt sufficiently recruited by the rest, they resumed their aquatic journey. For several hours they continued to advance at the same slow rate, without encountering any incident worthy of record. The igarápe still trended in a straight line, with only here and there a slight turning to one side or the other, preserving, however, the same general direction, which was northward. This they had discovered on the night before, not by observing the polar star, which is at no time visible at the equator, nor until you have travelled several degrees to the north of it. Even when this well-known star should be seen from the low latitudes of the torrid zone, it is usually obscured by the hazy film extending along the horizon. Sirius and other northern, constellations had guided them. As the sun had been shining throughout the whole of that day as well as the preceding one, you may suppose there could be no difficulty in discovering the quarter, within a point or two of the compass, at any hour of the day. This might be true to any one travelling in a high latitude, northern or southern, or at certain seasons of the year, anywhere outside the tropics. Even within the tropics it might be done by skilful observation, if the observer knew the exact time of the year. Trevannion knew the time. He knew, moreover, that it was close upon the vernal equinox, when the sun was crossing the equatorial line, near to which they were wandering. For this reason, in the meridian hours the great orb was right over their heads, and no one—not even a skilled astronomer—could have told north from south, or east from west.

Supposing that the igarápe should not be trending in the same direction, but imperceptibly departing from it? In that case, during the mid-hours of the day they could have had no guidance from the sky, and must have suspended their journey till the sun should begin to sink towards the west, and once more make known the points of the compass. Fortunately they needed not to make this delay. As already observed, the flow of the flood was the pilot to which they looked for keeping them in their course; and, as this still ran with a slight obliquity in the same direction as the igarápe, the latter could not have departed from the right line upon which, they had been advancing. The current had been compared with the points of the compass that morning before setting out. It was a little to the east of north. Northward, then, was the course of the swimmers.

They had drawn further inference from the direction in which the flood was setting. It proved that they had strayed from the Solimoës by its left or northern bank, and must now be somewhere among the mouths of the great river Japura. It was no consolation to discover this, but the contrary. The old tapuyo only looked graver on arriving at the conviction that such was the case. He knew that in that direction, in the vast delta formed by the unnumbered branches of the Japura, the Gapo was of great width, extending far back from the banks of this remarkable river, and dry land in that direction might be at the greatest distance. There was no alternative but to keep on, and, by deviating from the course as little as possible, they might in due time reach the limits of the flood. Actuated by this impulse and its attendant hopes, they continued their toilsome journey along “the path of the canoe.”

We have said that for several hours they encountered no incident worthy of note. It was not destined, however, for that day's sun to set before one should arise, whose record is not a matter of choice, but necessity, since it exerted such an influence on the proceedings of the travellers as to cause a complete change in their mode of progression. What they encountered was not exactly an incident, but an obstruction. In other words, their swim was suddenly brought to an end by the ending of the igarápe!

They had arrived at the termination of this curious canal, which all at once came to a *cul-de-sac*, the trees closing in on both sides, and presenting an impenetrable front, that forbade farther progress. The way was equally obstructed in every other direction; for on neither side of the igarápe, throughout its whole length, had any opening been observed. At first they fancied that the water might open again beyond the obstruction, but Munday, after penetrating a short distance among the tree-trunks, returned to declare his conviction that the igarápe was at an end. Nor did it terminate by any gradual convergence of the two lines of trees. On the contrary, they came together in an abrupt circular sweep,—one of colossal size, that rose high above its fellows and spread far out, standing in the centre, like some Titanic guardian of the forest, and seeming to say to the igarápe, "Hitherto shalt thou come, but no farther!"

It was of no use remaining longer in the water for that day. Even had the obstruction not arisen, it was time to have suspended their exertions. The sun was sinking towards the tree-tops, and by the time they could get themselves snugly stowed away, and something ready for supper, it would be night. Leaving other cares for the morrow, and the morrow to take care of itself, they at once proceeded to select their sleeping-place for the night. The colossal tree that had come so unpleasantly across their track seemed to offer the very quarters they were in search of; and, without more ado, they accepted the hospitality of its wide-spreading branches.

Chapter Thirty Nine.

The Brazil-Nuts.

The tree upon which they had made their roost was one of a species of which they had observed many during the day. It was the true Brazil-nut (*Bertholletia excelsa*), own cousin to the sapucaya; for both are of the same family,—the *Lecythis*,—of which there are many distinct members. Like the sapucaya, it is a denizen of the low lands and flooded forests, growing to a stupendous height. It produces large, showy flowers, which are succeeded by huge capsule-like pericarps, each enclosing a score or more of Brazil-nuts. But though the flowers are followed by the fruits, these do not all come together; and, like the orange and other tropical trees, bud, blossom, and fruit may all be observed upon the same branch, in various stages of development.

It need not be said that the nuts of the *Bertholletia* form one of the commercial staples of Amazonia. They are too well-known to need further description; for there are few dwelling-houses in either Europe or America where they have not been submitted to the squeeze of the nut-crackers. In the forest, where they are no man's property, they are collected by whoever chooses to take the trouble, but chiefly by the Indians and half-breeds who dwell on the borders of the Gapo. The time to gather the Brazil-nuts is the *vasante*, or dry season, though there are certain tribes of savages that go nutting in their canoes during the season of the *echente*. But the real nut harvest is after the floods have subsided, and the trees once more stand upon dry land. Then the whole *malocca* of Indians, or the inhabitants of a village, proceed in a body to the places where the fruits are to be found, scattered around the stems of the tall trees that have produced them.

In gathering their crop the gleaners require to observe certain precautions, those who go under the trees covering their heads with a thick wooden cap, resembling a helmet, lest the dropping of the heavy capsules—big as a cannon-ball, and almost as heavy—might crack a skull! For this reason the monkeys of the Amazon forest, though crazy for sapucaya and Brazil-nuts, always give the *Bertholletia* a wide berth, never going under, but around it, in a circle whose circumference lies outside the tips of the branches. Strange to say, these creatures have no fear of the sapucaya, although its pericarps are as large and heavy as those of the Brazil-nuts. But the former do not fall to the ground, or when they do, it is only after the lid has sprung open, and the huge cup has scattered its contents, leaving it a light and empty shell. It is for this reason, as much as anything else, that the nuts of the sapucaya are scarce in the market, and command a higher price. Having escaped spontaneously from their shell, they are at the mercy of all comers, birds, quadrupeds, and monkeys; whereas the Brazil-nuts, protected by their thick woody pericarps, are not so easily accessible. Even the monkeys cannot get at them, until some animal with teeth better adapted for chiselling performs for them the service of laying open the box, and giving them a chance at the treasures contained within. This is done by several species of rodents, among which the *cutia* and *paca* are conspicuous; and one of the most comical spectacles to be seen in a South American forest is that of a group of monkeys, watching from a distance the proceedings of a *paca* thus employed, and then springing forward to take forcible possession of the pericarp after it has been sufficiently opened.

It was a bit of good fortune that our adventurers found lodgings upon the *Bertholletia*. Though more hospitality may usually be met with in an inn, it provided them with at least a portion of their supper,—the bread-stuff. They had still left a brace of the macaw squabs that had not been roasted; but Munday, as before, soon produced sufficient fire to give them a scorching, and keen appetites supplied salt, pepper, and sauce.

Chapter Forty.

A Travelling Party of Guaribas.

Supper over, our adventurers only awaited the sunset to signal them to their repose. They had already selected their beds, or what was to serve for such,—the spaces of horizontal network formed by the intertwining of luxuriant lianas. At the best, it was no better than sleeping upon a raked hurdle; but they had been already somewhat inured to an uneasy couch on the galatea, and they were every day becoming less sensitive to necessities and hardships. They were all tired with the severe exertions they had made; for although their journey had been but about six miles, it was enough to equal sixty made upon land. They felt as if they could go to sleep astride of a limb, or suspended from a branch.

It was not decreed by fate that they should find rest before being made the witnesses of a spectacle so curious, that, had they been ever so much inclined for sleep, would have kept them awake against their will.

A noise heard afar off in the forest attracted their attention. There was nothing in it to alarm them, though had they not heard it before, or something similar to it, their fears might have been excited to the utmost pitch of terror. What they heard was the lugubrious chant of a band of howling monkeys. Of all the voices of Nature that awake the echoes of the Amazonian forest, there is perhaps none so awe-inspiring as this. It is a combination of sounds, that embrace the various tones of shrieking, screaming, chattering, growling, and howling, mingled with an occasional crash, and a rattle, such as might proceed from the throat of a dying maniac. And yet all this is often the product of a single *mycetes*, or howling monkey, whose hollow hyoid bone enables him to—send forth every species of sound, from the rolling of a bass drum to the sharp squeak of a penny-whistle.

“*Guaribas!*” quietly remarked the Mundurucú, as the distant noise was first heard.

“Howling monkeys you mean?” interrogatively rejoined Trevannion.

“Yes, patron, and the loudest howlers of the whole tribe. You’ll hear them presently. They are coming this way.”

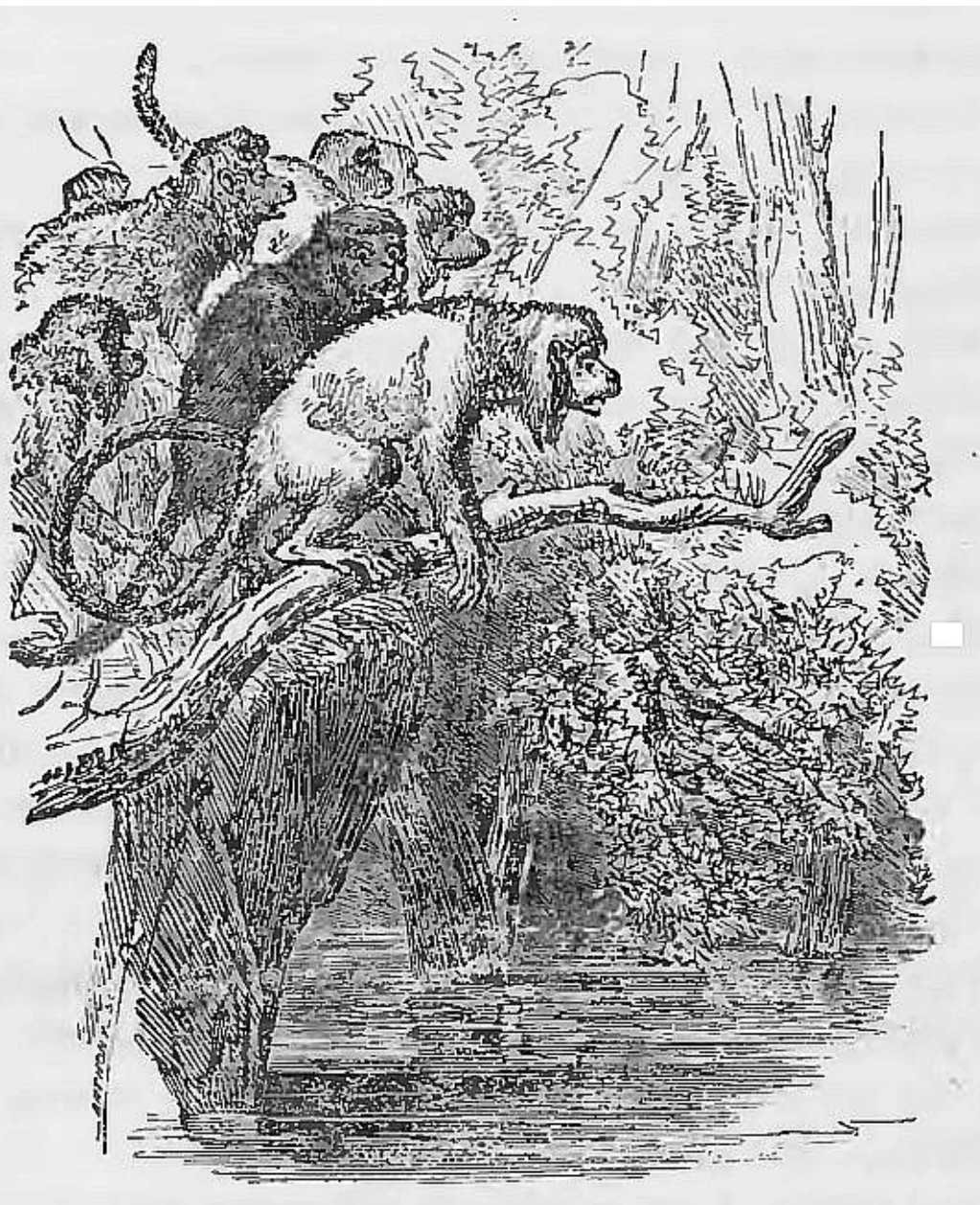
“They’re not far off now, I should say, if one may judge by the loudness of their cries.”

“All of a mile yet, patron. It proves that the forest stretches more than a mile in that direction, else the guaribas could not be there. If there be open water between us and them, they won’t come this way. If not, we’ll have them here in ten minutes’ time. I wish we could only travel among the tree-tops as they can. We shouldn’t stay long in the Gapo.”

“Just as the Mundurucú expected,” continued the tapuyo, after a pause. “The guaribas are coming towards us. I can hear the swishing of the leaves as they pass among them. We’ll soon see them.”

The howling of the guaribas had for some time ceased, but the rustling of leaves, with the occasional snapping of a twig, to which the Indian had directed the attention of his companions, told that the troop was travelling through the tree-tops, otherwise observing a profound silence.

Soon they appeared in sight, suddenly presenting themselves upon a tall tree that stood by the side of the igarápe, about a cable's length from that occupied by our adventurers. For some minutes the branches of the tree were seen oscillating up and down, as each black guariba sprang into it: and this continued until not less than a hundred had found lodgement upon the limbs. As the leader of the band, who was evidently chief of the tribe, caught sight of the igarápe, he was seen to pause in an abrupt and ambiguous manner, at the same moment giving utterance to a cry, easily intelligible as a word of command. It had the effect of causing those immediately behind him to come to a halt, as also the others, as they sprang successively into the tree. There could be no question as to what had caused the halt. It was the igarápe crossing the track which the guaribas were going. With them the only question was, how they were to get over it.



At the point where the howlers had clustered together, the strait was narrower than elsewhere within sight. Between the branches, extending horizontally from the opposite sides of the

igarápe, there was a clear space of about twenty feet; and to the spectators it appeared improbable that any animal without wings could leap from tree to tree. The monkeys, however, did not seem to be of this opinion, but were plainly contemplating the leap; and it was evident that some of them were only restrained from taking it by an authoritative command from their chief, which held them in check. For several minutes there was a profound silence among them, undisturbed until the stragglers had all arrived in the tree, and squatted on the branches.

It was now observed that among these last were several mothers, each carrying a child upon her back, or embraced between her bare arms; the youngster with face upturned, clinging, not with teeth and toe-nail, but with hands and tail, to the neck of its maternal parent. To these the attention of the whole tribe appeared to be directed; and it was evident that they were the sole cause of the difficulty,—the *impedimenta* that had interrupted the onward march of the troop.

There had been confusion, accompanied by some chattering, after first coming up; but a sign from the leader had put an end to all noise, and then succeeded the silence already mentioned. During its continuance the guariba chief slowly ascended the tree, until he had attained a position elevated above all his followers. Then squatting down, with his hams firmly planted upon a branch, his long tail carefully coiled around another, he commenced his harangue with as much ceremony as if he had been chairman of a Guild-Hall dinner. Perhaps there was quite as much sense and eloquence in his speech; at all events, there was more noise: for during the ten minutes taken up by it—it had the advantage of brevity—no other sound could have been heard over the Gapo within the circuit of a mile.

His address being ended, the chief, by a series of detached speeches, seemed to invite a reply from his followers, coaxing their assent, or daring them to contradiction. There appeared to be no dissent, not one voice. The chattering that responded to the speech was delivered in a tone that spoke unanimous compliance with the proposal—whatever it was—which their chief had offered to their consideration.

Then ensued another interval of silence, much shorter than before, and again interrupted by the leader of the troop. This time, however, his words were few and to the purpose. They were pronounced in a tone of command, that called for prompt obedience, which was yielded instantaneously and without protest.

One of the strongest of the guaribas ran out upon the limb overhanging the igarápe, and, stopping at its extremity, braced himself for the leap. In another instant it was made, and the monkey was seen rushing up into the tree on the other side of the igarápe. A comrade followed, placing his four hands in the same spot, his body in a similar attitude, and making the leap so exactly like the guariba that had preceded him, that it seemed the same monkey repeating the performance. Then went another, and another, so close following, that the creatures appeared more like the links of some colossal but quick-moving chain, pulled by supernatural power across the igarápe, than a series of individual and animated beings.

Chapter Forty One.

The Monkey Mother.

Our adventurers sat in silent wonder watching the movements of the monkeys. It was certainly a spectacle of the most interesting character to see these creatures making the passage of the igarápe. Perhaps the most singular thing was the similarity of their leaps,—all planting their feet upon the same spot of the branch from which the leader sprang, springing exactly in the same way, and alighting on the opposite side in apparently the same spot and attitude, proving that each and all must have been actuated by the same thought or instinct at the precise moment of passing from one tree to the other. Another singular point was, that during its continuance the intervals between each two were almost as regular as the ticking of a clock. As soon as one launched itself out from the branch, another sprang into its place, and was ready to follow so quickly that the air was never for a moment without a monkey; and any one looking straight down the opening between the trees, without glancing to either side, might almost have fancied that it was a single guariba suspended in mid-air!

All the males of the tribe had succeeded in making the leap in safety; and all the females, too,—those carrying their “piccaninnies” along with the rest,—except one. This was a mother with a very young child on her back,—in fact a mere infant,—perhaps not nine days old. Notwithstanding its extreme youth, it appeared to comprehend the situation, as well as those of more mature age, clinging with its infantile fingers to the shaggy hide of its mother, while its tiny tail was twisted around the root of hers, in a loop that appeared tight as a sailor’s knot.

But the mother, enfeebled by some sickness,—for monkeys are subject to sickness as well as men,—appeared doubtful of her ability to accomplish the leap; and, after all the others had crossed, she stood upon the branch evidently only half determined about following them. At this crisis occurred a curious incident,—the first of a series. One of those that had crossed, a man-monkey, was seen to separate from the crowd, that had by this time ascended to the top of the tree. Returning along the limb to which they had just leaped, he placed himself opposite to the hesitating female and began to chatter, intending to encourage her, as his gestures showed. The mother of the infant made reply; but although the sounds were unintelligible to the human spectators, they might be translated as saying, “It’s not a bit of use, my trying; I shall only get a ducking for my pains, and the infant too. It may be drowned.”

Her reply was delivered in a tone of appeal; and, as if affected by it, the male monkey—evidently the father of the child—made no more remonstrance, but bounded back across the open water. It was but the work of six seconds for him to transfer the juvenile to his own shoulders; and in as many more both he and it were on the right side of the igarápe. Relieved of her charge and encouraged by the cries of those already across, the mother sprang out from the branch. The effort was too great for her strength. With her forefinger she caught the twigs on the opposite side and succeeded in clutching them; but before she could lap the branch with her tail,—a more trustworthy means of prehension,—she had sunk below its level, and, the twigs giving way, she plunged into the water.

A universal scream came from the top of the tree, and a score or more of guaribas leaped

down upon the limb from which the unfortunate had fallen. There was a scene of confusion,—just as there would have been had the catastrophe happened among human beings,—as when a boat upsets or some one breaks through the ice, and spectators stand speechless, or hurry to and fro, no one knowing exactly what to do,—what order to give, or whom to obey.

Very like was the scene of surprise, terror, and lamentation among the monkeys,—except that it did not last quite so long. In this respect animal instinct, as it is called, has the advantage of bewildered reason; and, while a crowd upon the sea-beach or the river-bank would have spent ten minutes before taking action to rescue the drowning individual, scarcely so many seconds were allowed to elapse before the guaribas had picked up and safely deposited her trembling person on the fork of a tree.

The mode in which this had been accomplished was something to astonish the spectators, and yet it was performed in a very efficient manner. As soon as the screaming would permit, the voice of the guariba chieftain was heard, in a chattering so loud and serious in tone as to indicate command; and some half-score of the number, in obedience, glided out on the limb of the tree under which the female was in imminent danger of being drowned. A bucket could not have descended into a well, or a pulley-tackle come down from warehouse or mill, more promptly and speedily than did that string of monkeys, hooked neck and tail to one another, like the links of a long chain,—the lowest upon the swinging series being the husband of the half-drowned mother, who had hastily deposited his baby in one of the forkings of the tree. Neither could the water-bucket have been filled, nor the wheat-sack hooked on, with half the speed and agility with which she was picked up and restored.

Once more shouldering her “chickabiddy,” she took her place in the troop, which, without further delay, moved on amid the tree-tops, keeping in a direct line of march, as if bent upon a journey that was to terminate at some spot already known to them. For a long time their track could be traced by their continuous howling, which then was heard only at intervals, and at length receded to such a distance as to become inaudible.

Chapter Forty Two.

The Mundurucú Discourses of Monkeys.

The sun was just setting as the guaribas disappeared; and from this circumstance it was conjectured that they were on their return to some favourite resting-place. Trevannion supposed that they might be on their way to dry land; and, if so, the route they had taken might serve himself and party for a direction. He mentioned this to the Mundurucú, who shook his head, not doubtfully, but as a simple negative.

“You think it would be of no use our taking the direction in which they have gone?” said the miner interrogatively.

“No, patron; not a bit of good in that. They are as like to be going from *terra firma* as towards it. It’s all the same to them whether they sleep over land, or water, so long as they have the trees to cling to. They are now trooping to some roost they have a fancy for,—perhaps some very big tree,—which they use at all times for their night-rendezvous, and where others of the same tribe will be likely to meet them. These have been off to some favourite feeding-ground, where the fruit may be more plenty than in the neighbourhood of their regular dwelling-place; or they may have been upon some ramble for amusement.”

“What! do monkeys make such excursions?” inquired young Ralph.

“O yes,” replied the Mundurucú. “I’ve often met them trooping about among the trees, where nuts and fruits were in plenty; and have watched them, for hours at a time, without seeing them pluck a single one;—only chattering and screeching and laughing and playing tricks upon each other, as if they had nothing else to do. Neither have they when certain sorts of fruit are ripe, especially soft fruits, such as berries and the pulpy nuts of several kinds of palms, as the *pupunha* and *assai*. It is a little different at other seasons, when they have to live on the Brazil-nuts and sapucayas; then they have something to do to get at the kernels inside the thick shells, and at this they employ a good deal of their time.”

“Do they sleep perched on the trees, or have they nests among the branches in which they can lie down at their ease?”

“They have nests, but not for that. The females only use them when about to bring forth their young. As to sleeping at their ease, they can do that on the very slenderest of branches. It’s no hardship to them, as it is to us. Not a bit.”

“But do they not sometimes fall off in their sleep?”

“How could they do that, young master, when they have their tails to hold on by? Before going to sleep they take a turn or two of their long tail round a branch, not always the one their body is on, but more commonly a branch a little above it. For that matter they don’t need any branch to rest upon. They can go to sleep, and often do, hanging by the tail,—for that is the position in which they are most at ease; just as you would be reclining in a hammock. I’ve seen them

scores of times asleep that way. To prove that they feel most at home when hanging by the tail, they take to it whenever any alarm comes suddenly upon them; and they want to be in readiness for retreat, in case of its proving to be an enemy."

"What singular creatures!" said Ralph, half in soliloquy.

"You speak truth, young master. They have many an odd way, that would lead one to believe that they had as much sense as some kinds of men. You have seen how they picked up the old one that fell into the water; but I've seen them do a still stranger thing than that. It is but the commonest of their contrivances, put in practice every time they want to pluck a nut, or some fruit that grows near the end of a branch too slender to carry their weight. If there's a stronger limb above, they go out upon it; and then, clinging together as you saw them do, they let themselves down till the last in the string can lay hold of the fruit. Sometimes there is no branch right over the spot; but that don't hinder them from getting what they have coveted, if they can find a stout limb anyways near. Then they make their string all the same; and, by setting it in motion, they swing back and forward, until the lowest of the party is tossed out within reach of the fruit. I've seen them try this, and find that their string was just a few inches too short, when another monkey would glide down upon the others, and add his length to complete it. Then I've seen them make a bridge, young master."

"Make a bridge! Are you in earnest? How could they?"

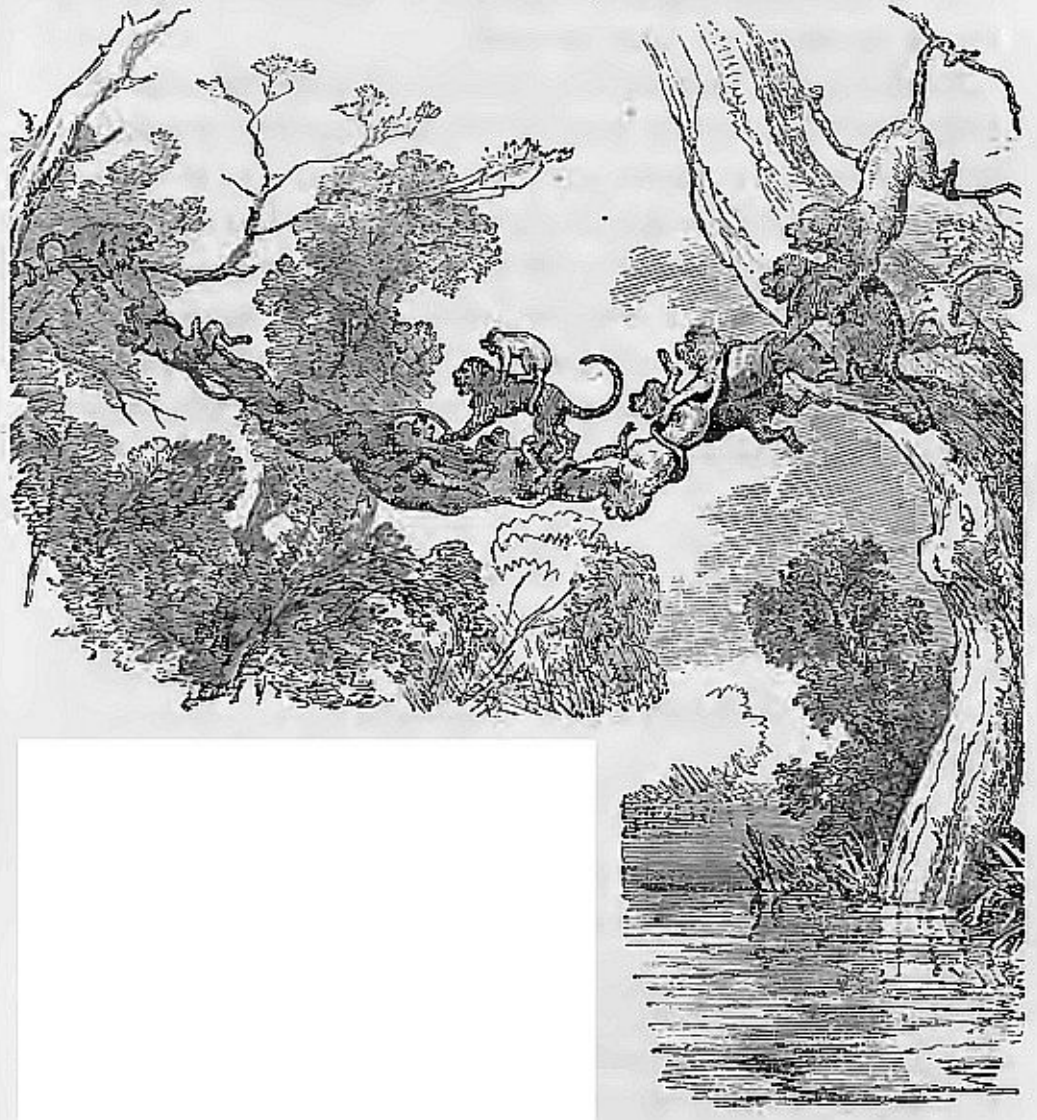
"Well, just in the same way as they get within reach of the nuts."

"But for what purpose?"

"To get across some bit of water, as a fast-running stream, where they would be drowned if they fell in."

"But how do they accomplish it? To make a bridge requires a skilled engineer among men; are there such among monkeys?"

"Well, young master, I won't call it such skill; but it's very like it. When on their grand journeyings they come to a stream, or even an igarápe like this, and find they can't leap from the trees on one side to those growing on the other, it is then necessary for them to make the bridge. They go up or down the bank till they find two tall trees opposite each other. They climb to a high branch on the one, and then, linking together, as you've seen them, they set their string in motion, and swing backward and forward, till one at the end can clutch a branch of the tree, on the opposite side. This done the bridge is made, and all the troop, the old ones that are too stiff to take a great leap, and the young ones that are too weak, run across upon the bodies of their stouter comrades. When all have passed over, the monkey at the other end of the string lets go his hold upon the branch; and if he should be flung into water it don't endanger him, as he instantly climbs up the bodies of those above him, the next doing the same, and the next also, until all have got safe into the trees."



"Be japers," exclaimed Tipperary Tom, "it's wonderful how the craythers can do it! But, Mистер Munday, have yez iver seen them fall from a tree-top?"

"No, never, but I've known one to leap from the top of a tree full a hundred feet in height."

"Shure it was kilt dead then?"

"If it was it acted very oddly for a dead animal, as it had scarce touched the ground when it sprang back up another tree of equal height, and scampered to the top branches nearly as quick as it came down."

"Ah!" sighed Trevannion, "if we had only the activity of these creatures, how soon we might escape from this unfortunate dilemma. Who knows what is before us? Let us pray before going to rest for the night. Let us hope that He, in whose hands we are, may listen to our supplications, and sooner or later relieve us from our misery." And so saying, the ex-miner repeated a well-remembered prayer, in the response to which not only the young people, but the Indian, the African, and the Irishman fervently joined.

Chapter Forty Three.

Two Slumberers Ducked.

It was somewhere among the mid-hours of the night, and all appeared to be as sound asleep as if reclining upon couches of eider-down. Not a voice was heard among the branches of the Brazil-nut,—not a sound of any kind, if we except the snore that proceeded from the spread nostrils of the negro, and that of a somewhat sharper tone from the nasal organ of the Irishman. Sometimes they snored together, and for several successive trumpeting this simultaneity would be kept up. Gradually, however, one would get a little ahead, and then the two snorers would be heard separately, as if the two sleepers were responding to each other in a kind of dialogue carried on by their noses. All at once this nasal duet was interrupted by a rustling among the boughs upon which rested Tipperary Tom. The rustling was succeeded by a cry, quickly followed by a plunge.

The cry and the plunge woke everybody upon the tree; and while several inquired the cause of the disturbance, a second shout, and a second plunge, instead of affording a clue to the cause of alarm, only rendered the matter more mysterious. There was a second volley of interrogatories, but among the inquiring voices two were missing,—those of Mozey and the Irishman. Both, however, could now be heard below; not very articulate, but as if their owners were choking. At the same time there was a plashing and a plunging under the tree, as if the two were engaged in a struggle for life.

“What is it? Is it you, Tom? Is it you, Mozey?” were the questions that came thick and fast from those still upon the tree.

“Och! ach!—I’m chokin’!—I’m—ach—drown—ach—drownin’!—Help! help!” cried a voice, distinguishable as the Irishman’s, while Mozey’s was exerted in a similar declaration.

All knew that Tom could not swim a stroke. With the Mozambique it was different. He might sustain himself above water long enough to render his rescue certain. With Tom no time was to be lost, if he was to be saved from a watery grave; and, almost with his cry for help, Richard Trevannion and the Mundurucú plunged in after him.

For a time, Trevannion himself and his two children could hear, underneath them, only a confused medley of sounds,—the splashing of water mingled with human voices, some speaking, or rather shouting, in accents of terror, others in encouragement. The night was dark; but had it been ever so clear, even had the full moon been shining above, her beams could not have penetrated through the spreading branches of the Brazil-nut, melted and lined as they were with thorns and leafy lianas.

It would seem an easy task for two such swimmers as the Indian and Paraense to rescue Tipperary Tom from his peril. But it was not quite so easy. They had got hold of him, one on each side, as soon as the darkness allowed them to discern him. But this was not till they had groped for some time; and then he was found in such a state of exhaustion that it required all the strength of both to keep his chin above the surface.

Mozey was fast becoming as helpless as Tom, being more than half paralysed by the fright he had got from being precipitated into the water while still sound asleep. Such a singular awaking was sufficient to have confused a cranium of higher intellectual development than that of the Mozambique.

After having discovered their half-drowned companions, neither Richard nor the Mundurucú knew exactly what to do with them. Their first thought was to drag them towards the trunk of the tree, under which they had been immersed. This they succeeded in doing; but once alongside the stem, they found themselves in no better position for getting out of the water. There was not a branch within reach by which to raise themselves, and the bark was as smooth as glass, and slippery with slime.

When first ascending into the great tree, they had made use of some hanging parasite, which now in the darkness they were unable to find. Even the two swimmers began to despond. If not their own lives, those of their comrades might be lost in that gloomy aisle, whose pavement was the subtle, deceitful flood. At this crisis an idea occurred to the young Paraense that promised to rescue them from their perilous position, and he called out, "The swimming-belts! fling down the swimming-belts!" His uncle and cousin, by this time having a clearer comprehension of what had occurred, at once obeyed the command. Richard and the Indian were not slow to avail themselves of this timely assistance; and in a trice the two half-drowned men were buoyed up beyond further danger.

On getting back into the Bertholletia, there was a general explanation. Tipperary Tom was the cause of the awkward incident. Having gone to sleep without taking proper precautions, his limbs, relaxed by slumber, had lost their prehensile power, and, sliding through the lianas, he had fallen plump into the water below, a distance of more than a dozen feet. His cries, and the consequent plunge, had startled the negro so abruptly that he too had lost his equilibrium, and had soused down the instant after.

The Mundurucú was by no means satisfied with the occurrence. It had not only interrupted his repose, but given him a wet shirt in which to continue it. He was determined, however, that a similar incident should not, for that night, occur,—at least not with the same individuals,—and before returning to his roost he bound both of them to theirs with *sipos* strong enough to resist any start that might be caused by the most terrible of dreams.

Chapter Forty Four.

Open Water.

The next day was spent in explorations. These did not extend more than four hundred yards from their sleeping-place; but, short as was the distance, it cost more trouble to traverse it than if it had been twenty miles on land, across an open country.

It was a thicket through which the explorers had to pass, but such a thicket as one acquainted only with the ordinary woods of Northern countries can have no conception of. It was a matted tangle of trees and parasitical plants, many of the latter—such as the climbing jacitara palms, the huge cane-briers, and bromelias—thickly set with sharp spines, that rendered it dangerous to come in contact with them. Even had there been firm footing, it would have been no easy task to make way through such a network; but, considering that it was necessary to traverse the wood by passing from tree to tree, all the time keeping in their tops, it will not be wondered at that a few hundred yards of such progress was accounted a day's journey.

You must not suppose that all the party of our adventurers went even thus far. In fact, all of them remained in the Brazil-nut, except the two who had acted as explorers on the former occasion,—Richard and the Mundurucú. It would have been worse than idle for any other to have accompanied them.

It was near sunset when they returned with their report, which to Trevannion and his party seemed anything but encouraging. The explorers had penetrated through the forest, finding it flooded in every direction. Not an inch of dry land had they discovered; and the Indian knew, from certain signs well understood by him, that none was near. The rapid drift of the current, which he had observed several times during the day, was one of these indications. It could not, he declared, be running in that way, if dry land were in the vicinity. So far, therefore, as reaching the shore was concerned, they might make up their minds for a long journey; and how this was to be performed was the question of the hour.

One point the explorers had definitely determined. The igarápe terminated at their sleeping-place. There was no sign of it beyond. Instead, however, they had come upon an opening of a very different character. A vast expanse of water, without any trees, had been found, its nearest edge being the limit of their day's excursion. This open water did not extend quite to the horizon. Around it, on all sides, trees could be seen, or rather the tops of trees; for it was evident that the thicket-like bordering was but the "lop and top" of a submerged forest. On returning to the "roost," Munday urged their going towards the open water.

"For what purpose?" inquired the patron, who failed to perceive any good reason for it. "We can't cross it, there being no sort of craft to carry us. We cannot make a raft out of these green branches, full of sap as they are. What's the use of our going that way? You say there's open water almost as far as you can see,—so much the worse, I should think."

"No, patron," replied the Indian, still addressing Trevannion as respectfully as when acting as his hired *tapuyo*. "So much the better, if you give me leave to differ with you. Our only hope is

to find open water.”

“Why, we have been all along coming from it. Isn't there plenty of it behind us?”

“True, patron; but it's not running in the right direction. If we launched upon it, the current would be against us. Remember, master, 'tis the *echenté*. We couldn't go that way. If we could, it would only bring us back to the river-channel, where, without some sort of a vessel, we should soon go to the bottom. Now the open Gapo we've seen to-day is landward, though the land may be a good way off. Still, by crossing it, we shall be getting nearer to firm ground, and that's something.”

“By crossing it? But how?”

“We must swim across it.”

“Why, you've just said that it stretches almost to the edge of the horizon. It must be ten miles or more. Do you mean to say we can swim so far?”

“What's to hinder us, master? You have, the monkey-pots; they will keep you above water. If not enough for all, we can get more. Plenty of the sapucaya-trees here.”

“But what would be the object of our crossing this expanse of water? You say there is no dry land on the other side; in that case, we'll be no better off than here.”

“There is land on the other side, though I think not near. But we must keep on towards it, else we shall never escape from the Gapo. If we stay here, we must starve, or suffer greatly. We might search the forest for months, and not find another nesting-place of the araras, or good food of any kind. Take my advice, patron. Soon as comes the light of to-morrow, let us cross to the open water. Then you can see for yourself what is best for us to do.”

As the perilous circumstances in which they were placed had altogether changed the relationship between Trevannion and his *tapuyo*, the latter being now the real “patron,” of course the ex-miner willingly gave way to him in everything; and on the morning of the next day the party of adventurers forsook the Brazil-nut, and proceeded towards the open Gapo.

Chapter Forty Five.

The Jacanas.

It will be asked how they proceeded. To swim to the open water would have been next to impossible, even with the assistance of the floats. Not only would the thick tree-trunks and drooping lianas have hindered them from making way in any direction; but there would have been nothing to guide them through the shadowy water, and they must soon lose themselves in a labyrinth of gloom. No sign of the sky could have availed them in the deep darkness below; and there were no landmarks to which to trust. The answer is, that they made their way along much as did the monkeys which had passed them the day before, only that their pace was a hundred times slower, and their exertions a thousand times more laborious. In fact, they travelled among the tree-tops, and followed the same track which their explorers had already taken, and which Munday, on his return, had taken the precaution to “blaze” by breaking a number of twigs and branches.

Their progress was of the slowest kind,—slower than the crawl of a cripple; but by dint of perseverance, and the performance of many feats in climbing and clinging and balancing, and general gymnastics, they succeeded at length in reaching the edge of the forest, and gaining a view of the wide watery expanse. It was a relief to their eyes, so long strained to no purpose amidst the shadowy foliage that had enveloped them.

“Now, Munday,” asked Trevannion, as soon as he had recovered breath, after such laborious exertion, “we are here on the edge of the open water. You talk of our being able to swim across it. Tell us how.”

“Just as we swam the igarapé.”

“Impossible, as you’ve admitted it can’t be less than ten miles to the other side. The tree-tops yonder are scarce discernible.”

“We came nearly as far along the canoe-path.”

“True; but then we had a chance to rest every few minutes, and that gave us strength to go on. It will be different if we attempt to cross this great sea, where there is no resting-place of any kind. We should be a whole day on the water, perhaps more.”

“Perhaps so, patron. But remember, if we do not try to get out of the Gapo, we may be three, four, five, or six months among these tree-tops. We may get no food but a few nuts and fruits,—scarcely enough to keep us alive. We may lose strength, and be no longer able to stay among the branches; we may grow faint and fall, one by one, into the water, to go down to the bottom of the Gapo or drop into the jaws of the jacarés.”

The alternative thus brought in terrible detail vividly before them produced a strong impression; and Trevannion offered no objection to any plan which the Mundurucú should propose. He only requested a fuller account of the feasibility of that now suggested,—in other words, an

explanation as to how they were to swim a stretch of ten miles without stopping to rest.

Munday made no mystery of the matter. He had no other plan than that already tried with success,—the swimming-belts; only that two additional sets would now be needed,—one for himself, the other for the young Paraense. On the short passage from the sapucaya to the forest, and along the canoe-path, these bold swimmers had disdained the use of that apparatus; but in a pull of ten miles, even they must have recourse to such aid.

No further progress was to be made on that day, as the fatigue of their arboreal journey required a long rest; and shortly after their arrival upon the edge of the forest, they set about arranging for the night, having chosen the best tree that could be found. Unfortunately, their larder was lower than it had ever been, since the going down of the galatea. Of the squab macaws there were no longer any left; and some sapucaya nuts gathered by the way, and brought along by Munday, formed the substance of their scanty supper.

As soon as it was eaten, the Mundurucú, assisted by Richard, busied himself in manufacturing the required swimming-belts; and long before the sun disappeared behind the forest spray, everything was ready for their embarkation, which was to take place at the earliest moment of its reappearance.

As usual, there was conversation,—partly to kill time, and partly to keep off the shadows that surrounded, and ever threatened to reduce them to despair. Trevannion took pains to keep it up, and make it as cheerful as the circumstances would permit, his object being less to satisfy himself than to provide gratification for his children. At times he even attempted to jest; but generally the conversation turned upon topics suggested by the scene, when the Indian, otherwise taciturn, was expected to do the talking. The open water became the subject on this particular occasion.

“It appears like a lake,” remarked the ex-miner. “I can see a line of trees or tree-tops all around it, with no signs of a break or channel.”

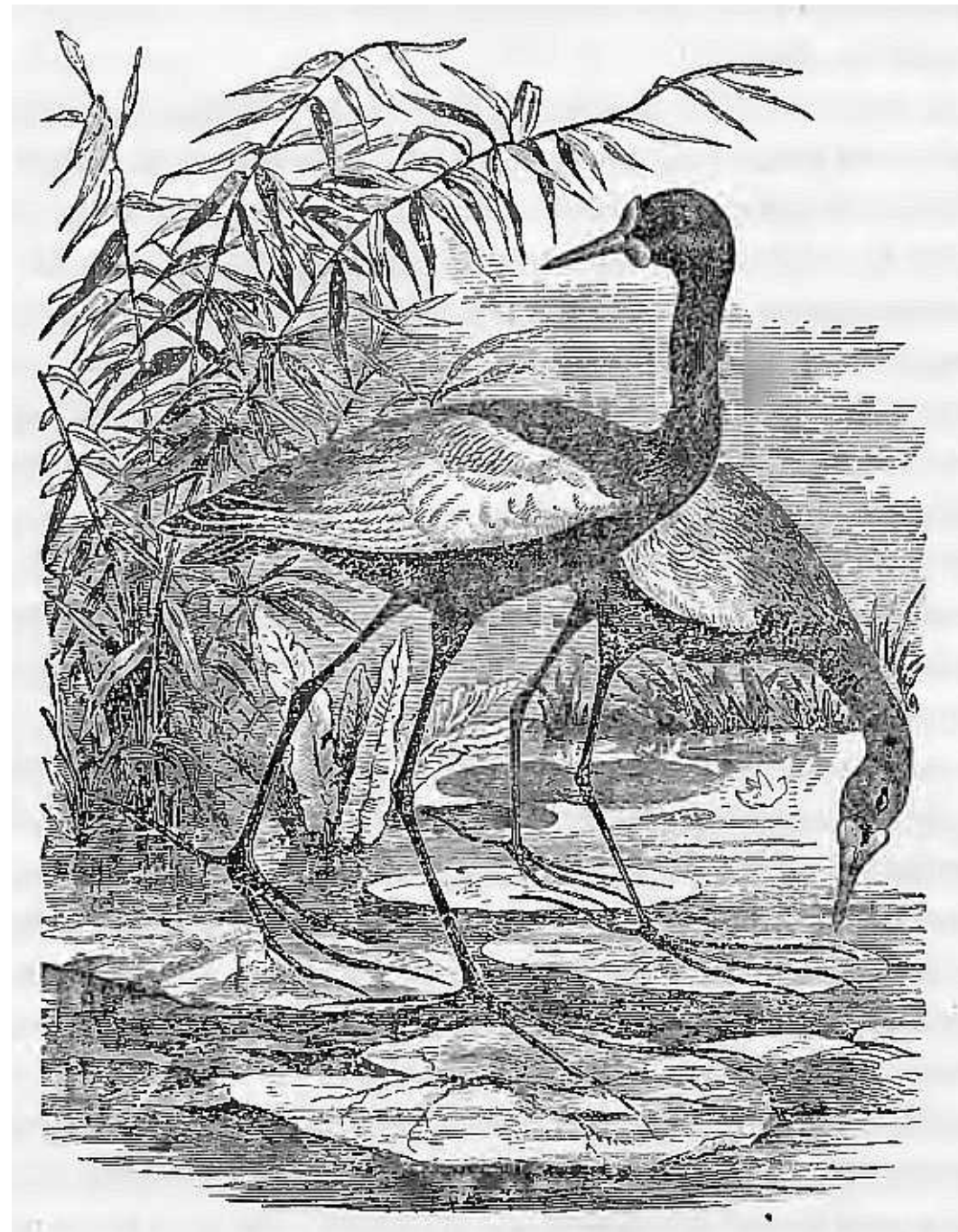
“It is one,” rejoined the *tapuyo*. “A real *lagoa*. Water in it at all seasons,—both *echenté* and *vasanté*,—only ’tis fallen now from the flood. There are no *campos* in this part of the country; and if it wasn’t a *lagoa*, there would be trees standing out of it. But I see a surer sign,—the *piosocas*.”

The speaker pointed to two dark objects at some distance off, that had not hitherto been observed by any of the party. On more careful scrutiny, they proved to be birds,—large, but of slender shape, and bearing some resemblance to a brace of cranes or curlews. They were of dark colour, rufous on the wings, with a green iridescence that glistened brightly under the beams of the setting sun.

They were near enough to enable the spectators to distinguish several peculiarities in their structure; among others a singular leathery appendage at the base of the beak, stout, spinous processes or “spurs” on the wing shoulders, very long, slender legs, and *tarsi* of immense length, radiating outward from their shank, like four pointed stare, spread horizontally on the surface of the water.

What struck the spectators, not only with surprise, but appeared unaccountable, was the fact that these birds seen upon the water were not seated as if swimming or afloat; but standing erect upon their long tarsi and toes, which apparently spread upon the surface, as if upon ice!

Stranger still, while they were being watched, both were seen to forsake their statue-like attitude, and move first toward each other, and then apart again, running to and fro as if upon a solid footing! What could it all mean? Munday was asked for the explanation. Were they walking upon the water?



No. There was a water plant under their feet—a big lily, with a leaf several feet in diameter, that floated on the surface—sufficient to carry the weight of the biggest bird. That was what was supporting the piosocas.

On scanning the surface more carefully, they could distinguish the big lily, and its leaf with a turned-up edge resembling the rim of a Chinese gong, or a huge frying-pan. They became acquainted for the first time with that gigantic lily, which has been entitled “the Royal Victoria,”

and the discoverer of which was knighted for his flattery.

“’Tis the *furno de piosoca*,” said Munday, continuing his explanation. “It is called so, because, as you see, it’s like the oven on which we bake our Cassava; and because it is the favourite roost of the piosoca.”

By “piosoca” the Indian meant the singular *jacana* of the family *Palamedeidae*, of which there are species both in Africa and America.

The birds had fortunately made their appearance at a crisis when the spectators required something to abstract their thoughts from the cares that encompassed them, and so much were they engrossed by the curious spectacle, that they did not perceive the *tapuyo*, as he let himself gently down into the water, and swam off under the drooping branches of the trees, pausing at a point opposite to where the piosocas were at play.

From this point they could not have perceived him, as he had dived under water, and did not come up again until the slender shanks of a jacana, enveloped in the lily’s soft leaf, were clutched by his sinewy fingers, and the bird with a shrill scream was seen fluttering on the water, while its terrified mate soared shrieking into the air.

The party in the tree-tops were at first amazed. They saw a dark, round object close to the struggling jacana, that resembled the head of a human being, whose body was under water! It was not till it had come nearer, the bird still keeping it close company, that they identified the head, with its copper-coloured face, now turned towards them, as belonging to their guide and companion,—Munday. A fire was soon blazing in the branches, and instead of going to sleep upon a supper of raw sapucayas, our adventurers sought repose after a hearty meal made upon roast jacana!

Chapter Forty Six.

A Companion Left Behind.

By daybreak they were once more in the water, each provided with a complete set of swimming-shells. As the voyage was more extensive, and altogether more perilous, the greatest pains was taken to have the swimming apparatus as perfect as possible. Any flaw, such as a weak place in the waist-belts or shoulder-straps, or the smallest crevice that would admit water into one of the shells, might be followed by serious consequences, perhaps even drowning. Besides making the new belts, therefore, Munday had mended the old ones, giving all the shells an additional coating of caoutchouc, and strengthening the sipos that attached them to one another.

Just as the sun's disk was seen above the tree-tops that skirted the *lagoa* on the east, our adventurers embarked on their aquatic expedition. But it could not be said that they started in high spirits. They knew not what was to be the sequel of their singular undertaking. Where their journey was to end, or whether its end might not be for some of their number—if not all of them—the bottom of the *Gapo*.

Indeed, the Indian, to whom they all looked for encouragement as well as guidance, was himself not very sanguine of success. He did not say so, but for all that Trevannion, who had kept interrogating him at intervals while they were preparing to start, had become impressed with this belief. As the Mundurucú persisted in counselling the expedition, he did not urge any further opposition, and under the auspices of a glorious tropical sunrise they committed themselves to the open waters of the *lagoa*.

At the very start there occurred a somewhat ominous accident. As the *coaita* would have been a cumbersome companion for any of the swimmers to carry, it was decided that the creature should be left behind. Unpleasant as it was to part with a pet so long in the company of the *galatea's* crew, there was no alternative but to abandon it.

Tipperary Tom, notwithstanding his attachment toward it, or rather its attachment toward him, was but too willing to assent to the separation. He had a vivid recollection of his former entanglement, and the risk he had run of being either drowned in the *Gapo*, or strangled by the *coaita's* tail; and with this remembrance still fresh before his fancy, he had taken the precaution at this new start to steal silently off from the trees, among the foremost of the swimmers. Everybody in fact had got off, before the *coaita* was aware of their intention to abandon it, and to such a distance that by no leap could it alight upon anybody's shoulders. On perceiving that it was left behind, it set up a series of cries, painfully plaintive, but loud enough to have been heard almost to the limits of the *lagoa*.

A similar desertion of the macaw was evidently intended, to which no one had given a thought, although it was Rosa's pet. The ouistiti had been provided with a free passage upon the shoulders of the young *Paraense*. But the huge parrot was not to be left behind in this free and easy fashion. It was not so helpless as the *coaita*. It possessed a pair of strong wings, which, when strongly and boldly spread, could carry it clear across the *lagoa*. Conscious of this

superior power, it did not stay long upon the trees, to mingle its chattering with the screams of the coaita. Before the swimmers had made a hundred strokes, the macaw mounted into the air, flew for a while hoveringly above them, as if selecting its perch, and then dropped upon the negro's head, burying its claws in his tangled hair.

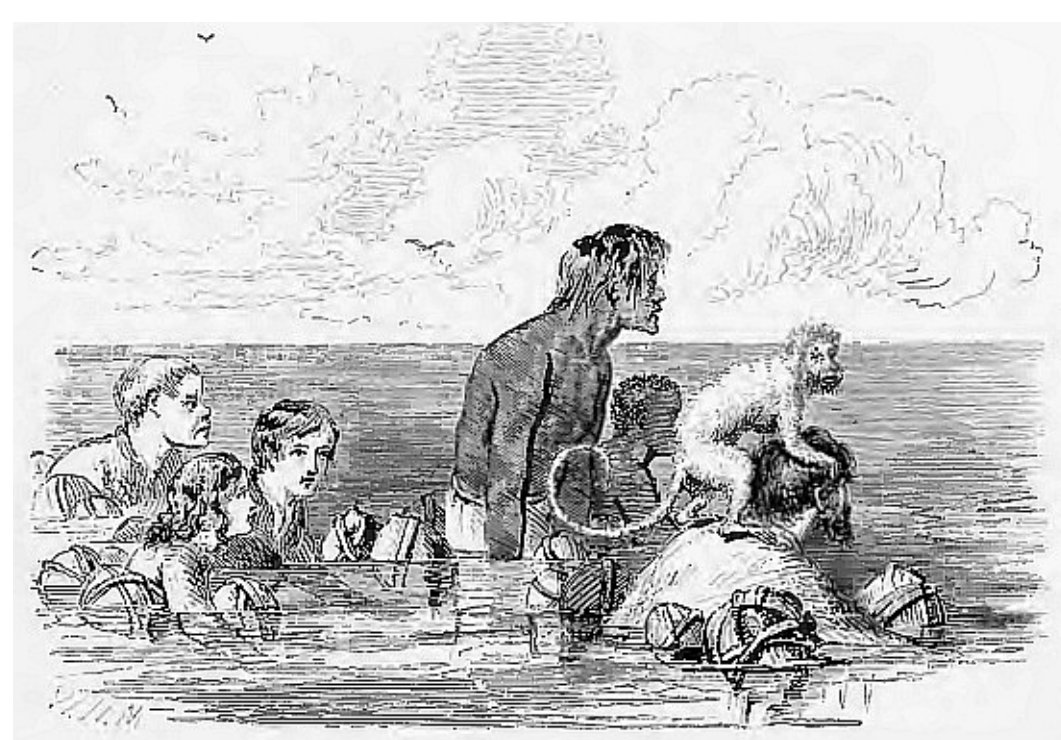
Chapter Forty Seven.

The Guide Abandoned.

As the swimmers proceeded, their hopes grew brighter. They saw that they were able to make good headway through the water; and in less than an hour they were a full mile distant from their point of departure. At this rate they should be on the other side of the lagoon before sunset, if their strength would only hold out. The voyage promised to be prosperous; and joy sat upon their countenances.

Shortly after there came a change. A cloud was seen stealing over the brow of the Mundurucú, which was the cue for every other to exhibit a similar shadowing. Trevannion kept scanning the countenance of the tapuyo to ascertain the cause of his disquietude. He made no enquiry; but he could tell by the behaviour of the Indian that there, was trouble on his mind. At intervals he elevated his head above the water, and looked back over his shoulder, as if seeking behind him for the cause of his anxiety. As they swam on farther, Munday's countenance lost nothing of its anxious cast, while his turnings and backward glances became more frequent. Trevannion also looked back, though only to ascertain the meaning of the tapuyo's manoeuvres. He could see nothing to account for it,—nothing but the tree-tops from which they had parted, and these every moment becoming less conspicuous. Though the patron did not perceive it, this was just what was causing the tapuyo's apprehensive looks. The sinking of the trees was the very thing that was producing his despondency.

Stimulated less by curiosity than alarm, Trevannion could keep silent no longer. "Why do you look back, Munday?" he inquired. "Is there any danger in that direction? Have you a fear that we shall be followed? I can see nothing except the tree-tops, and them scarcely at this moment."



“That’s the danger. We shall soon lose sight of them altogether; and then—”

“What then?”

“Then—I confess, patron, I am puzzled. I did not think of it before we took to the water.”

“O, I see what you mean. You’ve been hitherto guiding our course by the trees from which we parted. When they are no longer in view we shall have nothing to steer by?”

“It is true. The Great Spirit only can guide us then!” The Mundurucú evidently felt more than chagrin that he had expressed himself so confidently about their being able to cross the lagoon. He had only taken into consideration the circumstance of their being able to swim, without ever thinking of the chance of their losing the way. The trees sinking gradually to the horizon first admonished him; and as he continued to swim farther into the clear water, he became convinced that such mischance was not only possible, but too probable. With a sort of despairing effort he kept on with even more energy than before, as if trying how far he could follow a straight line without depending on any object to pilot him.

After proceeding thus for two or three hundred yards, he once more raised his chin to his shoulder and looked back. The tree-tops were barely visible; but he was satisfied on perceiving that the one from which they had started rose up directly opposite to him, thus proving that in his trial stretch he had gone in a straight line, inspiring him with the hope of being able to continue it to the opposite side. With renewed confidence he kept on, after uttering a few phrases of cheer to the others.

Another stretch of about three hundred yards was passed through in silence, and without any incident to interrupt the progress of the swimmers. Then all came to a pause, seeing their conductor, as before, suspend his stroke, and again make a rearward reconnoissance. This time he did not appear so well satisfied, until he had raised his head high over the surface, which he accomplished by standing erect, and beating the water with his palms downward, when his confidence was again refreshed, and he started forward once more.

At the next stopping-place, instead of raising himself once into the standing poise, he did so several times in succession, each time sinking down again with an exclamation of disappointment. He could not see the trees, even at the utmost stretch of his neck. With a grunt that seemed to signify his assent to the abandoning of their guidance, he again laid himself along the water, and continued in the direction he had been already following; but not before assuring himself that he was on the right course, which fortunately he was still able to do by noting the relative positions of the others.

At starting away from this, which he intended should be their last stopping-place, he delivered a series of admonitions intended for every swimmer. They were to keep their places, that is, their relative positions to him and one another, as nearly as might be; they were to swim gently and slowly, according to the example he should set them, so that they might not become fatigued and require to pause for rest; and, above all, they were not to bother him by putting questions, but were, in short, to proceed in perfect silence. He did not condescend to explain these strange injunctions further than by telling them that, if they were not followed, and to the letter, neither he nor they might ever climb into another tree-top!

It is needless to say that, after such an intimation, his orders received implicit obedience; and those to whom he had given them swam onward after him as silently as so many fishes. The only sound heard was the monotonous sighing of the water, seething against the hollow sapucaya-shells, now and then varied by the scream of the *caracara* eagle, as it poised itself for a second over their heads, in surprise at the singular cohort of aquatic creatures moving so mysteriously through the lagoons.

Chapter Forty Eight.

Round and Round.

For a full hour our adventurers preserved, not only their relative positions, but also the silence that had been enjoined upon them. None of them spoke, even when a dead guariba—that had been drowned, perhaps, by attempting a leap too great for its strength and agility—came drifting along among them. Not one of them took any notice of it except the ouistiti upon the shoulders of Richard Trevannion. This diminutive quadrumanous specimen, on recognising the body of one of its big kinsmen, entered upon a series of chatterings and squeakings, trembling all the while as if suddenly awakened to the consciousness that it was itself in danger of terminating its existence in a similar manner.

Its cries were not heeded. Munday's admonition had been delivered in a tone too serious to be disregarded; and the ouistiti was permitted to utter its plaint, without a single word being addressed to it, either of chiding or consolation. Tranquillity was at length restored, for the little ape, seeing that no notice was taken of it, desisted from its noisy demonstrations, and once more the swimmers proceeded in silence.

Half an hour or so might have elapsed before this silence received a second interruption. It again came in the voice of the ouistiti; which, rearing itself on its tiny hind-legs, having the shoulders of the Paraense for a support, craning its head outward over the water, commenced repeating its cries of alarm. In seeking for an explanation of this conduct, they contented themselves with watching the movements of the alarmist, and by turning their eyes towards the object which appeared to attract the ouistiti and cause it such evident alarm. Each buoyed himself up to get a good view; and each, as he did so, saw scarce ten paces ahead of him the carcass of a guariba! It was drifting towards them in the same manner as the one they had already met; and before any of them thought of exchanging speech, it was bobbing about in their midst.

The reflection that occurred to the swimmers was, that there had been a general drowning among the guaribas somewhere on the shores of the lagoon: perhaps a tribe had got into some isolated tree, where their retreat had been cut off by the inundation. Had the tapuyo not been of the party, this theory might have satisfied all hands, and the journey would have been continued, instead of being suddenly interrupted by the tapuyo himself. He was not so easily deceived. On passing the first guariba, although he had said nothing, he had carefully noted the peculiarities of the carcass; and as soon as he swam within distinguishing distance of the second guariba, he saw that the pair were identical. In other words, our adventurers had for the second time encountered the same unfortunate ape.

There could be but one conclusion. The carcass could not have changed its course, unless by the shifting of the wind, or the current of the water. But neither would have explained that second *rencontre*. It was only intelligible upon the supposition that the swimmers had been going round and round and returning on their own track!

Chapter Forty Nine.

Going by Guess.

Although their guide was the first to discover it, he did not attempt to conceal the dilemma into which he had been instrumental in leading them. "'Tis true, patron!" he said, addressing himself to Trevannion, and no longer requiring compliance with his former regulations. "We have gone astray. That's the same monkey we met before; so you see we're back where we were a half-hour ago. *Pa terra!* It's crooked luck, patron; but I suppose the Great Spirit wills it so!"

Trevannion, confounded, made scarcely any reply.

"We mustn't remain here anyhow," pursued the Indian. "We must try to get to the trees somewhere,—no matter where."

"Surely," said the ex-miner, "we can accomplish that?"

"I hope so," was the reply of the tapuyo, given with no great confidence.

Trevannion reflected that they had been *swimming in a circle*. Should this occur again,—and there was every possibility of such a thing,—the desired end might not be so easy of accomplishment.

For some minutes speculation was suspended. The guide was engaged in action. Like a water-spaniel in search of a winged wild-duck, he repeatedly reared himself above the surface, casting glances of interrogation to every quarter of the compass. Like the same spaniel, when convinced that the wounded bird has escaped him, he at length desisted from these idle efforts; and, laying his body along the water, prepared to swim disappointedly to the shore.

With something more than disappointment—something more than chagrin—did Munday commence retreating from the lagoon. As he called upon his companions to follow him, there was a tremor in his voice, and an irresolution in his stroke perceptible to the least observant of them; and the fact of his having shouldered the dead guariba, after first making inspection to see that it was fit for food, was proof of his entertaining some suspicion that their voyage might be a long one. No one questioned him; for notwithstanding the failure of his promise to guide them straight across the lagoon, they still relied upon him. On whom or what else could they rely?

After proceeding a considerable distance, he came to a pause, once more stood up in the water, and, turning as upon a pivot, scanned the circle of the horizon. Satisfied that there was not a tree-top within view, he swam onward as before. Could he have ensured keeping a straight course, no great danger need have been apprehended. The lagoon might be ten miles wide; or, if twenty, it could not so materially affect the result. Swim as slowly as they might, a score of hours would see them on its shore,—whether this was the spray of another submerged forest, or the true *terra firma*. There was no danger of their going to the bottom, for their swimming-belts secured them against that. There was no danger of their suffering from

thirst,—the contingency most dreaded by the castaway at sea, and the strayed traveller in the desert,—of fresh water they had a surfeit. Nor did hunger dismay them. Since eating the jacana, they had set forth upon a breakfast of Brazil-nuts,—a food which, from its oily nature, may be said to combine both animal and vegetable substance. Moreover, they were now no longer unprovided against a future emergency: since their guide carried upon his shoulders the carcass of the guariba.

Their real danger lay in their deviating from a right line: for who could swim straight, with his eyes on a level with the surface of the water, and nothing to direct his course, neither tree, nor rock, nor star, nor signal of any kind? The tapuyo knew this. So did they all. Even the children could tell that they were no longer guided, but going by guess-work. It was no longer a question of getting *across* the lagoon, but *out* of it. The unsteady movements of their guide, instead of allaying their fears, produced the contrary effect, and the disconsolate expression on his countenance was evidence that he was under much apprehension.

For over an hour this uncertainty continued. The swimmers, one and all, were beginning to give way to serious alarm. To say nothing of reaching land, they might never more set eyes upon the submerged forest. They might swim round and round, as in the vortex of Charybdis, until sheer exhaustion should reduce them utterly. In due time hunger must overtake them; and a lingering death by starvation might be their destiny. When faint from want of food and unable to defend themselves, they would be attacked by predatory creatures dwelling in the water, while birds of prey would assail them from the air. Already could they fancy that the cry of the caracara sounded more spiteful than was its wont; and exultingly, as if the base bird foreboded for them a tragical ending.

More than twenty times had the tapuyo repeated his inspection of the horizon, without seeing aught to cheer him. They had been many hours in the water, and supposed it to be about noon. They could only conjecture as to the time, for the sun was not visible. At an early hour in the morning—almost as they started—the sky had become overcast with a sheet of leaden grey, concealing the sun's disk from their sight. This circumstance had caused some discouragement; but for it they might long since have escaped from their dilemma, as the golden luminary, while low down, would have served them as a guide.

Strange to say, at that hour when it was no longer of any concern to them, the sky became suddenly clear, and the sun shone forth with burning brilliance. But his orb was now in the zenith, and of no service to point out the quarter of the compass. Within the equatorial zone, north, south, east, and west were all alike to him at that season of the year and that hour of the day. If they could but have the direction of one of these points, all would have been well. But the sun gave no sign.

For all that, the Indian hailed his appearance with a grunt of satisfaction, while a change came over his countenance that could scarce be caused by the mere brightening of the sky. Something more than cheerfulness declared itself in his dark features,—an expression of renewed hope.

"If the sun keep on to show," said he, in answer to the questioning of Trevannion, "it will be all right for us. Now it's no good. In an hour from now he'll make some shadow. Then we shall swim as straight as can be, never fear, patron! we shall get out of this scrape before night,—"

never fear!"

These cheering words were welcome, and produced universal joy where but the moment before all was gloom.

"I think, patron," continued the tapuyo. "We may as well stop swimming for a while, till we see which way the sun goes. Then we can make a fresh start. If we keep on now, we may be only making way in the wrong direction."

The tired swimmers were only too ready to yield compliance to this bit of advice. The Mundurucú made one more endeavour to catch sight of the tree-tops, and, being still unsuccessful, resigned himself to inactivity, and along with the rest lay motionless upon the water.



Chapter Fifty.

Guided by a Shadow.

In this way about an hour was spent; though by no means in solemn silence. Perfectly at ease, so far as physical comfort was concerned, upon their liquid couch the swimmers could converse, as if stretched upon a carpet of meadow-grass; and they passed their time in discussing the chances of their ultimate escape from that cruel situation, to which an unlucky accident had consigned them. They were not altogether relieved from apprehension as to their present predicament. If the sky should become again overcast, they would be worse off than ever, since there was the loss of time to be considered. All were constantly turning their eyes upwards, and scanning the firmament, to see if there were any signs of fresh clouds.

Munday looked towards the zenith with a different design. He was watching for the sun to decline. In due time his watchfulness was rewarded; not so much by observation of the sun itself, as by a contrivance which declared the course of the luminary, long before it could have been detected by the eye.

Having cautioned the others to keep still, so that there should be no disturbance in the water,—otherwise perfectly tranquil,—he held his knife in such a way that the blade stood up straight above the surface. Taking care to keep it in the exact perpendicular, he watched with earnest eye, as a philosopher watches the effect of some chemical combination. In a short time he was gratified by observing a *shadow*. The blade, well balanced, cast an oblique reflection on the water; at first, slight, but gradually becoming more elongated, as the experiment proceeded.

Becoming at length convinced that he knew west from east, the tapuyo restored his knife to its place, and, calling to his companions to follow him, he struck off in the direction pointed out to him by the shadow of the steel. This would take the swimmers in an easterly direction; but it mattered not what direction so long as it carried them out of the lagoon. As they proceeded onward, the guide occasionally assured himself of keeping the same course, by repeating the experiment with his knife; but after a time he no longer needed to consult his queer sun-dial, having discovered a surer guide in the spray of the forest, which at length loomed up along the line of the horizon.

It was close upon sunset when they swam in among the drooping branches, and once more, with dripping skins, climbed up into the tops of the trees. Had it not been that they were glad to get to any port, they might have felt chagrin on discovering that chance had directed them to the very same roost where they had perched on the preceding night.

The drowned guariba which Munday had carried from the middle of the lagoon was roasted, and furnished their evening meal; and the epicure who would turn up his nose at such a viand has never tasted food under the shadow of an Amazonian forest.

Chapter Fifty One.

Around the Edge.

Discouraged by their failure, our adventurers remained upon their perch till nearly noon of the next day, in listless lassitude. The exertions of the preceding day had produced a weariness that required more than a night's rest, for not only their bodies, but their spirits were under the influence of their long toil, until their state of mind bordered upon despondency. As the hours wore on, and their fatigue was gradually relieved by rest, their spirits rose in like proportion; and before the sun had reached its meridian, the instinctive desire of life sprang up within their bosoms, and once more they began to consider what steps should be taken to prolong it.

Should they make another attempt to cross the lagoon by swimming? What chance would there be of steering in the right course, any more than upon the day before? They were just as likely to go astray a second time, and perhaps with a less fortunate *finale*. If again lost amidst the waste of waters, they might not be able to get sight of the tree-tops, but swim on in circles or crooked turnings, until death, arising from sheer exhaustion, or want of food, should complete their misery.

Even the Mundurucú no longer urged the course in which he had formerly expressed such confidence; and for some time he declined giving any advice whatever,—his silence and his gloomy looks showing that he felt humiliated by the failure of his plan. No one thought of reproaching him; for although their faith in his power was not quite so strong as it had hitherto been, there was yet confidence in his superior skill. Had they been castaways from a ship, escaping in an open boat, or on some raft or spar, in the middle of the great ocean, their cook would doubtless have disputed his right to remain master. But in the midst of that strange inland sea, whose shores and islands consisted only of tree-tops, the Mozambique acknowledged himself to be no more than a novice.

Trevannion himself took the lead in suggesting the next plan. It was not intended to give up the idea of crossing the lagoon. It was a general belief that on the other side there must be land; and therefore to reach it became the paramount thought of the party. To go around it, by keeping upon the trees, was clearly out of the question. Even had these continued all the way with interlacing branches, still the journey would have been one that apes alone could perform. It would have occupied days, weeks, perhaps a month; and what certainty was there of finding food for such a length of time? Still, if they could not travel upon the tree-tops, what was to hinder them from going *under* them? Why should they not use the forest to steer by,—swimming along the edge of the trees, and making use of them at intervals for rest, and for a sleeping-place during the night?

The idea was excellent, and, coming from Trevannion himself, was of course approved without one opposing voice. Even the Indian acknowledged that it was a sagacious design, and superior to his own. Fortunately it required but slight preparation for trial, and as the sun shone down from the zenith they forsook their resting-place, and once more betook themselves to the water, with their swimming-belts carefully adjusted again about them.

Chapter Fifty Two.

The Massaranduba.

They advanced at the rate of about a mile an hour. Could they have kept on steadily, this would have given them ten or twelve miles a day, and two or three days might have brought them to the other side of the lagoon. It was necessary, however, that they should stop at intervals to obtain rest; and their progress was further impeded by the piosoca plants,—the huge water-lilies already described,—whose broad, circular leaves, lying along the surface like gigantic frying-pans, came directly in their course. Here and there they had to traverse a tract of these lilies several acres in extent, where the rims of the rounded leaves almost touched each other; and the thick succulent stalks formed a tangle underneath, through which it was very difficult for a swimmer to make way. More than once they were compelled to go around these watery gardens for a distance of many hundreds of yards, but thus shortening the journey made in the right direction.

On account of such impediments they had not gone more than three miles from their point of starting, when the Mundurucú recommended a halt for the night, although it could not have been later than six o'clock, as could be told by the sun, still high up in the heavens.

"I am hungry, patron," said the Indian at last; "so are you all. We must have some supper, else how can we go on?"

"Supper!" echoed Trevannion. "Yes, sure enough, we are hungry. I knew that an hour ago. But upon what do you propose to sup? I see nothing but trees with plenty of leaves, but no fruit. We cannot live upon leaves like the sloth. We must be starving before we take to that."

"We shall sup upon milk, master, if you don't object to our making a camping-place close by."

"Milk!" exclaimed Tom. "What div yez say, Misther Munday? Div yez mane milk? Och! don't be after temptin' wan's stomach with a dilicacy that can't be obtained in this land av wather! Shure now we're not only a hundred modes from the tail av a cow, but a thousand, may be, from that same."

"You may be wrong there," interrupted the Paraense. "There are cows in the Gapo, as well as upon land. You have seen them yourself as we came down the river?"

"Troth, yis,—if yez mane the fish-cow," (the Irishman alluded to the *Vaca marina*, or manatee, —the *peixe-boi* or fish-cow of the Portuguese, several species of which inhabit the Amazon waters). "But shure the great brute could not be milked, if we did cotch wan av them; an' if we did we should not take the throuble, when by sthrippin' the skin av her carcass we'd get somethin' far betther for our suppers, in the shape av a fat steak."

"Yonder is what the Mundurucú means!" said the guide. "Yonder stands the cow that can supply us with milk for our supper,—ay, and with bread too to go along with it; don't you see the *Massaranduba*?"

At first they could see nothing that particularly claimed attention. But by following the instructions of the guide, and raising their heads a little, they at length caught sight of a tree, standing at some distance from the forest edge, and so far overtopping the others as to appear like a giant among pygmies. It was in reality a vegetable giant,—the great massaranduba of the Amazon,—one of the most remarkable trees to be found even in a forest where more strange species abound than in any other part of the world. To Tom and some others of the party the words of the Mundurucú were still a mystery. How was a tree to supply them with a supper of bread and milk?

Trevannion and Richard required no further explanation. The former had heard of this singular tree; the latter had seen it,—nay, more, had drank of its milk, and eaten of its fruit. It was with great joy the young Paraense now looked upon its soaring leafy top, as it not only reminded him of a spectacle he had often observed in the woods skirting the suburbs of his native city, but promised, as the tapuyo had declared, to relieve the pangs of hunger, that had become agonisingly keen.

Chapter Fifty Three.

A Vegetable Cow.

The tree which had thus determined them to discontinue their journey, and which was to furnish them with lodgings for the night, was the famous *palo de vaca*, or “cow-tree” of South America, known also as the *arbol de leche*, or “milk-tree.” It has been described by Humboldt under the name *Galactodendron*, but later botanical writers, not contented with the very appropriate title given to it by the great student of Nature, have styled it *Brosium*. It belongs to the natural order of the *Atrocarpads*, which, by what might appear a curious coincidence, includes also the celebrated breadfruit. What may seem stranger still, the equally famous upas-tree of Java is a scion of the same stock, an *atrocarpad*! Therefore, just as in one family there are good boys and bad boys, (it is to be hoped there are none of the latter in yours,) so in the family of the *atrocarpads* there are trees producing food and drink both wholesome to the body and delicious to the palate, while there are others in whose sap, flowers, and fruit are concealed the most virulent of poisons.

The massaranduba is not the only species known as *palo de vaca*, or cow-tree. There are many others so called, whose sap is of a milky nature. Some yield a milk that is pleasant to the taste and highly nutritious, of which the “hya-hya” (*Tabernaemontana utibis*), another South American tree, is the most conspicuous. This last belongs to the order of the *Apocyanae*, or dog-banes, while still another order, the *Sapotacae*, includes among its genera several species of cow-tree. The massaranduba itself was formerly classed among the *Sapotads*.

It is one of the largest trees of the Amazonian forest, frequently found two hundred feet in height, towering above the other trees, with a top resembling an immense vegetable dome. Logs one hundred feet long, without a branch, have often been hewn out of its trunk, ready for the saw-mill. Its timber is very hard and fine grained, and will stand the weather better than most other South American trees; but it cannot be procured in any great quantity, because, like many other trees of the Amazon, it is of a solitary habit, only two or three, or at most half a dozen, growing within the circuit of a mile.

It is easily distinguished from trees of other genera by its reddish, ragged bark, which is deeply furrowed, and from a decoction of which the Indians prepare a dye of a dark red colour. The fruit, about the size of an apple, is full of a rich juicy pulp, exceedingly agreeable to the taste, and much relished. This is the bread which the Mundurucú hoped to provide for the supper of his half-famished companions.

But the most singular, as well as the most important, product of the massaranduba is its milky juice. This is obtained by making an incision in the bark, when the white sap flows forth in a copious stream, soon filling a calabash or other vessel held under it. On first escaping from the tree it is of the colour and about the consistency of rich cream, and, but for a slightly balsamic odour might be mistaken for the genuine produce of the dairy. After a short exposure to the air it curdles, a thready substance forming upon the surface, resembling cheese, and so called by the natives. When diluted with water, the coagulation does not so rapidly take place; and it is usually treated in this manner, besides being strained, before it is brought to the table. The

natives use it by soaking their *farinha* or maize-bread with the sap, and it is also used as cream in tea, chocolate, and coffee, many people preferring it on account of the balsamic flavour which it imparts to these beverages.

The milk of the massaranduba is in great demand throughout all the district where the tree is found, both in the Spanish and Portuguese territories of tropical South America. In Venezuela it is extensively used by the negroes, and it has been remarked that these people grow fatter during the season of the year when the *palo de vaca* is plenty. Certain it is that no ill effects have been known to result from a free use of it; and the vegetable cow cannot be regarded otherwise than as one of the most singular and interesting productions of beneficent Nature.

Chapter Fifty Four.

A Milk Supper.

It was some time before they swam under the massaranduba's wide-spreading branches, as it did not stand on the edge of the forest, and for a short time after entering among the other trees it was out of sight. The instincts of the Indian, however, directed him, and in due time it again came before their eyes, its rough reddish trunk rising out of the water like a vast ragged column.

As might have been expected, its huge limbs were laden with parasites, trailing down to the surface of the water. By these they found no difficulty in making an ascent, and were soon safely installed; its huge coreaceous leaves of oblong form and pointed at the tops, many of them nearly a foot in length, forming a shade against the fervent rays of the sun, still several degrees above the horizon.

As the Indian had anticipated, the tree was in full bearing, and ere long a number of its apples were plucked, and refreshing the parched palates that would have pronounced them exquisite had they been even less delicious than they were. Munday made no stay even to taste the fruit. He was determined on giving his companions the still rarer treat he had promised them, a supper of milk; and not until he had made some half-dozen notches with his knife, and placed under each a sapucaya-shell detached from the swimming-belts, did he cease his exertions.

They had not long to wait. The vegetable cow proved a free milker, and in twenty minutes each of the party had a pericarp in hand full of delicious cream, which needed no sugar to make it palatable. They did not stay to inquire how many quarts their new cow could give. Enough for them to know that there was sufficient to satisfy the appetites of all for that night.

When, after supper, the conversation naturally turned to the peculiarities of this remarkable tree, many other facts were elicited in regard to its useful qualities. Richard told them that in Pará it was well-known, its fruit and milk being sold in the streets by the negro market-women, and much relished by all classes of the inhabitants of that city; that its sap was used by the Paraense joiners in the place of glue, to which it was equal, if not superior, guitars, violins, and broken dishes being put together with it in the most effective manner, its tenacity holding against both heat and dampness. Another curious fact was, that the sap continues to run long after the tree has been felled: that even the logs lying in the yard of a saw-mill have been known to yield for weeks, even months, the supply required by the sawyers for creaming their coffee!

And now our adventurers, admonished by the setting of the sun, were about stretching themselves along the branches, with the intention of going to sleep. But they were not to retire without an incident, though fortunately it was such as to add to the cheerfulness lately inspiring the spirits of all, even to the macaw and little monkey, both of whom had amply regaled themselves upon the succulent fruits of the massaranduba. The great ape, again left behind, had been altogether forgotten. No one of the party was thinking of it; or, if any one was, it was only with a very subdued regret. All knew that the coaita could take care of itself, and under all

circumstances it would be safe enough. For all this, they would have been very glad still to have kept it in their company, had that been possible; and all of them were glad when a loud chattering at no great distance was recognised as the salutation of their old acquaintance, the coaita. Directly after, the animal itself was seen springing from tree to tree, until by a last long leap it lodged itself on the branches of the massaranduba, and was soon after seated upon the shoulders of Tipperary Tom.

While the swimmers were proceeding by slow stages, the ape had kept them company among the tops of the adjacent trees; and, but for its being delayed by having to make the circuit around the various little bays, it might have been astride the vegetable cow long before the swimmers themselves. Coming late, it was not the less welcome, and before going to sleep it was furnished with a fruit supper, and received a series of caresses from Tom, that in some measure consoled it for his double desertion.



Chapter Fifty Five.

Only a Dead-Wood.

Despite the coarse netting of the hammocks on which they were constrained to pass the night, our adventurers slept better than was their wont, from a certain feeling of security,—a confidence that God had not forgotten them. He who could give them food in the forest could also guide them out of the labyrinth into which their own negligence had led them.

A prayer to Him preceded their breakfast on the cream of the cow-tree, and with another they launched themselves upon their strings of shells, with renewed confidence, and proceeded along the curving selvage of the trees. As before, they found their progress impeded by the “ovens” of the piosoca; and despite their utmost exertions, at noon they had made scarce three miles from their starting-point, for the gigantic tree that had sheltered them was full in sight, and even at sunset they could not have been more than six miles from it.

In the forest about them there appeared no resting-place for the night. The trees stood closely together, but without any interlacing of branches, or large horizontal limbs upon which they might seek repose. For a time it appeared as if they would have to spend the night upon the water. This was a grave consideration, and the guide knew it. With their bodies immersed during the midnight hours,—chill even within the tropics,—the consequences might be serious, perhaps fatal. One way or another a lodgement must be obtained among the tree-tops. It was obtained, but after much difficulty. The climbing to it was a severe struggle, and the seat was of the most uncomfortable kind. There was no supper, or comfort of any kind.

With the earliest appearance of day they were all once more in the water, and slowly pursuing their weary way. Now slower than ever, for in proportion to their constantly decreasing strength the obstruction from the piosocas appeared to increase. The lagoon, or at least its border, had become a labyrinth of lilies.

While thus contending against adverse circumstances, an object came under their eyes that caused a temporary abstraction from their misery. Something strange was lying along the water at the distance of about a quarter of a mile from them. It appeared to be some ten or twelve yards in length, and stood quite high above the surface. It was of a dark brown colour, and presented something the appearance of a bank of dried mud, with some pieces of stout stakes projecting upward. Could it be this? Was it a bank or spit of land?

The hearts of the swimmers leaped as this thought, inspired by their wishes, came into every mind. If land, it could be only an islet, for there was water all around it,—that they could perceive. But if so, an islet, if no bigger than a barn-door, would still be land, and therefore welcome. They might stretch their limbs upon it, and obtain a good night's rest, which they had not done since the wreck of the galatea. Besides an islet ever so small—if only a sand-bar or bank of mud—would be a sort of evidence that the real dry land was not far off.

The dark form at first sight appeared to be close in to the trees, but Munday, standing up in the water, pronounced it to be at some distance from them,—between fifty and a hundred yards.

As it was evident that the trees themselves were up to their necks in water, it could hardly be an island. Still there might be some elevated spot, a ridge or mound, that overtopped the inundation. Buoyed up by this hope, the swimmers kept on towards it, every eye scanning intently its outlines in order to make out its real character. All at once the projections which they had taken for stakes disappeared from the supposed spot of mud. They had assumed the shape of large wading birds of dark plumage, which, having spread their long, triangular wings, were now hovering above the heads of the swimmers, by their cries proclaiming that they were more astonished at the latter than they could possibly be at them.

It was not until they had arrived within a hundred yards of the object that its true character was declared. "*Pa Terra!*" Munday cried, in a sonorous and somewhat sorrowful voice, as he sank despairingly upon his breast;—"no island,—no bank,—no land of any kind. *Only a dead-wood!*"

"A dead-wood!" repeated the patron, not comprehending what he meant, and fancying from the chagrined air of the Indian that there might be mischief in the thing.

"That's all, master. The carcass of an old *Manguba*, that's been long since stripped of his limbs, and has been carried here upon the current of the Gapo; don't you see his huge shoulders rising above the water?"

Richard proceeded to explain the Indian's meaning. "The trunk of a dead tree, uncle. It's the silk-cotton-tree, or manguba, as Munday calls it. I can tell that by its floating so lightly on the water. It appears to be anchored, though; or perhaps it is moored among the stalks of the piosocas."

The explanation was interrupted by a shout from the Indian, whose countenance had all at once assumed an expression of cheerfulness,—almost joy. The others, as they turned their eyes upon him, were surprised at the sudden change, for but a moment before they had noticed his despairing look.

"The Mundurucú must be mad, patron," he shouted. "Where is his head? Gone down to the bottom of the Gapo along with the galatea!"

"What's the matter?" inquired Tom, brightening up as he beheld the joyful aspect of the Indian. "Is it dhroy land that he sees? I hope it's that same."

"What is it, Munday?" asked Trevannion. "Why do you fancy yourself insane?"

"Only to think of it, patron, that I should have been sorry to find but the trunk of a tree. The trunk of a tree,—a grand manguba, big enough to make a *montaria*, an *igarité*,—a galatea, if you like,—a great canoe that will carry us all! Cry *Santos Dios!* Give thanks to the Great Spirit! We are saved!—we are saved!"

The words of the tapuyo, wild as they might appear, were well understood. They were answered by a general shout of satisfaction,—for even the youngest of the party could comprehend that the great log lying near them might be made the means of carrying them clear of the dangers with which they had been so long encompassed.

“True,—true,” said Trevannion. “It is the very thing for which we have been searching in vain,—some sort of timber that would carry its own weight in the water, and us beside. This dead manguba, as you call it, looks as if a ton would not sink it a quarter of an inch. It will certainly serve us for a raft. Give thanks to God, children; his hand is in this. It fills me with hope that we are yet to survive the perils through which we are passing, and that I shall live to see old England once more.”

No flock of jacanas ever created such a commotion among the leaves of the Victoria lily as was made at that moment. Like frail leaves the thick stems were struck aside by the arms of the swimmers, strengthened by the prospect of a speedy delivery from what but the moment before seemed extremest peril; and almost in a moment they were alongside the great trunk of the manguba, in earnest endeavour to get upon it.

Chapter Fifty Six.

The Sterculiads.

In their attempts at boarding they were as successful as they could have expected. The top of the gigantic log was full six feet above the surface of the water, and there were huge buttresses upon it—the shoulders spoken of by Munday—that rose several feet higher. By dint of hard climbing, however, all were at length safely landed.

After they had spent a few minutes in recovering breath, they began to look around them and examine their strange craft. It was, as the Indian had alleged, the trunk of a silk-cotton-tree, the famed *Bombax* of the American tropical forests,—found, though, in many different species, from Mexico to the mountains of Brazil. It is known as belonging to the order of the *Sterculiads*, which includes among its *genera* a great number of vegetable giants, among others the *baobab* of Africa, with a stem ninety feet in circumference, though the trunk is out of proportion to the other parts of the tree. The singular hand-plant of Mexico called *Manita* is a sterculiad, as are also the cotton-tree of India and the gum-tragacanth of Sierra Leone.

The bombax-trees of Tropical America are of several distinct species. They are usually called cotton or silk-cotton-trees, on account of the woolly or cottony stuff between the seeds and the outer capsules, which resemble those of the true cotton plant (*Gossypium*). They are noted for their great size and imposing appearance, more than for any useful properties. Several species of them, however, are not without a certain value. *Bombax ceiba*, and *Bombax monguba*, the monguba of the Amazon, are used for canoes, a single trunk sufficing to make a craft that will carry twenty hogsheads of sugar along with its crew of tapuyos. The peculiar lightness of the wood renders it serviceable for this purpose; and there is one species, the *ochroma* of the West Indies, so light as to have been substituted for cork-wood in the bottling of wines.

The silk or cotton obtained from the seed-pods, though apparently of an excellent quality, unfortunately cannot be well managed by the spinning-machine. It lacks adhesiveness, and does not form a thread that may be trusted. It is, however, extensively used for the stuffing of couches, cushions, and other articles of upholstery; and the Amazonian Indians employ it in feathering the arrows of their blow-guns, and for several other purposes.

A peculiarity of the Sterculiads is their having buttresses. Some are seen with immense excrescences growing out from their trunks, in the form of thin, woody plates, covered with bark just like the trunk itself, between which are spaces that might be likened to stalls in a stable. Often these partitions rise along the stem to a height of fifty feet. The cottonwood (*Populus angulata*) and the deciduous cypress of the Mississippi (*Taxodium distichum*) partake of this singular habit; the smaller buttresses of the latter, known as “cypress knees,” furnishing the “cypress hams,” which, under their covering of lime-washed canvas, had been sold (so say the Southerners) by the Yankee speculator for the genuine haunch of the corn-fed hog!

In spite of its commercial inutility, there are few trees of the South American forest more interesting than the manguba. It is a conspicuous tree, even in the midst of a forest abounding in types of the vegetable kingdom, strange and beautiful. Upon the trunk of such a tree, long

since divested of its leaves,—stripped even of its branches, its species distinguishable only to the eye of the aboriginal observer,—our adventurers found a lodgment.



Chapter Fifty Seven.

Chased by Tocandeiras.

Their tenancy was of short continuance. Never did lodger retreat from a shrewish landlady quicker than did Trevannion and his party from the trunk of the silk-cotton-tree. That they so hastily forsook a secure resting-place, upon which but the moment before they had been so happy to plant their feet, will appear a mystery. Strangest of all, that they were actually driven overboard by an insect not bigger than an ant!

Having gained a secure footing, as they supposed, upon the floating tree-trunk, our adventurers looked around them, the younger ones from curiosity, the others to get acquainted with the character of their new craft. Trevannion was making calculations as to its capability; not as to whether it could carry them, for that was already decided, but whether it was possible to convert it into a manageable vessel, either with sails, if such could be extemporised, or with oars, which might be easily obtained. While thus engaged, he was suddenly startled by an exclamation of surprise and alarm from the Indian. All that day he had been the victim of sudden surprises.

“The *Tocandeiras*!—the *Tocandeiras*!” he cried, his eyes sparkling as he spoke; and, calling to the rest to follow, he retreated toward one end of the tree-trunk.

With wondering eyes they looked back to discover the thing from which they were retreating. They could see nothing to cause such symptoms of terror as those exhibited by their guide and counsellor. It is true that upon the other end of the tree-trunk, in a valley-like groove between two great buttresses, the bark had suddenly assumed a singular appearance. It had turned to a fiery red hue, and had become apparently endowed with a tremulous motion. What could have occasioned this singular change in the colour of the log?

“The *Tocandeiras*!” again exclaimed Munday, pointing directly to the object upon which all eyes were fixed.

“*Tocandeiras*?” asked Trevannion. “Do you mean those little red insects crawling along the log?”

“That, and nothing else. Do you know what they are, patron?”

“I have not the slightest idea, only that they appear to be some species of ant.”

“That’s just what they are,—ants and nothing else! Those are the dreaded *fire-ants*. We’ve roused them out of their sleep. By our weight the manguba has gone down a little. The water has got into their nest. They are forced out, and are now spiteful as hungry jaguars. We must get beyond their reach, or in ten minutes’ time there won’t be an inch of skin on our bodies without a bite and a blister.”

“It is true, uncle,” said Richard. “Munday is not exaggerating. If these ugly creatures crawl upon us, and they will if we do not get out of the way, they’ll sting us pretty nigh to death. We must

leave the log!”

And now, on the way towards the spot occupied by the party, was a fiery stream composed of spiteful-looking creatures, whose very appearance bespoke stings and poison. There was no help for it but to abandon the log, and take to the water. Fortunately each individual was still in possession of his string of sapucaya-shells; and, sliding down the side of the log, once more they found themselves among the grand gong-like leaves of the gigantic lily.



Chapter Fifty Eight.

A Log that Wouldn't Roll.

It now became a question, what they were to do. Abandon the log altogether, for a swarm of contemptible insects, not larger than lady-bugs, when, by the merest chance, they had found a raft, the very thing they stood in need of? Such a course was not contemplated,—not for a moment. On gliding back into the Gapo, they had no idea of swimming away farther than would secure their safety from the sting of the insects, as Munday assured them that the fire-ants would not follow them into the water. But how regain possession of their prize?

The ants were now seen swarming all over it, here and there collected in large hosts, seemingly holding council together, while broad bands appeared moving from one to the other, like columns of troops upon the march! There was scarce a spot upon the surface of the log, big enough for a man to set his foot upon, that was not reddened by the cohorts of this insect army!

“How shall we dispossess them?” inquired Trevannion.

“Shure,” said Tipperary Tom, answering as if the appeal had been made to him, “can’t we sit thim on fire, an’ burn thim aft the log? Cudn’t we gather some dry laves out av the threes, an’ make a blaze that ’ud soon consume ivery mother’s son av thim?”

“Nonsense, Tom. We should consume the log, as well as the ants, and then what would be the advantage to us?”

“Well, thin, iv yez think fire won’t do, why can’t we thry wather? Lit us thry an’ drownd thim off the log. Munday sez they can’t swim, an’ iv they can’t, shure they must go to the bottom.”

“How would you do it?” asked Trevannion, catching at the idea suggested by the Hibernian.

“Nothing asier. Give the did three a rowl over on its back, an’ thin the ants’ll get undher the wather; an’ won’t they have to stay there? Lit us all lay howlt on the log, an’ see iv we can’t give the swate craythers a duckin’.”

Convinced that there was good sense in Tom’s counsel, swimming back towards the log, they stretched their arms upward, and commenced trying to turn it over. The attempt proved unsuccessful. Partly from the enormous weight of the dead tree, saturated as one half of it was with water, and partly owing to the great buttresses acting as outriggers, they could only turn it about one tenth part of its circumference. It rolled back upon them, at first dipping a little deeper, but afterwards settling into its old bed. They were about to discontinue their efforts when a cry came from Tom, as if some new source of terror had been discovered in the manguba. Soon each and all found an explanation in their own sensations, which were as if they had been sharply stung or bitten by some venomous insect. While shouldering the log in vain endeavours to capsize it, some scores of the ants had been detached from its sides, and fallen upon the bodies of the swimmers. Instead of showing gratitude for this temporary respite from

drowning, the spiteful insects had at once imbedded their poisoned fangs in their preservers, as if conscious that they owed all their misfortunes to the intruders who had so rudely disturbed their rest. But when these stray ants that had been stinging them were disposed of, their attention was once more directed towards the manguba, with a still more determinate resolution to repossess what in their eyes was more valuable than a selected log of the finest Honduras mahogany!

Chapter Fifty Nine.

Drowning the Tocandeiras: Five Men in a Fever.

For a time the brains of our adventurers were busied in devising some plan for routing the tocandeiras from their floating citadel, of which they now retained sole possession. At last Tipperary Tom again became the suggester of a scheme for dispelling the multitudinous hosts.

"If we can't spill thim aff the log," said he, "we can wather thim aff it."

"Not such a bad idea," said Richard. "Come on, let us surround the trunk, and attack them on all sides, and let all heave together."

The dark mud colour that had characterised it when first seen, and during the time while they were approaching it, was now changed to a hue of fiery red, here in spots of patches, there in broad lists or streaks, running irregularly between the extremities. Of course the red bands and blotches mottling its sombre surface were the tocandeiras, whose crowded battalions were distributed all over it. On closer scrutiny, it could be seen that they were in motion, passing to and fro, or in places circling around as if in search of the intruders who had disturbed them.

At a word from Trevannion, all the assailants commenced heaving up water with the palms of their hands, and the log became shrouded under a shower of sparkling drops that fell fast and thickly over it, dissipating into a cloud of vapour like the spray of a waterfall. Under such a drenching the tocandeiras could not possibly retain their hold, however tenacious might be their sharp curving claws, and it was but natural that thousands of them should soon be swept from the manguba. Their assailants saw it, and, rejoicing at the success of their scheme, gave utterance to triumphant shouts, just like boys destroying with hot water a nest of wasps or hornets. Louder than all could be heard the voice of Tipperary Tom. It was he who had suggested the scheme, and the thought of having his character for sagacity thus raised caused his boisterous fit of self-congratulation.

But the splashing suddenly ceased, and the six pairs of palms, instead of being turned upward and forward to bale water upon the log, were now exerted in the opposite direction, backward and downward, while the owners of them commenced swimming away from the spot; as they went off, making vigorous efforts to free themselves from the spiteful creatures again clinging to them. Not one of them said a word about staying longer by the dead manguba; but, picking up little Rosa on the way, they continued their retreat, nor paused again until they felt sure of having distanced the tocandeiras.

As a matter of course they had retreated towards the tree-tops. After so many surprises, accompanied by almost continuous exertion, they stood in need of rest. Having chosen one that could be easily climbed, they ascended to its branches, and there seated themselves as comfortably as circumstances would permit. On perceiving that the sun was already over the meridian, and satisfied, moreover, that the task of getting rid of their enemies was one that it might take time to accomplish, they determined to remain all night in their new situation. But there was a more powerful reason for suspending their journey at this point. They were

suffering great pain from the stings of the tocandeiras, and, until that should be to some extent allayed, they could think of nothing else, unless indeed it might be a mode of avenging themselves.

It was fortunate they had found a safe place of repose, and that Munday, who suffered less than the rest, preserved sufficient composure to make their beds or hammocks of sipos, for, in less than twenty minutes after ascending the tree, every one of the party, Munday and Rosa excepted, found himself in a raging fever from the stings inflicted by the tocandeiras, since these bloodthirsty insects not only bite as other ants, but have the power of stinging like wasps, only that the pain produced by their sting is much greater,—more like that of the black scorpion.

As the sun went down, a cool breeze began to play over the waters of the lagoa; and this—the fever having burnt itself out—restored them to their ordinary health, though with a feeling of languor that disinclined them to do anything for that night. Stretched upon their rude aerial couches, they looked up at the stars, and listened to Munday as he made answer to the interrogatories of Trevannion giving an account of one of the singular customs of his tribe,—that known as the “Festival of the Tocandeiras.”

Chapter Sixty.

The Festival of the Tocandeiras.

When a youth of the Mundurucú nation, or its kindred tribe, the Mahüe, has reached the age for assuming the dignities of manhood, he is expected to submit himself to an ordeal that well deserves to be called fiery. This more especially if the youth's ambition inclines him to become a warrior or otherwise distinguished in the tribe. The ordeal is voluntary; but without undergoing it, the young Mundurucú must consent to an existence, if not disgraced, at least inglorious; and if not absolutely scorned by the girls of the Malocca, he will have but slight chance of winning their smiles.

It must be known to my young readers that a custom prevails among many tribes of North American Indians of submitting their young men who aspire to become "braves" to a test of courage and endurance so severe at times as to be a torture quite incredible to those unacquainted with the Indian character. You might fancy the South American a very trifling affair, compared with the torture of the Mandans and other Northern tribes, when you are told that it consists simply in the wearing of a pair of gloves, or mittens, for a certain length of time, —so long that the wearer can make the round of the Malocca, and finish up by an obeisance to the *tuchao*, or chief, who awaits him at the door of his hut. But these mittens once described to you, as they were described by Munday to his companions on the tree, you will perchance change your mind; and regard the Mundurucú ceremony as one of the most severe that was ever contrived to test the constancy and courage of any aspirant to distinction.

When the young Mundurucú declares his readiness to put on the gloves, a pair of them are prepared for him. They are manufactured out of the bark of a species of palm-tree, and are in fact only long hollow cylinders, closed at one end, and large enough to admit the hand and arm up to the elbow. Before being drawn on they are half filled with ants of the most spiteful and venomous kinds; but chiefly with tocandeiras, from which the ceremony derives its name.

Thus accoutred, and accompanied by a crowd with horns, drums, and other musical instruments in use among the Indians, the candidate for manhood's rights has to make the round of the village, presenting himself before every hut, and dancing a jig at every halt that is made. Throughout all the performance he must affect signs of great joy, chanting a cheerful strain, loud enough to be heard above the beating of the drums, the blowing of the horns, and the fracas of his noisy followers. Should he refuse to submit to this terrible ordeal, or during its continuance show signs of weakness or hesitation, he is a lost man. He will be forever after the butt and scorn of his tribe; and there is not a Mundurucú girl who will consent to have him for a sweetheart. His parents and relatives will also be affected in the event of his proving a coward, and he will be regarded as a disgrace to the family.

Stimulated by these thoughts, he enters upon the trial, his friends urging him forward with cries of encouragement, his parents keeping by his side, and with anxious entreaties fortifying him against a failure. He has courageously thrust his hands into the fiery gauntlets, and with like courage he must keep them there, until the ceremony is completed. He suffers cruel torture. Every moment increases his agony. His hands, wrists, and arms feel as if surrounded by fire.

The insect poison enters his veins. His eyes are inflamed. The sweat pours from his skin,—his bosom palpitates,—his lips and cheeks grow pale; and yet he must not show the slightest acknowledgment of suffering. If he does, it will cover him with shame; and he will never be permitted to carry the Mundurucú war-spear, nor impale upon its point the head of his slain enemy. He knows the awful fate that must result from failure; and, though staggering in his steps, he keeps courageously on. At length he stands in the presence of the tuchao, seated to receive him.

Before the chief the ceremony is repeated with increased excitement; the dance is redoubled in vigour,—the chant is louder than ever,—both continuing until his strength fails him through sheer exhaustion. His gloves are then removed, and he falls into the arms of his friends.

He is now surrounded by the young girls of the tribe, who fling their arms around him, covering him with kisses and congratulations. His sufferings prevent him from appreciating their soft caresses, and breaking away from their embrace, he rushes down to the river, and flings his fevered body into the grateful current. There remaining until the cool water has to some extent alleviated his pain, he comes forth and retires to the Malocca, to receive fresh congratulations from his fellow-savages.

He has proved himself of the stuff of which warriors are made, and may now aspire to the hand of any Mundurucú maiden, and to the glory of increasing the number of those hideous trophies that adorn the council-room of the tribe, and which have earned for these Indians the distinctive surname of *Decapitadores* (Beheaders).

Chapter Sixty One.

Amazonian Ants.

Succeeding this thrilling account of the tocandeira festival, ants continued for a time to form the staple subject of conversation, which was not confined to the particular species they had encountered upon the log, but related to many others that inhabit the forests and *compos* of the Amazon valley. Scores of sorts were known to the Mundurucú,—all differing from each other, not only in size, shape, colour, and what may be termed *personal* characteristics, but also in their modes of life, habits, and dwelling-place; in short, in every particular except those essential traits which make them all members of the same family.

The entomologist who would make a study of ant-life could find no better school to pursue it in than the grand valley of the Amazon. In all parts of it he will find these insects in countless numbers, and in a vast variety of species,—separated from each other by all distinctions of classes founded on habits of life quite opposed to each other. Some species inhabit the earth, never descending below its surface. Others live *under* it, in subterranean dwellings, scarce ever coming out into the light of day. Others again live above the earth, making their home in the hollow trunks of trees; while still others lead a more aerial life, building their nests among the twigs and topmost branches.

In their diet there is a still greater range. There are *carnivora* and *herbivora*,—some that feed only on flesh, others that confine themselves to vegetable substances. There are, moreover, kinds that devour their meat before the life is out of it; while other carnivorous species, like the vulture among birds, prey only on such carrion as may chance to fall in their way, and in search of which their lives seem principally to be spent.

Then there are the vegetable feeders, which not only strip the leaves from plants and trees, but destroy every other sort of vegetable substance that they may fancy to seize upon. The clothes in a chest or wardrobe, the papers in a desk, and the books in a library, have all at times been consumed by their devastating hosts, when foraging for food, or for materials out of which to construct their singular dwellings. These dwellings are of as many different kinds as there are species of ants. Some are of conical shape, as large as a soldier's tent. Some resemble hillocks or great mounds, extending over the ground to a circumference of many yards. Others represent oblong ridges, traversed by numerous underground galleries, while some species make their dwellings in deep horizontal tunnels, or excavations, often extending under the bed of broad rivers. Many kinds lead an arboreal life, and their nests may be seen sticking like huge excrescences to the trunks of the forest-trees, and as often suspended from the branches.

To give a detailed account of the different kinds of Amazonian ants,—to describe only their appearance and ordinary habits,—would require, not a chapter, but a large volume. Their domestic economy, the modes of constructing their domiciles, the manner of propagating their species, their social distinction into classes or castes, the odd relations that exists between the separate castes of a community, the division of labour, their devotion to what some writers, imbued with monarchical ideas, have been pleased to term their *queen*,—who in reality is an individual *elected* for a special purpose, render these insects almost an anomaly in nature. It is

not to be expected that the uneducated Indian could give any scientific explanation of such matters. He only knew that there were many curious things in connection with the ants, and their indoor as well as out-door life, which he had himself observed,—and these particulars he communicated.

He could tell strange tales of the *Termites*, or white ants, which are not ants at all,—only so called from a general resemblance to the latter in many of their habits. He dwelt longest on the sort called *Saübas*, or leaf-carrying ants, of which he knew a great number of species, each building its hill in a different manner from the others. Of all the species of South American ants, perhaps none surprises the stranger so much as the *saüba*. On entering a tract of forest, or passing a patch of cultivated ground, the traveller will come to a place where the whole surface is strewn with pieces of green leaves, each about the size of a dime, and all in motion. On examining these leafy fragments more closely, he will discover that each is borne upon the shoulders of a little insect not nearly so big as its burden. Proceeding onward he will come to a tree, where thousands of these insects are at work cutting the leaves into pieces of the proper size, and flinging them down to thousands of others, who seize upon and carry them off. On still closer scrutiny, he will observe that all this work is being carried on in systematic order,—that there are some of the insects differently shaped from the rest,—some performing the actual labour, while the others are acting as guards and overseers. Were he to continue his observation, he would find that the leaves thus transported were not used as food, but only as thatch for covering the galleries and passages through which these countless multitudes make their way from one place to another. He would observe, moreover, so many singular habits and manoeuvres of the little crawling creatures, that he would depart from the spot filled with surprise, and unable to explain more than a tenth part of what he had seen.

Continuing his excursion, he would come upon ants differing from the *saübas* not only in species, but in the most essential characteristics of life. There would be the *Ecitons*, or foraging ants, which instead of contenting themselves by feeding upon the luxurious vegetation of the tropics, would be met upon one of their predatory forays,—the object of their expedition being to destroy some colony of their own kind, if not of their own species. It may be that the foraging party belong to the species known as *Eciton-rapax*,—the giant of its genus, in which many individuals measure a full half-inch in length. If so, they will be proceeding in single file through the forest, in search of the nests of a defenceless vegetable-feeding ant of the genus *Formica*. If they have already found it, and are met on their homeward march towards their own encampment, each will be seen holding in its mouth a portion of the mangled remains of some victim of their rapacity.

Again, another species may be met travelling in broad columns, containing millions of individuals, either on the way to kill and plunder, or returning laden with the spoil. In either case they will attack any creature that chances in their way,—man himself as readily as the most defenceless animal. The Indian who encounters them retreats upon his tracks, crying out, “*Tauóca!*” to warn his companions behind, himself warned by the ant-thrushes whom he has espied hovering above the creeping columns, and twittering their exulting notes, as at intervals they swoop down to thin the moving legion.

Of all the kinds of ants known to the Mundurucú, there was none that seemed to interest him more than that which had led to the conversation,—the *tocandeira*, or, as the Brazilians term it,

formigade fogo (fire-ant). Munday had worn the formidable mittens; and this circumstance had no doubt left an impression upon his mind that the tocandeira was the truest representative of spitefulness to be found in the insect world.

Perhaps he was not far astray. Although an ant of ordinary size,—both in this and general appearance not differing greatly from the common red ant of England,—its bite and sting together are more dreaded than those of any other species. It crawls upon the limbs of the pedestrian who passes near its haunt, and, clutching his skin in its sharp pincer-like jaws, with a sudden twitch of the tail it inserts its venomous sting upon the instant, holding on after it has made the wound, and so tenaciously that it is often torn to pieces while being detached. It will even go out of its way to attack any one standing near. And at certain landing-places upon some of the Amazonian rivers, the ground is so occupied with its hosts that treading there is attended with great danger. In fact, it is on record that settlements have been abandoned on account of the fire-ant suddenly making its appearance, and becoming the pest of the place.

Munday, in conclusion, declared that the tocandeiras were only found in the dry forests and sandy *campos*; that he had never before seen one of their swarms in the Gapo, and that these in the dead-wood must have retreated thither in haste, to escape drowning when caught by the inundation, and that the log had been afterwards drifted away by the *echente*.

Whether this statement was true or not, the ants appeared to have made up their minds to stay there, and permit no intruders to deprive them of their new, strange domicile,—at all events until the *vasante* might enable them once more to set foot upon dry land.

Chapter Sixty Two.

The Ants Still Excited.

At break of day the party were all awake; and after refreshing themselves with a little *cheese*—which was only some coagulated milk of the massaranduba, preserved in sapucaya-shells—they once more turned their attention to the floating trunk. To their surprise, it was no longer where they had left it!

There was a fog upon the water, but that was rapidly becoming dissipated; and as the sun peeped over the tree-tops, the lagoon was sufficiently free from mist for any dark object as large as a man's head, within a mile's distance, to be distinguished. The manguba had been left scarce a hundred yards from their sleeping-place. Where was it now?

"Yonder!" said Munday, "close in by the trees. By our splashing in the water, we started it from its moorings among the piosocas. There has been a little breeze through the night, that has brought it this way. It is now at anchor against yonder tree. I shouldn't wonder if the ants would try to escape from it, and take to the branches above them. The dead manguba is not their natural home; nor is the Gapo their dwelling-place. The tocandeiras belong on land; and no one would expect to find them here. They must have had their home in the hollow of the log while it was lying on dry land. The *echente* set it afloat while they were inside, and the current has carried them far away from their own country."

So they now turned to ascertain whether Munday's conjectures were true, that the ants had taken to the tree that stood over the dead-wood, which was at no great distance; and as the sun had now completely dispelled the fog, they could see it very distinctly. The tocandeiras were still upon it. Their countless hosts were seen moving over its surface in all their red array, apparently as much excited as when putting to flight the swimmers who had intruded upon them.

The log, although close to the stem of the standing tree, was not in connection with it. Something held it several feet off; and as none of the drooping branches reached quite down, it was impossible for the insects to reach the tree, although they evidently desired to make this change, as if suddenly dissatisfied with their quarters on the drifting trunk, and wishing to change them for others less at the mercy of the winds and waves.

As there was something curious in all this, something that could not fail to fix the attention of the observer, our adventurers remained silent, watching the movements of the insect multitude, in hopes that they might find some way of detaching themselves from the floating log, and leave in peaceable and undisputed possession the quarters they appeared so desirous of quitting to those who were equally desirous of entering upon them.

Chapter Sixty Three.

The Tamandua: The Ant-Thrush.

Trusting to the explanation given by the tapuyo, they did not think of inquiring further into the cause of the commotion among the ants. While scanning the tree closely, several of the party perceived a movement among its branches, and soon after the form of a singular creature that was causing it. It was a quadruped, about the size of a raccoon or cat, but of a shape peculiarly its own. Its body was long and cylindrical, terminating posteriorly in a round, tapering tail, while its low, flat head, prolonged into a smooth, slender muzzle, also tapered nearly to a point. The eyes were so small as scarcely to be seen, and the mouth more resembled a round hole than the closing of a pair of jaws. It was covered with a dense silky fur, of a uniform length over the body, and slightly crisped, so as to give it a woolly aspect. This fur was straw-coloured, with a tinge of maroon and brown on the shoulders and along the back, while the tail presented a ringed appearance from an alternation of the two colours.

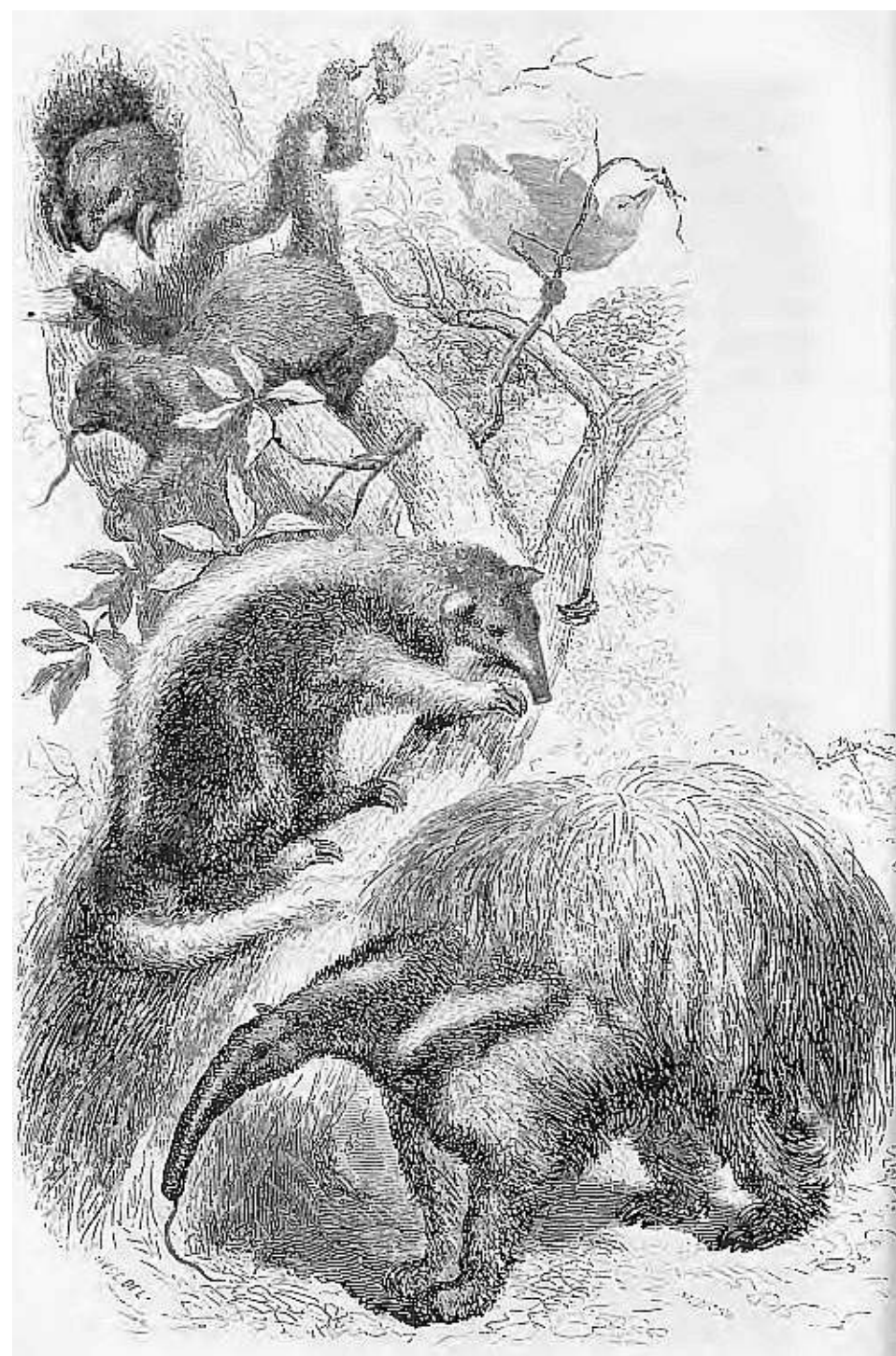
"*Tamandua!*" exclaimed Munday, at sight of the strange quadruped. "The ant-eater. Not the great one, which is called *Tamandua assu*, and don't climb up the trees. That you see is the little one; he lives all his life among the branches,—sleeps there, either upon his breast, or suspended by his tail,—travels from one tree to another in search of honey, bees, wasps, grubs, but, above all, of such ants as make their nests either in holes, or stick to the twigs. Ha!" he continued, "what could I have been thinking of? The tocandeiras wishing to climb up to the tree? Not a bit of it. Quite the contrary. It's the tamandua that's keeping them in motion! See the cunning beast preparing to make a descent among them!"

Nothing could be more certain than that this was the tamandua's intention; for almost on the instant it was seen to move among the branches, descending from one to the other, partly using its strong, hooked claws, and partly its tapering and highly prehensile tail. Once upon the dead-wood, it lay flat down upon its breast and belly; and shooting out its long, thread-like tongue, coated with a sticky shining substance resembling saliva, it commenced licking up the tocandeiras that swarmed in thousands around it. It was to no purpose that the ants made an attack upon it. Nature had provided it with an armour proof both against their bite and sting. Rage around it as they might, the tocandeiras could do nothing to hinder it from licking them up from the log, and tucking them in hundreds into its capacious stomach. Finally the tamandua had taken his fill,—breakfasted to his heart's content; then, erecting himself on his hind-legs after the manner of a squirrel or marmoset, he sprang back upon the branch from which he had descended. Going a little higher up, he selected another and larger branch, placing himself so that his belly rested along its upper surface, with the legs hanging down on each side; and then, burying his proboscis in the long fur of his breast, and taking two or three turns of his tail around head, body, and legs, he fell fast asleep.

The old saw, that there is "many a slip between the cup and the lip," is as true in the life of ant-eater as in that of a man; and when the tamandua awoke,—which it did some twenty minutes afterwards,—and looked down upon the dead-wood, it was astonished to discover that not a tocandeira was in sight.

What had become of them? When left by the tamandua to their own devices there were myriads still surviving. The few thousands which the devourer licked up had made no perceptible diminution in their numbers; and on the retiring of their enemy, they were swarming as thickly and countlessly as ever. Now not one was visible upon the log, the hue of which, from being of a flaming red, had returned to its original colour of sombre grey. A few were discovered upon the standing tree, crawling up its trunk and lower branches, with excited air and rapid movements, as if escaping from terrible disaster. These refugees did not amount to many hundreds; thinly scattered over the bark, they could have been counted. They were too few to tempt the hunger of the tamandua. It would not have been worth his while to project his slimy tongue for the sake of a single tocandeira; so he retained it—not behind his teeth, for he had none—but within the cylinder-shaped cavity of his mouth. What had become of the tocandeiras? It is possible that the tamandua mentally put this question to himself; for there is no animal, however humble its organisation, that has not been gifted by beneficent Nature with a mind and powers of reasoning,—ay, with moral perceptions of at least the primary principles of right and wrong, as even the little ant-eater gives evidence.

Perhaps you have yourself witnessed the proof. You have seen one ant rob another of its crumb of bread, that by a laborious effort has been carried far. You have seen the companions of both gather around the spot, deprive the despoiler of its ill-gotten prize, restore the crumb to its lawful possessor, and punish the would-be pilferer. If you have not seen this, others have,—myself among the number. Surely, it is reason; surely, it is moral perception. If not, what is it? The closet-naturalist calls it *instinct*,—a ready word to cloak that social cowardice which shrinks from acknowledging that besides man there are other beings upon the earth with talents worth saving.



Soon after the ant-eater had gone to sleep, a little bird about the size of a starling was seen flitting about. It was of the ordinary shape of the shrikes, or fly-catchers, and, like them, of sombre plumage,—a dull grey blended with bluish slate. As already said, it was flitting about among the tree-tops, now and then rising above them, and hovering for a while in the air; then lighting again upon a branch, and from this hopping to another, and another, all the time giving utterance to twittering but scarcely musical notes.

“An ant-thrush,” Munday said. “It’s hunting about for the very creatures that are swarming on that log. If it should spy them we’ll have no more trouble with the tocandeiras. That friend will clear them out of our way. If it but gets its eye on that red crowd, it’ll treat them very differently from what the beast has done. In twenty minutes there won’t be a tocandeira to sting us. May the Great Spirit prove propitious, and turn its eyes upon the dead-wood!”

For a time the bird kept up its flickering flight and twittering cry, while our adventurers watched

it manoeuvres, keeping quiet, as a precaution against scaring it away. All at once the ant-thrush changed its tactics, and its louder note proclaimed a surprise. It had come close to the tree that contained the tamandua, and saw the quadruped taking its *siesta* upon the branch. From the presence of the ant-eater it argued the proximity of their common prey.

The swarm of fire-ants, reddening the log, formed too conspicuous an object to escape being seen. The ant-thrush soon saw them, and announced the discovery with a screech, which was a signal to scores of hungry companions. It was answered by what seemed a hundred echoes, and soon the air resounded with whistling wings, as the feathered ant-eaters came crowding to the feast.

Boy reader, you have bred pigeons, and fed them too. You have flung before them whole baskets of barley, and pecks of oats, until the pavement was thickly strewed. You have observed how quickly they could clear the ground of the grain. With the like rapidity was the log cleared of the tocandeiras. In ten minutes not a single insect could be seen upon it; and then the feathered ant-eaters, without giving the tamandua a hint that his premises had been despoiled, flew off into the forest in search of a fresh swarm.

Chapter Sixty Four.

Ant-Eaters—Biped and Quadruped.

The spectacle of the bird ant-eaters engaged in their work of destruction is one that may be seen almost every day in the Amazonian region. The presence of an army of ants passing from place to place through the forest—themselves often bent upon a marauding and murderous expedition—may often be discovered long before the insects themselves are in sight, by the twittering cries and excited actions of the ant-thrushes, that in large flocks are seen hovering above them. The traveller takes warning by the spectacle. Experience has long ago taught him that to stray into the midst of a party of foraging ants is no slight matter. It would be like dancing an Irish jig over a nest of hornets. He is sure of being attacked, bitten, and stung by the venomous insects; and on hearing the call of the ant-thrush, he beats an instant retreat. The quadruped licking up his insect prey is a sight of less frequent occurrence.

Of these four-footed ant-eaters there are many distinct kinds, differing very considerably in their habits of life. Four species are known to naturalists; but it is probable that there are many more yet to be discovered and described. The Indians who are best acquainted with the remote haunts of the great mountain wilderness of interior South America assert that there are others; and their testimony is generally derived from acute observation. Of the four known species there is the great ant-eater (*Myrmecophaga jubata*) called Tamanoir, large as a mastiff dog, and a match for most dogs in strength, often even killing one by squeezing the breath out of his body between its thick, muscular fore-limbs. This is the *Tamandua bandeira*, or “banner tamandua” of the natives, so called from the peculiar marking of its skin,—each side of the body being marked by a broad blackish band running obliquely from the shoulders, and suggesting the resemblance of an heraldic banner. It lives in the drier forests, making its haunt wherever the white ants (*termites*), those that construct the great hills, abound. Of the habits of this species a more complete account has been given elsewhere. (See “The Forest Exiles,” by the author of this story.)

The second species of tamandua—that is, in size—is quite a different creature. It scarcely ever descends to the earth, but passes from branch to branch and tree to tree by means of its strong, curving claws, and more especially by the aid of a very long and highly prehensile tail. Its food consists exclusively of ants, that construct huge earthy nests high up among the branches or against the trunks of the trees, where they present the appearance of grotesque excrescences. This tamandua often moves about during the day, in its slow progress much resembling the sloths, though its food is so very different from the animal of the Cecropia-tree (*bicho de embaüba*). This species dwells chiefly in the thick forests, and goes into the Gapo at all seasons of the year, and it was one of this sort which the party had seen.

But there are still two other kinds that make their home upon the trees,—both exceedingly curious little animals, and much more rarely seen than the large tamanduas. They are distinguished by the name of *tamandua-i*, which in the Indian language means “little tamandua.” One of them, the rarest of the family, is about the size of a half-grown kitten. Instead of hair, it wears a fine wool of a greyish-yellow colour, soft and silky to the touch. The other is of the same size, but dingy brown in colour, and with hair of a coarser kind. These little ant-eaters

both sleep through the day, curled up in the cavity of a tree, or in some fork of the branches, and only display their activity by night.

Thus it is that the ants have no chance of escaping from their numerous enemies. On the earth they are attacked and destroyed by the great ant-eater, in the trees by his brother with the four curving claws. By day one species preys upon them,—by night, another. Go where they will, there is a foe to fall upon them. Even when they seek security under the earth, there too are they pursued by enemies of their own tribe, the savage *ecitons*, which enter their subterranean dwellings, and kill them upon their own hearths, to be dragged forth piecemeal and devoured in the light of the sun!



Chapter Sixty Five.

The Chase of the Tamandua.

If the tamandua had been surprised by the disappearance of the tocandeiras, it was not less so to see approaching a creature more than ten times its own size. This creature was of a dark bronze colour, having a long, upright body, a pair of legs still longer, arms almost as long as the legs, and a roundish head with long black hair growing out of its crown, and hanging down over its shoulders. If the ant-eater had never before seen a human being,—which was probable enough,—it saw one now; for this creature was no other than old Munday, who had taken a fancy to capture that tamandua. Perhaps the little quadruped may have mistaken him for an ape, but it must have also thought him the grandest it had ever set eyes upon. Swinging itself from branch to branch, using both claws and tail to effect its flight, it forsook the tree where it had slept, and took to another farther into the forest. But Munday had anticipated this movement, and passed among the branches and over the matted lianas with the agility of an ape,—now climbing up from limb to limb, now letting himself down by some hanging sipo.

He was soon joined in the pursuit by Richard Trevannion, who was an expert climber, and, if unable to overtake the ant-eater in a direct chase, could be of service in helping to drive it back to the tree it had just left, and which stood at the end of a projecting tongue of the forest. It is possible that Munday might have been overmatched, with all his alertness; for the tamandua had reached the narrowest part of the peninsula before he could get there. Once across the *isthmus*, which consisted of a single tree, it would have had the wide forest before it, and would soon have hidden itself amid the matted tangle of leaves and twigs. Richard, however, was too cunning to let the ant-eater escape him. Dropping into the water, he swam towards the isthmus with all his strength, and reached the tree before the tamandua.

By this time Munday had arrived from the opposite quarter, and was already climbing into the same tree. Seeing itself intercepted on both sides, the tamandua began crawling up towards the topmost branches. But Munday was too quick for it, and springing after, with the agility of a cat, he caught hold of it by one of the hind-legs. Being an animal insignificant in size, and apparently in strength, the spectator supposed he would speedily have dragged it down. In this however they were mistaken, not taking account of the power in its fore-limbs and tail.

Notwithstanding the tapuyo exerted all his strength, he could not detach it from the tree; and even when assisted by his companion, was only able to get the fore-legs free. The tail, lapped several times around a limb, resisted all their efforts. But Munday cut the clinging tail with his knife, leaving two or three of its rings around the branch. Then, twisting the stump around his wrist, he swung the animal back against the trunk with a force that deprived it at once of strength and life.

Chapter Sixty Six.

Roast Ant-Eater.

Instead of returning to the tree, the Indian and Richard swam directly to the dead-wood, where they were quickly joined by the rest of the party. Although the dead-wood was as hard as any other wood, and to sleep upon it would be like sleeping on a plank, still it would give them the feeling of security; so, as if by general consent, though nothing was said, they stretched themselves along the trunk, and were soon fast asleep.

The old Indian, tough as the sipos of his native forests, seemed as if he could live out the remainder of his life without another wink of sleep; and when the rest of his companions were buried in profound repose, he was engaged in an operation that required both energy and the most stoical patience. In a place where the bark was dry, he had picked out a small circular cavity, beside which he had placed some withered leaves and dead twigs collected from the tree that spread its branches above. Kneeling over this cavity, he thrust down into it a straight stick, that had been cut from some species of hard wood, and trimmed clear of knots or other inequalities, twirling it between the palms of his hands so as to produce a rapid motion, now one way, now the other. In about ten minutes a smoke appeared, and soon after sparks were seen among the loose dust that had collected from the friction. Presently the sparks, becoming thicker, united into a flame; and then, dropping the straight stick, he hastily covered the hole with the dry leaves and chips, and, blowing gently under them, was soon cheered by a blaze, over which a cook with even little skill might have prepared a tolerable dinner. This had been Munday's object; and as soon as he saw his fire fairly under way, without dressing or trussing the game,—not even taking the hide off,—he laid the tamandua across the fire, and left it to cook in its skin.

It was not the first time by scores that Munday had made that repast, known among Spanish-Americans as *carne con cuero*. He now proceeded to prevent the spreading of the flames. The dead-wood around was dry as tinder. Stripping off the cotton shirt that, through every vicissitude, still clung to his shoulders, he leant over the side of the floating log, and dipped it for several minutes under the water. When well soaked, he drew it up again, and taking it to the spot where the fire was crackling, he wrung the water out in a circle around the edge of his hearth. When the tamandua was done brown, he then awakened his companions, who were astonished to see the fire, with the bronzed body of the Indian, nude to the waist, squatting in front of it,—to hear the crackling of sticks, the loud sputtering of the roast, and the hissing of the water circle that surrounded the hearth. But the savour that filled the air was very agreeable. They accepted his invitation to partake of the repast, which was found greatly to resemble roast goose in taste; and in an inconceivably short time only the bones of the ant-eater, and these clean picked, could be seen upon the ceiba.

Chapter Sixty Seven.

The Juarouá.

Postponing till the next day the task of making a canoe out of their log, the party soon betook themselves to rest again; but they had been slumbering only about an hour when a low whimpering noise made by the monkey awoke Tipperary Tom, close to whose ear the animal had squatted down. Its master raised himself up, and, leaning upon his elbow, looked out over the Gapo. There was nothing but open water, whose smooth surface was shining like burnished gold under the beams of the setting sun. He turned toward the trees. He saw nothing there,—not so much as a bird moving among the branches. Raising his head a little higher, and peeping over the edge of the dead-wood, “It’s thare is it, the somethin’ that’s scyarin’ ye?” he said to his pet. “An’ shure enough there is a somethin’ yandher. There’s a ‘purl’ upon the wather, as if some crayther was below makin’ a disturbance among the weeds. I wondther what it is!”

At length the creature whose motion he had observed, whatever it was, came near enough for him to obtain a full view of it; and though it was neither a snake nor a crocodile, still it was of sufficiently formidable and novel appearance to cause him a feeling of fear. In shape it resembled a seal; but in dimensions it was altogether different, being much larger than seals usually are. It was full ten feet from snout to tail, and of a proportionate thickness of body. It had the head of a bull or cow, with a broad muzzle, and thick, overhanging lip, but with very small eyes; and instead of ears, there were two round cavities upon the crown of its head. It had a large, flat tail, not standing up like the tail of a fish, but spread in a horizontal direction, like that of a bird. Its skin was smooth, and naked of hairs, with the exception of some straggling ones set thinly over it, and some tufts resembling bristles radiating around its mouth and nostrils. The skin itself was of a dull leaden hue, with some cream-coloured spots under the throat and along the belly. It had also a pair of flippers, more than a foot in length, standing out from the shoulders, with a teat in front of each, and looking like little paddles, with which the huge creature was propelling itself through the water, just as a fish uses its fins or a man his arms.

The Irishman did not stay to note half of these characteristics, but hastily woke Munday, crying, “What is it? O what is it?”

The Indian, rousing himself, looked round for a moment dreamily, and then, as he caught sight of the strange object, replied, “Good fortune! it is the *juarouá*.”

Chapter Sixty Eight.

A Fish-Cow at Pasture.

The Irishman was no wiser for Munday's answer, "The *juarouá*."

"But what is it?" he again asked, curious to learn something of the creature. "Is it a fish or a quadruped?"

"A *peixe-boi*,—a *peixe-boi*!" hurriedly answered the tapuyo. "That's how the whites call it. Now you know."

"But I don't, though, not a bit betther than before. A pikes-boy! Troth, it don't look much like a pike at all, at all. If it's a fish av any kind, I should say it was a sale. O, luk there, Munday! Arrah, see now! If it's the owld pike's boy, yandher's the young wan too. See, it has tuk howlt av the tit, an' 's sucking away like a calf! An' luk! the old wan has got howlt av it with her flipper, an' 's kapin' it up to the breast! Save us! did hever I see such a thing!"

The sight was indeed one to astonish the Irishman, since it has from all time astonished the Amazonian Indians themselves, in spite of its frequency. They cannot understand so unusual a habit as that of a fish suckling its young; for they naturally think that the *peixe-boi* is a fish, instead of a cetacean, and they therefore continue to regard it with curious feelings, as a creature not to be classified in the ordinary way.

"Hush!" whispered the Indian, with a sign to Tom to keep quiet. "Sit still! make no noise. There's a chance of our capturing the *juarouá*,—a good chance, now that I see the *juarouá-i* (little one) along with it. Don't wake the others yet. The *juarouá* can see like a vulture, and hear like an eagle, though it has such little eyes and ears. Hush!"

The *peixe-boi* had by this time got abreast of the dead-wood, and was swimming slowly past it. A little beyond there was a sort of bay, opening in among the trees, towards which it appeared to be directing its course, suckling the calf as it swam.

"Good," said Munday, softly. "I guess what it's going after up there. Don't you see something lying along the water?"

"Yes; but it's some sort av wather-grass."

"That's just it."

"An' what would it want wid the grass? Yez don't mane to till me it ates grass?"

"Eats nothing else, and this is just the sort it feeds on. Very like that's its pasturing place. So much the better if it is, because it will stay there till morning, and give me a chance to kill it."

"But why can't yez kill it now?" said Tom.

“For want of a proper weapon. My knife is of no use. The juarouá is too cunning to let one come so near. If it come back in the morning, I will take care to be ready for it. From it we can get meat enough for a long voyage. See, it has begun to browse!”

Sure enough it had, just as the Indian said, commenced pasturing upon the long blades of grass that spread horizontally over the surface; and just as a cow gathers the meadow sward into her huge mouth, at intervals protruding her tongue to secure it, so did the great water cow of the Amazon spread her broad lips and extend her rough tongue to take in the floating herbage of the Gapo.



Chapter Sixty Nine.

The Pashuba Spear.

Munday was now prepared to set out on a little exploring excursion, as he said; so, enjoining upon Tom, who was determined to awake the sleepers that they might share the sight of the feeding fish-cow, to keep them all strictly quiet until his return, he slipped softly into the water and swam noiselessly away.

The enforced silence was tedious enough to the party, who were all eager to talk about the strange spectacle they saw, and it would surely have been soon broken, had not the Indian returned with a new object for their curiosity. He had stolen off, taking with him only his knife. At his reappearance he had the knife still with him, and another weapon as well, which the knife had enabled him to procure. It was a staff of about twelve feet in length, straight as a rush, slightly tapering, and pointed at the end like a spear. In fact, it *was* a spear, which he had been manufacturing during his hour of absence out of a split stem of the *pashuba* palm. Not far off he had found one of these trees, a water-loving species,—the *Martea exorhuza*,—whose stems are supported upon slanting roots, that stand many feet above the surface of the soil. With the skill known only to an Amazonian Indian in the use of a knife-blade, he had split the *pashuba*, (hard as iron on the outside, but soft at the heart,) and out of one of the split pieces had he hastily fashioned his spear. Its point only needed to be submitted to fire, and then steel itself would not serve better for a spear-head. Fortunately the hearth was not yet cold. A few red cinders smouldered by the wet circle, and, thrusting his spear point among them, the Indian waited for it to become hardened. When done to his satisfaction, he drew it out of the ashes, scraped it to a keen point with the blade of his knife, and then announced himself ready to attack the *juarouá*.

The amphibious animal was yet there, its head visible above the bed of grass upon which it was still grazing. Munday, while rejoiced at the circumstance, expressed himself also surprised at it. He had not been sanguine of finding it on his return with the spear, and, while fabricating the weapon, he had only been encouraged by the expectation that the *peixe-boi*, if gone away for the night, would return to its grazing ground in the morning. As it was now, it could not have afforded him a better opportunity for *striking* it. It was reclining near the surface, its head several inches above it, and directly under a large tree, whose lower limbs, extending horizontally, almost dropped into the water. If he could but get unperceived upon one of those limbs, it would be an easy matter to drive the spear into its body as far as his strength would enable him.

If any man could swim noiselessly through the water, climb silently into the tree, and steal without making sound along its limbs, that man was the Mundurucú. In less time than you could count a thousand, he had successfully accomplished this, and was crouching upon a limb right over the cow. In an instant his spear was seen to descend as the spectators were expecting it to do; but to their astonishment, instead of striking the body of the *peixe-boi*, it pierced into the water several feet from the snout of the animal! What could it mean? Surely the skilled harpooner of fish-cattle could not have made such a stray stroke. Certainly he had not touched the cow! Had he speared anything?

“He’s killed the calf!” cried Tipperary Tom. “Luk yandher! Don’t yez see its carcass floatin’ in the wather?”

Still the spectators could not understand it. Why should the calf have been killed, which would scarce give them a supper, and the cow spared, that would have provisioned the whole crew for a month? Why had the chance been thrown away? Was it thrown away? They only thought so, while expecting the peixe-boi to escape. But they were quickly undeceived. They had not reckoned upon the strong maternal instincts of that amphibious mother,—instincts that annihilate all sense of danger, and prompt a reckless rushing upon death in the companionship or for the protection of the beloved offspring. It was too late to protect the tiny creature, but the mother recked not of this. Danger deterred her not from approaching it again and again, each time receiving a fresh stab from that terrible stick, until, with a long-drawn sigh, she expired among the sedge.

These animals are extremely tenacious of life, and a single, thrust from such a weapon as he wielded would only have put the peixe-boi to flight, never to be encountered again. The harpoon alone, with its barbed head and floats, can secure them for a second strike; and not being provided with this weapon, nor the means of making it, the old tapuyo knew that his only chance was to act as he had done. Experience had made him a believer in the affection of the animal, and the result proved that he had not mistaken its strength.

Chapter Seventy.

Curing the Fish-Cow.

Nothing was done for that night. All slept contentedly on the dead-wood, which next day became the scene of a series of curious operations. This did not differ very much from the spectacle that might be witnessed in the midst of the wide ocean, when whalers have struck one of the great leviathans of the deep, and brought their ship alongside for the purpose of cutting it up.

In like manner as the whale is “flensed,” so was the fish-cow, Munday performing the operation with his knife, by first skinning the creature, and then separating the flesh into broad strips or steaks, which were afterwards made into *charqui*, by being hung up in the sun.

Previous to this, however, many “griskins”—as Tom called them—had been cut from the carcass, and, broiled over the fire kindled upon the log, had furnished both supper and breakfast to the party. No squeamishness was shown by any one. Hunger forbade it; and, indeed, whether with sharp appetites or not, there was no reason why they should not relish one of the most coveted articles of animal food to be obtained in Amazonia. The taste was that of pork; though there were parts of the flesh of a somewhat coarser grain, and inferior in flavour to the real dairy-fed pig.

The day was occupied in making it ready for curing, which would take several days’ exposure under the hot sun. Before night, however, they had it separated into thin slices, and suspended upon a sort of clothes-line, which, by means of poles and sipos, Munday had rigged upon the log. The lean parts alone were to be preserved, for the fat which lies between these, in thick layers of a greenish colour and fishy flavour, is considered rather strong for the stomach,—even of an Indian not over nice about such matters. When a peixe-boi has been harpooned in the usual manner, this is not thrown away, or wasted. Put into a proper boiling-pot, it yields a very good kind of oil,—ten or twelve gallons being obtained from an individual of the largest and fattest kind.

In the present instance, the fat was disregarded and flung back into the flood, while the bones, as they were laid bare, were served in a similar fashion. The skin, however, varying from an inch in thickness over the back, to half an inch under the abdomen, and which Munday had removed with considerable care, was stowed away in a hollow place upon the log. Why it was kept, none of the others could guess. Perhaps the Indian meant it as something to fall back upon in the event of the *charqui* giving out.

It was again night by the time the cow-skin was deposited in its place, and of course no journey could be attempted for that day. On the morrow they intended to commence the voyage which it was hoped would bring them to the other side of the lagoon, if not within sight of land. As they ate their second supper of *amphibious steaks*, they felt in better spirits than for many days. They were not troubled with hunger or thirst; they were not tortured by sitting astride the branches of a tree; and the knowledge that they had now a craft capable of carrying them—however slow might be the rate—inspired them with pleasant expectations. Their conversation

was more cheerful than usual, and during the after-supper hour it turned chiefly on the attributes and habits of the strange animal which Munday had so cleverly dissected.

Most of the information about its habits was supplied by the Indian himself, who had learned them by personal experience; though many points in its natural history were given by the patron, who drew his knowledge of it from books. Trevannion told them that a similar creature—though believed to be of a different species—was found in the sea; but generally near to some coast where there was fresh water flowing in by the estuary of a river. One kind in the Indian seas was known by the name of *dugong*, and another in the West Indies as the *manati* or *manatee*,—called by the French *lamantin*. The Spaniards also know it by the name of *vaca marina* (sea-cow), the identical name given by the Dutch of the Cape Colony to the hippopotamus,—of course a very different animal.

The manati is supposed to have been so named from its fins, or flippers, bearing some resemblance to the hands of a human being,—in Spanish, *manos*,—entitling it to the appellation of the “handed” animal. But the learned Humboldt has shown that this derivation would be contrary to the idiom of the Spanish language, which would have made the word *manudo* or *manon*, and not *manati*. It is therefore more likely that this name is the one by which it was known to the aborigines of the southern coast of Cuba, where the creature was first seen by the discoverers of America. Certain it is that the sea species of the West Indies and the Guianian coast is much larger than that found in the Amazon and other South American rivers; the former being sometimes found full twenty feet in length, while the length of the fish-cow of South America rarely reaches ten.

Here Munday took up the thread of the discourse, and informed the circle of listeners that there were several species of *juarouá*—this was the name he gave it—in the waters of the Amazon. He knew of three kinds, that were distinct, not only in size, but in shape,—the difference being chiefly observable in the fashion of the fins and tail. There was also some difference in their colour,—one species being much lighter in hue than the others, with a pale cream-coloured belly; while the abdomen of the common kind is of a slaty lead, with some pinkish white spots scattered thinly over it.

A peculiar characteristic of the peixe-boi is discovered in its lungs,—no doubt having something to do with its amphibious existence. These, when taken out of the animal and inflated by blowing into them, swell up to the lightness and dimensions of an India-rubber swimming-belt; so that, as young Richard observed while so inflating them, they could spare at least one set of the sapucaya-shells, if once more compelled to take to the water.

Munday gave a very good account of the mode practised in capturing the *juarouá*, not only by the Indians of his own tribe, but by all others in the Amazon valley. The hunter of the peixe-boi—or fisher, as we should rather call him—provides himself with a *montaria* (a light canoe) and a harpoon. He rows to the spot where the creature may be expected to appear,—usually some solitary lagoon or quiet spot out of the current, where there is a species of grass forming its favourite food. At certain hours the animal comes thither to pasture. Sometimes only a single individual frequents the place, but oftener a pair, with their calves,—never more than two of the latter. At times there may be seen a small herd of old ones.

Their enemy, seated in his canoe, awaits their approach in silence; and then, after they have

become forgetful of all save their enjoyment of the succulent grass, he paddles up to them. He makes his advances with the greatest caution; for the fish-cow, unlike its namesake of the farm-yard, is a shy and suspicious animal. The plunge of the paddle, or a rude ripple of the water against the sides of the montaria, would frighten it from its food, and send it off into the open water, where it could not be approached.

The occupant of the canoe is aware of this, and takes care not to make the slightest disturbance, till he has got within striking distance. He then rises gently into a half-crouching attitude, takes the measure of the distance between him and his victim, and throws his harpoon with unerring aim. A line attached to the shaft of the weapon secures the wounded animal from getting clear away. It may dive to the bottom, or rush madly along the surface, but can only go so far as that terrible tether will allow it, to be dragged back towards the montaria, where its struggles are usually terminated by two or three thrusts of a spear.

The sport, or, more properly speaking, the trade, of harpooning this river cetacean, is followed by most of the Amazonian Indians. There is not much of it done during the season of the floods. Then the animals, becoming dispersed over a large surface of inundated forest, are seen only on rare occasions; and a chase specially directed to discover them would not repay the trouble and loss of time. It is when the floods have fallen to their lowest, and the lagoas or permanent ponds of water have contracted to their ordinary limits, that the harpooning of the fish-cow becomes profitable. Then it is followed as a regular pursuit, and occupies the Indian for several weeks in the year.

Sometimes a lagoon is discovered in which many of these creatures have congregated,—their retreat to the main river having been cut off by the falling of the floods. On such occasions the tribe making the discovery reaps a plentiful harvest, and butchering becomes the order of the day.

The malocca, or village, is for the time deserted; all hands—men, women, children, and curs—moving off to the lagoa, and making their encampment upon its edge. They bring with them boiling-pots, for trying out the oil, and jars to contain it, and carry it to the port of commerce; for, being of a superior quality, it tempts the Portuguese trader to make long voyages up many remote tributaries where it is obtained.

During these grand fisheries there is much feasting and rejoicing. The “jerked” flesh of the animal, its skin, and, above all, its valuable oil, are exchanged for knives, pigments, trinkets, and, worse still, for *cashaca* (rum). The last is too freely indulged in; and the fishing rarely comes to a close without weapons being used in a manner to bring wounds, and often death.

As the old Mundurucú had been present at many a hunt of the fish-cow, he was able to give a graphic account of the scenes he had witnessed, to which his companions on the log listened with the greatest attention. So interested were they, that it was not till near midnight that they thought of retiring to rest.

Chapter Seventy One.

A Sail of Skin.

By daybreak they were astir upon their new craft; and after breakfast they set about moving it away from its moorings. This was not so easily accomplished. The log was a log in every respect; and though once a splendid silk-cotton-tree, covered with gossamer pods, and standing in airy majesty over the surrounding forest, it now lay as heavy as lead among the weeds and water-lilies, as if unwilling to be stirred from the spot into which it had drifted.

You may wonder how they were able to move it at all; supposing, as you must, that they were unprovided with either oars or sails. But they were not so badly off as that. The whole of the preceding day had not been spent in curing the fish-cow. Munday's knife had done other service during the afternoon hours, and a pair of paddles had been the result. Though of a rude kind, they were perfect enough for the purpose required of them; while at the same time they gave evidence of great ingenuity on the part of the contriver. They had handles of wood, with blades of *bone*, made from the fish-cow's shoulder-blades, which Munday had carefully retained with the skin, while allowing the offal to sink. In his own tribe, and elsewhere on the Amazon, he had seen these bones employed—and had himself employed them—as a substitute for the spade. Many a cacao patch and field of mandioca had Munday cleared with the shoulder-blade of a fish-cow; and upon odd occasions he had used one for a paddle. It needed only to shaft them; and this had been done by splicing a pole to each with the tough sipos.

Provided with these paddles, then,—one of them wielded by himself, the other by the sturdy Mozambique,—the log was compelled to make way through the water. The progress was necessarily slow, on account of the tangle of long stalks and broad leaves of the lilies. But it promised to improve, when they should get beyond these into the open part of the lagoon. Out there, moreover, they could see that there was a ripple upon the water; which proved that a breeze had sprung up, not perceptible inside the sheltering selva of the trees, blowing in the right direction,—that is, from the trees, and towards the lagoon.

You may suppose that the wind could not be of much use to them with such a craft,—not only without a rudder, but unprovided with sails. So thought they all except the old tapuyo. But the Indian had not been navigating the Gapo for more than forty years of his life, without learning how to construct a sail; and, if nothing else had turned up, he could have made a tolerable substitute for one out of many kinds of broad, tough leaves,—especially those of the *miriti* palm.

He had not revealed his plans to any one of the party. Men of his race rarely declare their intentions until the moment of carrying them into execution. There is a feeling of proud superiority that hinders such condescension. Besides, he had not yet recovered from the sting of humiliation that succeeded the failure of his swimming enterprise; and he was determined not to commit himself again, either by too soon declaring his designs, or too confidently predicting their successful execution.

It was not, therefore, till a stout pole had been set up in a hollow dug out by his knife in the

larger end of the log, two cross pieces firmly lashed to it by sipos, and the skin of the fish-cow spread out against these like a huge thick blanket of caoutchouc, and attached to them by the same cordage of creepers,—it was not till then that his companions became fully acquainted with his object in having cut poles, scooped the hollow, and retained the skin of the cow, as he had done to their previous bewilderment.

It was all clear now; and they could not restrain themselves from giving a simultaneous cheer, as they saw the dull dead-wood, under the impulsion of the skin sail, commence a more rapid movement, until it seemed to “walk the water like a thing of life.”

Chapter Seventy Two.

Becalmed.

Once out on the open lagoon, and fairly under sail, in what direction should they steer their new craft? They wanted to reach the other side of the lagoon, which the Indian believed to extend in the right direction for finding *terra firma*. They had skirted the edge upon which they were for several miles, without finding either the sign of land or an opening by which they might penetrate through the forest, and it was but natural that they should wish to make trial the other side, in the hope of meeting with better fortune.

Mozey, who prided himself on being the best sailor aboard, was intrusted with the management of the sail, while Trevannion himself acted as pilot. The Indian busied himself in looking after the curing of the charqui, which, by the help of such a hot sun as was shining down upon them, would soon be safely beyond the chance of decay. The young people, seated together near the thick end of the log—which Mozey had facetiously christened the quarter-deck of the craft—occupied themselves as they best might.



The cloud that had shadowed them for days was quite dispelled. With such a raft, there was every expectation of getting out of the Gapo. It might not be in a day, or even in a week. But time was of little consequence, so long as there was a prospect of ultimate release from the labyrinth of flooded forests. The charqui, if economised, would feed all hands for a fortnight, at least; and unless they should again get stranded among the tree-tops they could scarcely be all that time before reaching dry land.

Their progress was sadly slow. Their craft has been described as “walking the water like a thing of life.” But this is rather a poetical exaggeration. Its motion was that of a true dead-wood, heavily weighted with the water that for weeks had been saturating its sides. It barely yielded to the sail; and had they been forced to depend upon the paddles, it would have been a hopeless affair. A mile an hour was the most they were able to make; and this only when the breeze was at its freshest. At other times, when it unfortunately lulled, the log lay upon the water with no more motion than they caused as they stepped over it.

Towards noon their progress became slower; and when at length the meridian hour arrived the ceiba stood still. The sail had lost the power of propelling it on. The breeze had died away, and there was now a dead calm. The shoulder-blades of the peixe-boi were now resorted to, but neither these, nor the best pair of oars that ever pulled a man-o'-war's boat, could have propelled that tree-trunk through the water faster than half a knot to the hour, and the improvised paddles were soon laid aside.

There was one comfort in the delay. The hour of dinner had now arrived, and the crew were not unprepared for the midday meal; for in their hurry at setting out, and the solicitude arising from their uncertainty about their craft, they had breakfasted scantily. Their dinner was to consist of but one dish, a cross between fish and flesh,—a cross between fresh and dried,—for the peixe-boi was still but half converted into charqui.

The Indian had carefully guarded the fire, the kindling of which had cost him so much trouble and ingenuity. A few sparks still smouldered where they had been nursed; and, with some decayed pieces of the ceiba itself, a big blaze was once more established. Over this the choicest tit-bits were suspended until their browned surface proclaimed them “done to a turn.” Their keen appetites furnished both sauce and seasoning; and when the meal was over, all were ready to declare that they had never dined more sumptuously in their lives. Hunger is the best appetiser; scarcity comes next.

They sat after dinner conversing upon different themes, and doing the best they could to while away the time,—the only thing that at all discommoded them being the beams of the sun, which fell upon their crowns like sparks of fire showered from a burning sky. Tom's idea was that the heat of the sun could be endured with greater ease in the water than upon the log; and, to satisfy himself, he once more girdled on the cincture of shells, and slipped over the side. His example was followed by the patron himself, his son and nephew.

Little Rosa did not need to retreat overboard in this ignominious manner. She was in the shade, under a tiny *toldo* of broad leaves of a *Pothos* plant, which, growing parasitically upon one of the trees, had been plucked the day before, and spread between two buttresses of the dead-wood. Her cousin had constructed this miniature harbour, and proud did he appear to see his little sylph reclining under its shade.

The tapuyo, accustomed to an Amazonian sun, did not require to keep cool by submerging himself; and as for the negro, he would scarce have been discommoded by an atmosphere indicated by the highest figure on the thermometer. These two men, though born on opposite sides of the Atlantic Ocean, were alike types of a tropical existence, and equally disregarded the fervour of a tropic sun.

Suddenly the four, who had fallen a little astern, were seen making towards the log; and by the terror depicted on their countenances, as well as their quick, irregular strokes, it was evident something in the water had caused them serious alarm. What could it all mean? It was of no use to ask the swimmers themselves. They were as ignorant of what was alarming them as their companions upon the log; they only knew that something was biting them about the legs and feet; but what it was they had not the slightest idea. It might be an insect,—it might be a water-snake, or other amphibious reptile; but whatever it was, they could tell that its teeth were sharp as needles, and scored their flesh like fish-hooks.

It was not till they had gained footing upon the log, and their legs were seen covered with lacerations, and streaming with fresh blood, that they ascertained the sort of enemy that had been attacking them. Had the water been clear, they might have discovered it long before; but discoloured as it was, they could not see beneath the surface far enough to make out the character of their secret assailants. But the tapuyo well understood the signs, and, as soon as his eye rested upon them, his perplexity disappeared; and, with an exclamation that rather betokened relief, he pronounced the simple phrase, “Only *piranhas*!”

Chapter Seventy Three.

The Piranhas.

The companions of the tapuyo were no wiser for his words, until piranhas was explained to them to mean “biting fish,” for such were the unseen enemies that assailed them.

They belong to the great tribe of the *Salmonidae*, of which there are many varieties in the different Amazonian rivers, all very voracious, and ready to bite at anything that may be thrown into the water. They often attack bathers, putting them to flight; and a swimmer who should unfortunately be surrounded by them, when far from the shore or a boat, would have the greatest difficulty to escape the fearful fate of being eaten up alive. Most of the species are fish of small size, and it is their numbers that the swimmer has chiefly to dread.

As it was, our adventurers were more scared than hurt. The commotion which they had made in the water, by their plunging and kicking, had kept the piranhas at a distance, and it was only an odd one that had been able to get a tooth into them.

For any injury they had sustained, the Mundurucú promised them not only a speedy revenge, but indemnification of a more consolatory kind. He knew that the piranhas, having tasted blood, would not willingly wander away, at least for a length of time. Although he could not see the little fish through the turbid water, he was sure they were still in the neighbourhood of the log, no doubt in search of the prey that had so mysteriously escaped them. As the dead-wood scarcely stirred, or drifted only slightly, the piranhas could keep alongside, and see everything that occurred without being seen themselves. This the tapuyo concluded they were doing. He knew their reckless voracity,—how they will suddenly spring at anything thrown into the water, and swallow without staying to examine it.

Aware of this habit, he had no difficulty in determining what to do. There was plenty of bait in the shape of half-dried charqui, but not a fish-hook to be found. A pair of pins, however, supplied the deficiency, and a piece of string was just right for a line. This was fastened at one end to the pashuba spear, to the pin-hook at the other; and then, the latter being baited with a piece of peixe-boi, the fishing commenced.

Perhaps never with such rude tackle was there more successful angling. Almost as soon as the bait sank under the water, it was seized by a piranha, which was instantly jerked out of its native element, and landed on the log. Another and another and another, till a score of the creatures lay upon the top of the dead-wood, and Tipperary Tom gave them the finishing touch, as they were caught, with a cruel eagerness that might to some extent have been due to the smarting of his shins.

How long the “catch” might have continued it is difficult to say. The little fish were hooked as fast as fresh bait could be adjusted, and it seemed as if the line of succession was never to end. It did end, however, in an altogether unexpected way, by one of the piranhas dropping back again into the water, and taking, not only the bait, but the hook and a portion of the line along with it, the string having given away at a weak part near the end of the rod.

Munday, who knew that the little fish were excellent to eat, would have continued to take them so long as they were willing to be taken, and for this purpose the dress of Rosita was despoiled of two more pins, and a fresh piece of string made out of the skin of the cow-fish.

When the new tackle was tried, however, he discovered to his disappointment that the piranhas would no longer bite; not so much as a nibble could be felt at the end of the string. They had had time for reflection, perhaps had held counsel among themselves, and come to the conclusion that the game they had been hitherto playing was “snapdragon” of a dangerous kind, and that it was high time to desist from it.

The little incident, at first producing chagrin, was soon viewed rather with satisfaction. The wounds received were so slight as scarce to be regarded, and the terror of the thing was over as soon as it became known what tiny creatures had inflicted them. Had it been snakes, alligators, or any animals of the reptile order, it might have been otherwise. But a school of handsome little fishes,—who could suppose that there had been any danger in their attack?

There had been, nevertheless, as the tapuyo assured them,—backing up his assurance by the narrative of several narrow escapes he had himself had from being torn to pieces by their sharp triangular teeth, further confirming his statements by the account of an Indian, one of his own tribe, who had been eaten piecemeal by piranhas.

It was in the river Tapajos, where this species of fish is found in great plenty. The man had been in pursuit of a peixe-boi, which he had harpooned near the middle of the river, after attaching his weapon by its cord to the bow of his montaria. The fish being a strong one, and not wounded in a vital part, had made a rush to get off, carrying the canoe along with it. The harpooner, standing badly balanced in his craft, lost his balance and fell overboard. While swimming to overtake the canoe, he was attacked by a swarm of piranhas ravenous for prey, made so perhaps by the blood of the peixe-boi left along the water. The Indian was unable to reach the canoe; and notwithstanding the most desperate efforts to escape, he was ultimately compelled to yield to his myriad assailants.

His friends on shore saw all, without being able to render the slightest assistance. They saw his helpless struggles, and heard his last despairing shriek, as he sank below the surface of the water. Hastening to their canoes, they paddled, rapidly out to the spot where their comrade had disappeared. All they could discern was a skeleton lying along the sand at the bottom of the river, clean picked as if it had been prepared for an anatomical museum, while the school of piranhas was disporting itself alone, as if engaged in dancing some mazy minuet in honour of the catastrophe they had occasioned.

Chapter Seventy Four.

A Stowaway.

The new-caught fishes looked too temptingly fresh to be long untasted; and although it was but an hour since our adventurers had eaten their dinner, one and all were inclined for an afternoon meal upon piranha. The Mundurucú set the fire freshly astir, and half a dozen piranhas were soon browned in the blaze and distributed among the party, who one and all endorsed the tapuyo, by pronouncing them a delicacy.

After the second dinner they were more gay than ever. The sun sinking westward indicated the quarters of the compass; and already a few puffs of wind promised them an evening breeze. They saw that it was still blowing in the same direction, and therefore favourable to the navigation of their craft, whose thick sail, spread broadly athwart ships, seemed eager to catch it.

Little dreamt they at that moment that, as it were, a volcano was slumbering under their feet; that separated from them by only a few inches of half-decayed wood was a creature of such monstrous size and hideous shape as to have impressed with a perpetual fear every Indian upon the Amazon, from Pará to Peru, from the head waters of the Purus to the sources of the Japura! At that moment, when they were chatting gaily, even laughingly, in confidence of a speedy deliverance from the gloomy Gapo,—at that very moment the great *Mai d'Agoa*, the “Mother of the Waters,” was writhing restlessly beneath them, preparing to issue forth from the cavern that concealed her.

The tapuyo was sitting near the fire, picking the bones of a piranha, which he had just taken from the spit, when all at once the half-burned embers were seen to sink out of sight, dropping down into the log, as cinders into the ash-pit of a dilapidated grate. “Ugh!” exclaimed the Indian, giving a slight start, but soon composing himself; “the dead-wood hollow at the heart! Only a thin shell outside, which the fire has burnt through. I wondered why it floated so lightly,—wet as it was!”

“Wasn’t it there the tocandeiras had their nest?” inquired Trevannion.

“No, patron. The hole they had chosen for their hive is different. It was a cavity in one of the branches. This is a hollow along the main trunk. Its entrance will be found somewhere in the butt,—under the water, I should think, as the log lies now.”

Just then no one was curious enough to crawl up to the thick end and see. What signified it whether the entrance to the hollow, which had been laid open by the falling in of the fire, was under water or above it, so long as the log itself kept afloat? There was no danger to be apprehended, and the circumstance would have been speedily dismissed from their minds, but for the behaviour of the coaita, which now attracted their attention.

It had been all the time sitting upon the highest point which the dead-wood offered for a perch. Not upon the rudely rigged mast, nor yet the yard that carried the sail; but on a spar that

projected several feet beyond the thick end, still recognisable as the remains of a root. Its air and attitude had undergone a sudden change. It stood at full length upon all fours, uttering a series of screams, with chatterings between, and shivering throughout its whole frame, as if some dread danger was in sight, and threatening it with instant destruction.

It was immediately after the falling in of the fagots that this began; but there was nothing to show that it was connected with that. The place where the fire had been burning was far away from its perch; and it had not even turned its eyes in that direction. On the contrary, it was looking below; not directly below where it stood, but towards the butt-end of the ceiba, which could not be seen by those upon the log. Whatever was frightening it should be there. There was something about the excited actions of the animal,—something so heart-rending in its cries,—that it was impossible to believe them inspired by any ordinary object of dread; and the spectators were convinced that some startling terror was under its eyes.

Tipperary Tom was the first to attempt a solution of the mystery. The piteous appeals of his pet could not be resisted. Scrambling along the log he reached the projecting point, and peeped over. Almost in the same instant he recoiled with a shriek; and, calling on his patron saint, retreated to the place where he had left his companions. On his retreat Munday set out to explore the place whence he had fled, and, on reaching it, craned his neck over the end of the dead-wood, and looked below. A single glance seemed to satisfy him; and, drawing back with as much fear as the man who had preceded him, he exclaimed in a terrified shriek, "*Santos Dios!* 'tis the Spirit of the Waters!"

Chapter Seventy Five.

The Spirit of the Waters.

“The *Mai d’Agoa*! the Spirit of the Waters!” exclaimed Trevannion, while the rest stood speechless with astonishment, gazing alternately upon the Indian and the Irishman, who trembled with affright. “What do you mean? Is it something to be feared?”

Munday gave an emphatic nod, but said no word, being partly awed into silence and partly lost in meditating some plan of escape from this new peril.

“What did *you* see, Tom?” continued Trevannion, addressing himself to the Irishman, in hopes of receiving some explanation from that quarter.

“Be Sant Pathrick! yer honour, I can’t tell yez what it was. It was something like a head with a round shinin’ neck to it, just peepin’ up out av the wather. I saw a pair av eyes,—I didn’t stay for any more, for them eyes was enough to scare the sowl out av me. They were glittherin’ like two burnin’ coals! Munday calls it the spirit av the wathers. It looks more like the spirit av darkness!”

“The *Mai d’Agoa*, uncle,” interposed the young Paraense, speaking in a suppressed voice. “*The Mother of the Waters*! It’s only an Indian superstition, founded on the great water serpent,—the anaconda. No doubt it’s one of these he and Tom have seen swimming about under the butt-end of the log. If it be still there I shall have a look at it myself.”

The youth was proceeding towards the spot so hastily vacated by Munday and Tom, when the former, seizing him by the arm, arrested his progress. “For your life, young master, don’t go there! Stay where you are. It may not come forth, or may not crawl up to this place. I tell you it is the Spirit of the Waters!”

“Nonsense, Munday; there’s no such thing as a *spirit* of the waters. If there were, it would be of no use our trying to hide from it. What you’ve seen is an anaconda. I know these water-boas well enough,—have seen them scores of times among the islands at the mouth of the Amazon. I have no fear of them. Their bite is not poisonous, and, unless this is a very large one, there’s not much danger. Let me have a look!”

The Indian, by this time half persuaded that he had made a mistake,—his confidence also restored by this courageous behaviour,—permitted Richard to pass on to the end of the log. On reaching it he looked over; but recoiled with a cry, as did the others, while the ape uttered a shrill scream, sprang down from its perch, and scampered off to the opposite extremity of the dead-wood.

“It *is* an anaconda!” muttered the Paraense, as he made his way “amidships,” where the rest were awaiting him; “the largest I have ever seen. No wonder, Munday, you should mistake it for the *Mai d’Agoa*. ’Tis a fearful-looking creature, but I hope we shall be able to destroy it before it can do any of us an injury. But it is very large, and we have no arms! What’s to be done, Munday?”

“Be quiet,—make no noise!” entreated the Indian, who was now himself again. “May be it will keep its place till I can get the spear through its neck, and then—Too late! The sucuruju is coming upon the log!”

And now, just rising through a forked projection of the roots, was seen the horrid creature, causing the most courageous to tremble as they beheld it. There was no mistaking it for anything else than the head of a serpent; but such a head as not even the far-travelled tapuyo had ever seen before. In size it equalled that of an otter, while the lurid light that gleamed from a pair of scintillating orbs, and still more the long, forked tongue, at intervals projected like a double jet of flame, gave it an altogether demoniac appearance.

The water out of which it had just risen, still adhering to its scaly crown, caused it to shine with the brightness of burnished steel; and, as it loomed up between their eyes and the sun, it exhibited the coruscation of fire. Under any circumstances it would have been fearful to look at; but as it slowly and silently glided forth, hanging out its forked red tongue, it was a sight to freeze the blood of the bravest.

When it had raised its eyes fairly above the log, so that it could see what was upon it, it paused as if to reconnoitre. The frightened men, having retreated towards the opposite end of the dead-wood, stood as still as death, all fearing to make the slightest motion, lest they should tempt the monster on.

They stood about twenty paces from the serpent, Munday nearest, with the pashuba spear in hand ready raised, and standing as guard over the others. Richard, armed with Munday’s knife, was immediately behind him. For more than a minute the hideous head remained motionless. There was no speech nor sound of any kind. Even the coaita, screened by its friends, had for the time ceased to utter its alarm. Only the slightest ripple on the water, as it struck against the sides of the ceiba, disturbed the tranquillity of the scene, and any one viewing the tableau might have supposed it set as for the taking of a photograph.

But it was only the momentary calm that precedes the tempest. In an instant a commotion took place among the statue-like figures,—all retreating as they saw the serpent rise higher, and, after vibrating its head several times, lie flat along, evidently with the design of advancing towards them. In another instant the monster was advancing,—not rapidly, but with a slow, regular motion, as if it felt sure of its victims, and did not see the necessity for haste in securing them.

Chapter Seventy Six.

An Unexpected Escape.

The great reptile had already displayed more than a third of its hideous body, that kept constantly thickening as it rose over the butt-end of the log; and still the tapuyo appeared irresolute. In a whisper, Trevannion suggested their taking to the water.

“No, patron; anything but that. It would just be what the sucuruju would like. In the water it would be at home, and we should not. We should there be entirely at his mercy.”

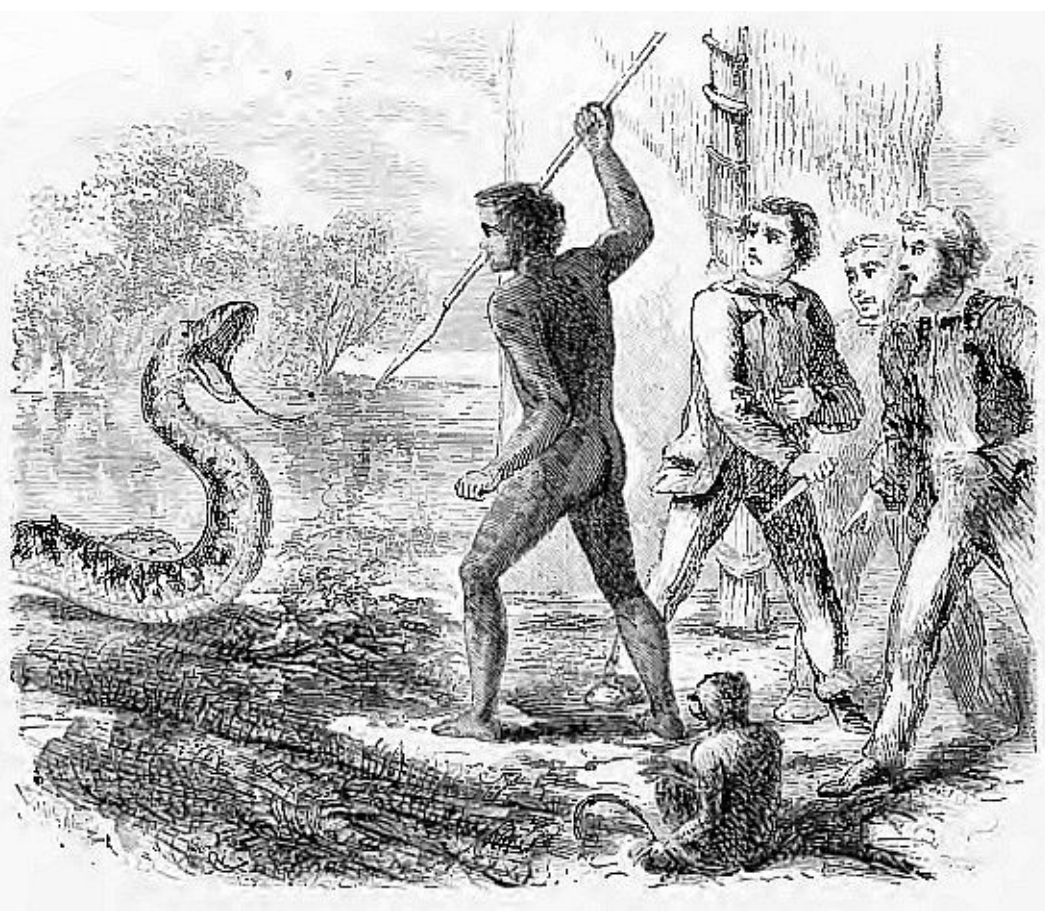
“But are we not now?”

“Not yet,—not yet,—stay!” From the fresh confidence with which he spoke, it was evident some plan had suggested itself. “Hand me over that monkey!” he said; and when he took the ape in his arms, and advanced some paces along the log, they guessed for what the pet was destined,—to distract the attention of the anaconda, by securing for it a meal!

Under other circumstances, Tom might have interfered to prevent the sacrifice. As it was, he could only regard it with a sigh, knowing it was necessary to his own salvation.

As Munday, acting in the capacity of a sort of high-priest, advanced along the log, the demon to whom the oblation was to be made, and which he still fancied might be the *Spirit of the Waters*, paused in its approach, and, raising its head, gave out a horrible hiss.

In another instant the coaita was hurled through the air, and fell right before it. Rapidly drawing back its head, and opening wide its serrated jaws, the serpent struck out with the design of seizing the offering. But the ape, with characteristic quickness, perceived the danger; and, before a tooth could be inserted into its skin, it sprang away, and, scampering up the mast, left Munday face to face with the anaconda, that now advanced rapidly upon him who had endeavoured to make use of such a substitute.



Chagrined at the failure of his stratagem, and dismayed by the threatening danger, the tapuyo retreated backwards. In his confusion he trod upon the still smouldering fire, his scorched feet scattering the fagots as he danced through them, while the serpent, once more in motion, came resolutely on.

His companions were now more frightened than ever, for they now saw that he was, like themselves, a prey to fear. For again had he become a believer in the Spirit of the Waters. As he stood poising his spear, it was with the air of a man not likely to use it with effect. The young Paraense, with his knife, was more likely to prove a protector. But what could either do to arrest the progress of such a powerful monster as that, which, with only two thirds of its length displayed, extended full twenty feet along the log? Some one of the party must become a victim, and who was to be the first?

The young Paraense seemed determined to take precedence, and, with the generous design of protecting his friends,—perhaps only little Rosa was in his thoughts,—he had thrown himself in front of the others, even the spearman standing behind him. It appeared that his time was come. He had not confidence that it was not. What could he do with a knife-blade against such an enemy? He stood there but to do his duty, and die.

And both would quickly have been accomplished,—the duty and the death,—but that the Omnipotent Hand that had preserved them through so many perils was still stretched over them, and in its own way extricated them from this new danger. To one unacquainted with the cause, it might have been a matter of surprise to see the reptile, hitherto determined upon making an attack, all at once turn away from its intended victims; and, without even showing its tail upon the log, retreat precipitately into the water, and swim off over the lagoon, as if the ceiba was something to be shunned beyond everything else that might be encountered in the Gapo!



Chapter Seventy Seven.

History of the Anaconda.

Though it may be a mystery to the reader why it had retreated, it was none to our adventurers, who had seen it crawl over the scattered fagots; they had heard the hissing, sputtering sound, as the live coals came in contact with its wet skin; they had witnessed its dismay and flight at a phenomenon so unexpected. They were therefore well aware that it was the scorching hot cinders that had caused the sucuruju to forsake the dead-wood in such a sudden and apparently mysterious manner.

It was some time before they were entirely relieved of their fears. Notwithstanding its precipitate retreat, they could not tell but that the anaconda might change its mind and come back again. They could see it swimming for some time in a tortuous track, its head and part of its neck erect above the water; then it took a direct course, as if determined upon leaving the lagoon. It was, therefore, with no ordinary feeling of relief that they saw it finally disappearing from view in the far distance.

The mystery of its presence upon the dead monguba was soon cleared up. The log was hollow inside, the heart-wood being entirely decayed and gone. In the cavity the serpent had perhaps sought a sleeping-place secure from intrusion during some protracted slumber that had succeeded the swallowing of a gigantic prey,—deer, paca, or capivain. Here it had lain for days,—perhaps weeks; and the log, carried away by the rising of the floods, had done nothing to disturb its repose. Its first intimation that there was any change in the situation of its sleeping-place was when the fire fell in through the burnt shell, and the hot cinders came in contact with its tail, causing it to come forth from its concealment, and make the observation that resulted in its attacking the intruders. The hollow that had contained the colony of tocandeiras was altogether a different affair. It was a cavity of a similar kind, but unconnected with that in the heart of the tree; and it was evident that the little insects and the great reptile, although dwelling in such close proximity,—under the same roof, it may be said,—were entirely unacquainted with each other.

When the serpent was quite out of sight, our adventurers once more recovered their spirits, and conversed gayly about the strange incident. The breeze, having freshened, carried their raft with considerable rapidity through the water, in the right direction, and they began to scan the horizon before them in the hope of seeing, if not land, at least the tree-tops ahead. These, however, did not show themselves on that day, and before the sun went down the forest behind them sank out of sight. The night overtook them, surrounded by a smooth surface of open water, spotless and apparently as limitless as the great ocean itself.

They did not “lay to,” as on the night before. The breeze continued favourable throughout the night; and, as they were also favoured with a clear sky, and had the stars to pilot them, they kept under sail till the morning. Before retiring to rest they had supped upon roast charqui and fish broiled over the coals; and, after supper, talk commenced, as usual, the chief topic being the anaconda. On this subject the tapuyo had much to say, for of all the animals that inhabit the water wilderness of the Amazon there is none that inspires the Indian with greater interest than

the sucuruju. It is the theme of frequent discourse, and of scores of legends;—some real and true, while others have had their origin in the imagination of the ignorant aboriginal; some even having proceeded from the excited fancy of the colonists themselves, both Spanish and Portuguese, who could boast of a higher intelligence and better education.

The fanciful say that there are anacondas in the waters of the Amazon full thirty yards in length, and of a thickness equalling the dimensions of a horse! This has been stated repeatedly,—stated and believed in, not only by the ignorant Indian, but by his instructors, the monks of the missions. The only fanciful part of the statement is what regards the size, which must be merely an exaggeration. What is real and true is of itself sufficiently surprising. It is true that in the South American rivers there are anacondas, or “water-boas,” as they are sometimes called, over thirty feet in length and of proportionate thickness; that these monstrous creatures can swallow such quadrupeds as capivains, deer, and even large-sized animals of the horse and cattle kind; that they are not venomous, but kill their prey by *constriction*,—that is, by coiling themselves around it, and crushing it by a strong muscular pressure; and that, once gorged, they retire to some safe hiding-place,—of which there is no scarcity in the impenetrable forests of Amazonia,—go to sleep, and remain for a time in a sort of torpid condition. Hence they are much more rarely seen than those animals which require to be all the time on the alert for their daily food.

Of these great snakes of Tropical America there are several species; and these again are to be classified, according to their habits, into two groups markedly distinct,—the “boas,” properly so called, and the “water-boas,” or anacondas. The former are terrestrial in their mode of living, and are to be found upon the dry road; the latter, though not strictly living in the water or under it, are never met with except where it is abundant; that is to say, on the banks of rivers and lagoons, or in the submerged forests of the Gapo. They swim under water, or upon the surface, with equal facility; and they are also arboreal, their powers of constriction enabling them to make their way to the tops of the highest trees. It is these that are more properly called sucuruju,—a name belonging to the common language spoken upon the Amazon, a mixture of Portuguese with the ancient tongue of the Supinampas, known as the *lingua geral*. No doubt, also, it is from some unusually large specimen of sucuruju, seen occasionally by the Indian hunters and fishermen, that these simple people have been led into a belief in the existence of the wonderful *Mai d’Agoa*, or “Mother of the Waters.”

Chapter Seventy Eight.

A Snake “Yarn.”

Cheered by the thought that the breeze was bearing them in the right direction, our adventurers sat up till a late hour. When they at length resolved upon going to sleep, it was arranged that two should sit up,—one to mind the sail, the other to ply a paddle, and keep the craft steadily to her course, as well as could be done with such a rudder. The old sea-cook still had charge of the sheets and halyards, while Tipperary, notwithstanding that he had already proved himself such an indifferent helmsman, was intrusted with the steering.

After the many perils through which they had passed, and under the apprehension of the many more through which they might yet have to pass, Tom’s mismanagement,—the original cause of all their misfortunes,—if not forgotten, was not remembered against him with resentment. It had been only an error of judgment,—a fault of the head, and not of the heart.

Even the negro, whose race appears, almost by instinct, to inherit an antipathy to the countrymen of Tom, and who, previous to the catastrophe, was not always on the best of terms with the Irishman, no longer showed signs of spite: rather had the two become friends. Their friendship sprung from the ties of a common misfortune, and any little difference that now displayed itself was in a rivalry as to which should make himself most useful to the floating community.

On this particular night they sat together as white and black brothers; Mozey attending to the sipo that served for a sheet to the sail, and Tom steering the craft by a star that had been pointed out to him as that towards which he was to keep her head.

Both African and Irishman were not a little vain of being thus left to themselves. Up to that time both had been playing a very subordinate part; the Indian taking upon himself almost the sole management of affairs, and treating them as nobodies. From the night on which they had made their unfortunate mistake by straying into the Gapo, every movement had been made by his counsel and direction: moreover, both had suffered humiliation by his having saved their lives from drowning. Although they were not ungrateful for that, they were nevertheless chagrined to think that they should be so looked upon.

On this night, Munday, worn out by his long-continued exertions, was urged by Trevannion to desist, and recruit his energies by good repose. As there was no particular reason why he should remain awake, he had consented to do so; and, with his back against one of the buttresses, he reposed, silent as the Sphinx.

Neither the man of Mozambique, nor he of Tipperary, was given to habits of silence; and they continued to converse long after the others had sunk into slumber. After what had that day occurred, it was natural that the theme should be *snakes*. “Yez have got some in your counthry,—haven’t yer, Mozey?” inquired Tom.

“Dar you’s e ’bout right, Masser Tum. Haven’t we got um! Snakes ob de biggest kind.”

“But none so big as the wun we saw the day?”

“Buf! you call dat a big snake. He not more den ten yard long. I’ve hab some on de coass of Africa, down dere by Mozabeek, dat measure more den a mile,—ticker round de body den dis ere log we sittin’ on.”

“More than a mile long!” rejoined Tipperary. “And thicker than this tree! Yez don’t mane to say ye iver saw wan ov that size yerself?”

“Well, I’s not say it war a whole mile. It mout be less, an’ it mout a been more dan a mile. Ob one ting I’s sartin shoo: it wa’n’t less den three quarters ob a mile. Youz may b’lieve um or not; jess as you pleeze ’bout dat, Massa Tipprary. All I’b got to say is, dat de snake I ’peak ’bout war long nuf to go clar roun’ de kraal, and twice roun’ too.”

“A kraal! what moight that be? I know what a *kreel* is. Miny’s the wan I’ve carried on me back, full ov turf at that, in the bogs of Tipperary. Yez don’t mane a kreel, div ye?”

“Kreel! no. I’m ’peakin’ ’bout de place we niggers live in,—village, you white folk call ’um.”

“A village! that is a town av people,—men, weemen, and childher.”

“Jess so. Da be men, woman, and chillen in de kraal,—sartin to be plenty of boaf de last,—an’ dar am dogs, and sheeps, and goats, and sometime big cattle. Dat’s zactly what we brack folks ob de African coass call de kraal. Some am bigger dan oders; but de one I ’peak ’bout, dat war surrounded by de snake, war a kraal ob de mod’rate size. It had ’bout a hundred houses, and, ob coorse, it contain zackly hundred families, excludin’ de piccaninnies.”

“A snake to extind round a hundherd houses! Whin was that?”

“When dis chile was a piccaninny hisself. If you like, Massa Tipprary, I tell you all ’bout it. Ye see, dat de kraal I ’peak ’bout war my native place, wha dis chile fust saw de shinin’ ob de sun. I ’pose I war ’bout ten year ole jess at dat time when de sacumstance ’curred ob which I go tell you. Near de village dar war a big foress. It wa’ filled with all sorts ob dangerous beasts. Da wa’ buffaloes and elephants, an’ de rhinoceros, an’ hipperpotamusses, an’ dar war big monkeys ob de baboon ’pecies. These lass war partickler dangerous, ’pecially to de women ob de place, for if any ob de nigga gals strayed too fur into de foress, den de baboons carried dem up into de tops ob de highest trees, an’ dere kep’ dem prisoner fo’ eber. But de wusset ting in dat wood war de snakes. Da war ob all sorts an’ sizes. Dere war de cobera, berry benemous, dat killed you wif him bite, an’ de spit snake dat fo’ pizen beat de cobera all holler, as it kud kill ye by jess spittin’ upon yer from among de branches ob a tree. An’ da war de whip-snake, dat lashed folks to deaph wif him tail; an’ de rock-boia dat twisted itself roun’ you body an’ crushed you to de jelly. But none ob dese kud hold a candle to de great big snake ob all,—de one I tell you ’bout. Munday, he call dat we see, de spirit ob de waters. Our big snake we nigga of Mozabeek call de *debbil ob de woods*. Nebba mind ’bout de name. He come one fine mornin’, dis debbil come, while de people ob de kraal war all ’sleep, dat is ’fore anybody get up to go ’bout dar business. He surroun’ the village *twice*.”

“You mane that he crawled twice round it?”

“Not a bit ob dat;—he may hab crawled twenty time roun’ it: nobody know. De people all ’sleep when he come. What dis chile mean is, dat when de people get out ob dar beads, an’ come to de door, de debbil ob de woods, he hab him body all roun’ de place in two great coil, one on top ob de odder, like de cable ’board ship,—de two makin’ a fence roun’ do kraal, more’n ten feet high.”

“Saint Pathrick prasarve us!”

“Ah, Masser Tom, I tink I hear you say dat de San Parfick you ’peak ’bout was a great snake-killer in yur country. I wish he had been in de island of Mozabeek on dat same mornin’. Pahps dis nigger might still hab a fadder an’ a modder. He loss dem boaf on de occasion we now ’peak ob. You see de snake, after enclosin’ de kraal twice roun’ wif him body, left enuf ob de neck to reach all ober de place; den stretchin’ out him mouf, dat war wide nuf to swaller a man ’ithout chewin’ him, he went from house to house, pickin’ out de people, till der want one lef’, neider man, woman, nor chile. He eat up de chief ob de kraal jess de same as de commonest scum ob de village. As fo’ de piccaninnies, he swallow dem eight or ten at a time, jess de same as we see de ant-eater do wif de ants. Boaf de men an’ de women an’ de chillen try to ’scape out ob de place. ’Twa’n’t no manner ob use. When dey tried to climb ober de body ob de snake, de ole debbil gub hissself a shake, an’ down dey slipped from him sides, as if him skin had been coated from de slush cask. Ob course da wa’ soon all destroyed.”

“But yerself, Mozey; how did yez manage to ’scape?”

“Ah, how! dat wor de bess joke ob de whole. As I’s been tellin’ you, I war at de time only a piccaninny, ’bout ten years ob de age. I war considered ’bove de common for dat age, an’ wa’ employed in de house ob de chief which war called de palace. Well, jess when I see dat great big mouf sarchin’ from place to place an’ swallerin’ up ebberybody, I know it wan’t no use to hide down dar among de houses. Now dar war a big pole dat stood righ’ in front ob de palace, wif a flag floatin’ on de top. When de odder folk war runnin’ about ebbery wha else, I climbed up de pole, an’ when I got to de top, I drawed de flag roun’ me, so as to hide de whole ob my body. When dat ’ere debbil ob de woods had finished off wif de oder people, and cleared out de kraal complete, he nebber thought ’bout lookin’ up de pole, or ’spectin’ whether tha wa’ anybody wrop up in de flag at de top. Dis chile kep’ up dar till he see de snake ’tretch out him long body, an’ go back to de big foress. Den I slip down from de tree, an’ make my way to de nearest place wha da war people. As boaf my fadder and modder had been eat up ’long wi’ de ress, I atterwards left home an’ tuk to de sea. Dat’s why dis nigger hab wandered all de way fom dat ’ere island ob Mozabeek. Buf! de snake we see here, de spirit ob de water, a’n’t no more to de debbil ob de woods dan a tadpole am to de biggest alligator in all de waters ob de Amazum.”

Chapter Seventy Nine.

Saint Patrick's Performance.

Notwithstanding the serious air with which Mozey told his very improbable story, Tom did not appear to give implicit credence to it. He evidently suspected that the rogue had been cheating him; and, after several exclamations of wonder, but without betraying incredulity, he sat in silence, apparently cogitating some scheme for repaying him. It was not long before an opportunity offered, his companion unintentionally furnishing him with a cue.

"I's hab heer, Massa Tum, dat dar am no snake in de country wha you come from. Dat 'ere de troof?"

"Yis. Nayther snake nor toad in owld Oireland,—nayther could live for a single hour, if ye plants them thare. The green island wudn't contain thim bekase they're condimned to die the moment they sit fut on the sod."

"But what condemn dem?"

"Saint Pathrick, to be shure. Trath, thare's a story about that. May be yez wud loike to be afther hearin' it, Mozey?"

"Like um berry much, Massy Tum."

"Will, thin, I'll till it to yer. It isn't such a wondherful story as yours; but it had a bettther indin', as yer'll see when ye've heerd it. Instid av the snakes killin' all the people exciptin' wan, the riptiles got killed thimsilves, all but wan,—that was the father of ivry sirpint in the world. He's livin' yit, an' must now be about five thousand years uv age. So the praste sez.

"A long toime ago, owld Oireland was very badly infisted wid thim craythers. They wur so thick all over the swate island, that yez cudn't sit your fut down widout triddin' on wan av their tails; an' to kape out av their way the people had to build a great scaffoldin' that extinded all over the counthry, and slape on the threes, just as we've been doin' over the gyapo.

"Whiniver they wanted anythin' to ate, such as purtaties, an' the loike, they were compilled to git it up from the ground wid long forks; and whin they wur in need to dhrink, they had to dip it up in buckets, as if they were drawin' it out av a well.

"Av coorse this was moighty inconvanient, an' cudn't last long no how. The worst ov it was, that the snakes, instid ov gettin' thinned off, were ivery year growin' thicker, by razin ov their large families ov young wuns. Will, it got so bad at last that ther' wusn't a spot av groun' bigger than the bunch ov your hand that warn't occupoyed by a snake, an' in some places they were two deep. The people up on the platform that I towld yez about, they cursed an' swore, an' raged, an' raved, an' at last prayed to be delivered from the inimy."

Here Tom paused to note the effect of his speech on his sable listener.

“But dey war delibered,—wur dey?”

“Trath, wur they. If they hadn’t, is it at all loikely that yer wud see me here? Will, the people prayed. Not as your countrymen prays, to a stick or a stone, or beloike to the sarpints themselves, that could do them no benefit; but to a lady, that was able to protect them. We, in owld Oireland, call her the Virgin Mary. She was the mother av Him that came down from the siventh heaven to save us poor sinners. But what’s the use of my tryin’ to explain all that to an ignorant haythen, loike you?”

“No use, Massa Tum, no use,” rejoined the African, in a tone of resignation.

“Never moind, Mozey. The lady heerd their prayer, and that was an ind to it.”

“She killed da snakes!”

“Arrah now; did yez think the Virgin Mary—a raal lady as she was—ud be afther doin’ such dhirty work as slaughter a whole island full of venomous sarpents? Not a bit av that same. It’s true they were desthroyed; but not by her own swate hands. She sinds a man to do the work for her. She sint Sant Pathrick.”

“O, I’s heerd ye ’peak ob dat man, many’s de time, Massa Tum. ’Twur him dat kill de sarpents, wur it?”

“Trath was it.”

“But how’d he do it? It muss hab take um a berry long time to destroy um all.”

“There ye are intirely asthray, nager. It only occupied him wan day, an’ not all the day nayther, for he had done the work a thrifle ov a hour or so afther dinner-time.”

“Gollys! how’d he do all dat?”

“Will! ye see, he invited all the snakes to a grand banquit. He had such a charmin’ way wid him that they wun an’ all agreed to come. The place was on the top of a high mountain,—called the Hill of Howth,—far hoigher than any in the Andays we saw when crossin’ thare. The faste he had provided for them was a colliction of toads, includin’ every wun ov thim that inhabited the island. The toads he had invited too; an’ the stupid craythers, not suspictin’ anythin’, come willingly to the place.

“Now yez must undherstand, nager, that the snakes are moighty fond of toads, and frogs too; but Saint Pathrick had no ill-will against the frogs, an’ they wur exchused from comin’. As it was, the toads wur axed at an earlier hour than the snakes, an’ got first to the top of the hill; an’ while they were waitin’ there to see what was to be done, the sarpints came glidin’ up, and bein’ tould that their dinner was spread before them, they fell to, an’ swallowed up every toad upon the hill, which was every wun there was in all Oireland.”

The narrator made a long pause, either to draw breath after such a declamation, or to give time for his companion to indulge his astonishment.

“Gora!” exclaimed the latter, impatient for further explanation. “How ’bout de snakes demselves? Surely dey didn’t swallow one anodder?”

“Trath! an’ that’s jest what they did do,—every mother’s son of them.”

“But dat ’ere doan’ ’tan’ to reezun, unless dey hab a fight one wif de odder? Splain yourself, Massa Tum.”

“Will, yez have guessed it exactly widout my sayin’ a word. They *did* have a foight, that went all roun’ through the whole crowd, like a shindy in Donnybrook fair. Yez would loike to hear how it begun. Will, I’ll tell ye. There was two kinds av the riptile. Wan they called ‘Ribbon snakes,’ an’ the tother ‘Orange snakes,’ by rason av their colour, both in politics and religion. They had a king over both that lived mighty foine at their expinse. But he couldn’t manage to keep thim continted with payin’ him taxes, unless by sittin’ the wan agaynst the tother. An’ this he did to the full av his satisfacshin. Now the bad blood that was betwane thim showed itself at that great gatherin’ worse than iver it had done afore. Thare wasn’t toads enough to give them all a full male; and by way of dissart they thought they’d turn to an’ ate wun another. Av course that was just what Sant Pathrick wanted; for he wasn’t plazed at their having two sorts of religion. So the ould praste hugged thim on in the quarrel, till it come to blows, an’ inded in both kinds killin’ an’ atin’ wun another till there was nothing lift av ayther exceptin’ the tails.”

“Golly! what becomed of de tails?”

“O, thim? The people jumped down from the scaffolds and gathered thim up into a hape, and thin made a great bonfire av thim, and aftherwardt spred the ashes over the groun’; and that’s what makes ould Oireland the greenest gim av the oshin.”

“But, Massa Tum, you hab say dat one ob de snakes ’scape from the genr’l congregation?”

“Trath did I say it. Wun did escape, an’ ’s livin’ to make mischief in ould Oireland to this very day.”

“Which one was he?”

“Their king.”

“De king. How you call um, Massa Tipprary?”

“The Diwel.”

Chapter Eighty.

Lights Ahead.

The expression of incredulity had now floated from the countenance of the Irishman to that of the African, who in turn suspected himself imposed upon. The leer in Tom's eye plainly declared that he considered himself "quits" with his companion; and the two remained for some moments without further exchange of speech. When the conversation was resumed, it related to a theme altogether different. It was no longer on the subject of snakes, but stars.

The pilot perceived that the one hitherto guiding him was going out of sight,—not by sinking below the horizon, but because the sky was becoming overcast by thick clouds. In ten minutes more there was not a star visible; and, so far as direction went, the helm might as well have been abandoned. Tom, however, stuck to his paddle, for the purpose of steadying the craft; and the breeze, as before, carried them on in a direct course. In about an hour after, this gave token of forsaking them; and, at a still later period, the log lay becalmed upon the bosom of the lagoon.

What, next? Should they awake the others and communicate the unpleasant intelligence? Tom was of opinion that they should, while the negro thought it would be of no use. "Better let dem lie 'till," argued he, "and hab a good night res. Can do no good wake um up. De ole craff muss lay to all de same, till dar come anodder whif ob de wind!"

While they were disputing the points, or rather after they had done disputing, and each held his tongue, a sound reached their ears that at once attracted the attention of both. It was rather a chorus of sounds, not uttered at intervals, but continued all the time they were listening. It bore some resemblance to a distant waterfall; but now and then, mingling with the hoarser roaring of the torrent, were voices as of birds, beasts, and reptiles. None of them were very distinct. They appeared to come from some point at a great distance off. Still, they were loud enough to be distinguished, as sounds that could not proceed out of the now tranquil bosom of the lagoon.

Perhaps they might sooner have attracted the notice of the two men, but for the sighing of the breeze against the sail, and the rippling of the water as it rushed along the sides of the ceiba. When these sounds had ceased, the conversation that ensued produced the same effect; and it was only after the dispute came to a close that the disputants were made aware that something besides their own voices was disturbing the tranquillity of the night.

"What is it, I wondher?" was the remark of Tipperary Tom. "Can yez tell, Mozey?"

"It hab berry much de soun' ob a big forress!"

"The sound av a forest? What div yez mane by that?"

"Wha' shud I mean, but de voices ob de animal dat lib in de forress. De birds an' de beast, an' de tree frogs, an' dem 'ere crickets dat chirps 'mong de trees. Dat's what dis nigger mean."

"I b'lieve ye're right, nager. It's just that same. It can't be the wather, for that's did calm; an' it can't purceed from the sky, for it don't come in that direction. In trath it's from the forest, as ye say."

"In dat case, den, we muss be near de odder side ob de lagoa, as de Indyun call um,—jess wha we want to go."

"Sowl, thin, that's good news! Will we wake up the masther an' till him av it? What do yez think?"

"Dis nigga tink better not. Let um all sleep till de broke ob day. Dat can't be far off by dis time. I hab an idee dat I see de furs light ob mornin' jess showin' out yonner, at de bottom ob de sky. Gora! what's yon? Dar, dar! 'trait afore de head. By golly! dar's a fire out yonner, or someting dat hab de shine ob one. Doan ye see it, Massa Tum?"

"Trath, yis; I do see somethin' shinin'. It a'n't them fire-flies, div yez think?"

"No! 'ta'n't de fire-fly. Dem ere flits about. Yon ting am steady, an' keeps in de same place."

"There's a raal fire yandher, or else it's the willy-wisp. See! be me troth thare's two av thim. Div yez see two?"

"Dar *am* two."

"That can't be the willy-wisp. He's niver seen in couples,—at laste, niver in the bogs av Oireland. What can it be?"

"What can which be?" asked Trevannion, who, at this moment awaking, heard the question put by Tom to the negro.

"Och, look yandher! Don't yez see a fire?"

"Certainly; I see something very like one,—or rather two of them."

"Yis, yis; there's two. Mozey and meself have just discovered thim."

"And what does Mozey think they are?"

"Trath, he's perplexed the same as meself. We can't make hid or tail av thim. If there had been but wan, I'd a sayed it was a willy-wisp."

"Will-o'-the-wisp! No, it can scarce be that,—the two being together. Ah! I hear sounds."

"Yes, masther, we've heerd thim long ago."

"Why didn't you awake us? We must have drifted nearly across the lagoa. Those sounds, I should say, come out of the forest, and that, whatever it is, must be among the trees. Munday! Munday!"

“Hola!” answered the Indian, as he started up from his squatting attitude: “what is it, patron? Anything gone wrong?”

“No: on the contrary, we appear to have got very near to the other side of the lagoon.”

“Yes, yes!” interrupted the Indian as soon as the forest noises fell upon his ear; “that humming you hear must come thence. *Pa terra!* lights among the trees!”

“Yes, we have just discovered them. What can they be?”

“Fires,” answered the Indian.

“You think it is not fire-flies?”

“No; the *loengos* do not show that way. They are real fires. There must be people there.”

“Then there is land, and we have at last reached *terra firma*.”

“The Lord be praised for that,” reverently exclaimed the Irishman. “Our troubles will soon be over.”

“May be not, may be not,” answered the Mundurucú, in a voice that betrayed both doubt and apprehension.

“Why not, Munday?” asked Trevannion. “If it be fires we see, surely they are on the shore; and kindled by men. There should be some settlement where we can obtain assistance?”

“Ah, patron! nothing of all that need follow from their being fires; only that there must be men. The fires need only be on the shore, and as for the men who made them, instead of showing hospitality, just as like they make take a fancy to eat us.”

“Eat us! you mean that they may be cannibals?”

“Just so, patron. Likely as not. It’s good luck,” pursued the tapuyo, looking around, “the wind went down, else we might have been carried too close. I must swim towards yon lights, and see what they are, before we go any nearer. Will you go with me, young master?”

“O, certainly!” replied Richard, to whom the question was addressed.

“Well, then,” continued the tapuyo, speaking to the others, “you must not make any loud noise while we are gone. We are not so very distant from those fires,—a mile or thereabout; and the water carries the sound a long ways. If it be enemies, and they should hear us, there would be no chance of escaping from them. Come, young master, there’s not a minute to spare. It must be very near morning. If we discover danger, we shall have but little time to get out of its way in the darkness; and that would be our only hope. Come! follow me!”

As the Indian ceased speaking, he slipped gently down into the water, and swam off to the two lights whose gleam appeared every moment more conspicuous.

“Don’t be afraid, Rosetta,” said Richard, as he parted from his cousin. “I warrant it’ll turn out to be some plantation on the bank, with a house with lights shining through the windows, and white people inside, where we’ll all be kindly received, and get a new craft to carry us down to Pará. Good by for the present! We’ll soon be back again with good news.”

So saying, he leaped into the water and swam off in the wake of the tapuyo.

Chapter Eighty One.

An Aerial Village.

The swimmers had not made many hundred yards when they saw beyond doubt that the forest was not far off. It was even nearer than they had at first imagined, the darkness having deceived them; and perhaps the log may have drifted nearer while they were under the impression that they lay becalmed.

At all events, they were now scarcely a quarter of a mile from the forest, which they knew stretched along the horizon as far as they could have seen had it been daylight. They could only just distinguish a dark belt or line rising above the surface of the water before them; but that this extended right and left to a far distance could be told from the sounds that came from it. There was the hum of tree-crickets and cicadas, the *gluck* of toads and frogs, the screams of aquatic birds, the hooting of owls, and the strange plaintive calls of the goat-suckers, of which several species inhabit the Gapo forests; the whip-poor-will and the “willy-come-go” all the night long giving utterance to their monotonous melody. Harsher still were the cries proceeding from the throats of howling monkeys, with now and then the melancholy moaning of the *ai*, as it moved slowly through the branches of the *embaüba* (cecropia-tree). All these sounds, and a score of other kinds,—some produced by insects and reptiles of unknown species,—were blended in that great choir of nature which fills the tropical forest with its midnight music.

The two swimmers, however, paid no attention to this fact; their whole thoughts being occupied by the lights, that, as they advanced, grew every moment more conspicuous. There was no longer any doubt about these being the blaze of fires. It was simply a question of where the fires were burning, and who had kindled them.

The young Paraense supposed them to be upon the shore of the lagoa. About this, however, his companion expressed a doubt. They did not seem to burn steadily, their discs appearing now larger and now less. Sometimes one would go out altogether, then blaze up afresh, while another was as suddenly extinguished. The younger of the two swimmers expressed astonishment at this intermittence, which his companion easily explained. The fires, he said, were placed at some distance from the edge of the forest, among the trees, and it was by some tree-trunk now and then intervening that the illusion was caused.

Silently the swimmers approached, and in due time they glided in under the shadow of the thick foliage, and saw the fires more distinctly. To the astonishment of Richard—for the tapuyo did not seem at all astonished—they did not appear to be on the ground, but up in the air! The Paraense at first supposed them to have been kindled upon the top of some eminence; but, on scanning them more closely, he saw that this could not be the case. Their gleaming red light fell upon water shining beneath, over which, it was clear, they were in some way suspended.

As their eyes became accustomed to the glare, the swimmers could make out that the fires were upon a sort of scaffold raised several feet above the water, and supported by the trunks of the trees. Other similar scaffolds could be seen, on which no fires had been kindled,—from the fact, no doubt, that their occupants were not yet astir.

By the blaze human figures were moving to and fro, and others were on the platforms near by, which were more dimly illuminated; some entering, some coming forth from “toldos,” or sheds, that stood upon them. Hammocks could be seen suspended from free to tree, some empty, and some still holding a sleeper.

All this was seen at a single glance, while at the same time were heard voices, that had been hitherto drowned by the forest choir, but could now be distinguished as the voices of men, women, and children,—such as might be heard in some rural hamlet, whose inhabitants were about bestirring themselves for their daily avocations.

The tapuyo, gliding close up to the Paraense, whispered in his ear, “A malocca!”

“An Indian village!” Richard rejoined. “We’ve reached *tierra firme*, then?”

“Not a bit of it, young master. If the dry land had been near, those fires wouldn’t be burning among the tree-tops.”

“At all events, we are fortunate in falling in with this curious malocca, suspended between heaven and earth. Are we not so?”

“That depends on who they are that inhabit it. It may be that we’ve chanced upon a tribe of cannibals.”

“Cannibals! Do you think there are such in the Gapo?”

“There are savages in the Gapo who would torture before killing,—you, more especially, whose skins are white, remember, with bitterness, what first drove them to make their home in the midst of the water-forests,—the white slave-hunters. They have reason to remember it; for the cruel chase is still kept up. If this be a malocca of Muras, the sooner we get away, the safer. They would show you whites no mercy, and less than mercy to me, a red man like themselves. We Mundurucús are their deadliest enemies. Now, you lie still, and listen. Let me hear what they are saying. I know the Mura tongue. If I can catch a word it will be sufficient. Hush!”

Not long had they been listening, when the Indian started, an expression of anxiety suddenly overspreading his features, as his companion could perceive by the faint light of the distant fires.

“As I expected,” said he, “they are Muras. We must be gone, without a moment’s loss of time. It will be as much as we can do to paddle the log out of sight before day breaks. If we don’t succeed in doing so, we are all lost. Once seen, their canoes would be too quick for us. Back, back to the monguba!”

Chapter Eighty Two.

A Slow Retreat: in the Arcade.

Their report spread consternation among the crew. Trevannion, incredulous of the existence of such bloodthirsty savages as Munday represented the Muras to be, was disposed to treat it as an exaggeration. The young Paraense, who, when in his father's house, had met many of the up-river traders, and heard them conversing on this very theme, was able to endorse what the Mundurucú said. It was well-known to the traders that there were tribes of wild Indians inhabiting the Gapo lands, who during the season of the inundation made their home among the tree-tops,—that some of these were cannibals, and all of them savages of a most ferocious type, with whom an encounter in their native wilds, by any party not strong enough to resist them, might prove both dangerous and deadly.

There was no time to argue; and without further opposition the ex-miner himself sprang to one of the paddles, the tapuyo taking the other. They had no idea of going back across the lagoa. To have proceeded in that direction would have been to court discovery. With such slow progress as theirs, a mile would be about all they could make before daybreak; and, out on the open water, their craft would be distinguishable at three times that distance. The course counselled by the tapuyo was to keep at first parallel to the line of the trees; and then enter among these as soon as the dawn began.

As the party retreated, not two, but ten fires were seen gleaming among the trees, filling the forest with their bright coruscation. The tapuyo explained that each new light denoted the uprising of a fresh family, until the whole malocca was astir. The fires were kindled to cook the breakfast of the Indians. Notwithstanding this domestic design, our adventurers looked back upon them with feelings of apprehension; for they were not without fears that, roasted over those very fires, they might furnish the savages with the material for a cannibal repast!

To all appearance never did the ceiba go slower,—never lie so dull upon the water. Despite the vigorous straining of strong arms, it scarcely seemed to move. The sail was of no service, as there was not a breath of air, but was rather an obstruction; and, seeing this, Mozey let loose the halyards and gently lowered it.

They had hardly made half a mile from the point of starting, when they saw the dawn just appearing above the tops of the trees. They were upon the equator itself, where between dawn and daylight there is but a short interval of time. Knowing this, the craft was turned half round, and pulled towards a place of concealment. As they moved on to make it, they could see the sunlight stealing over the surface of the water, and the fires becoming paler at its approach. In ten minutes more, daylight would be upon them!

It was now a struggle against time,—a trial of speed between the ceiba and the sun,—both slowly approaching a critical point in their course. Trevannion and the tapuyo plied the paddles as men rowing for their lives and the lives of others dear to them. They almost felt as if the sun favoured them; for he not only seemed to suspend his rising, but to sink back in his course. Perhaps it was only the shadow of the trees, under which they had now entered. At all events,

they were in the midst of obscurity, propelling the dead-wood into the embouchure of an igarápe, overshadowed with drooping trees, that, like a dark cavern, promised them a hiding-place.

At the moment of entering, it was so dark they could not tell how far the opening extended. In this uncertainty they suspended the stroke of their paddles, and suffered the ceiba to come to a standstill. As yet they had no other light than that afforded by the fire-flies that flitted under about the trees. But these were of the large species, known as *Cocuyos* (*Elater noctilucus*), one of which, when held over the page of a printed book, enables a person to read; and as there were many of them wandering about, their united sparkle enabled our adventurers to make out that the creek was of very limited extent.

Gradually, as the sun rose higher, his light fell gently glimmering through the leaves, and showed that the arcade was a *cul de sac*, extending only about a hundred yards into the labyrinth of branches and parasitical plants. They had entered, so to speak, a court through which there was no thoroughfare; and there they must remain. They could only get out of it by taking to the tree-tops, or else by returning to the open lagoon. But they had had enough of travelling through the tree-tops, while to abandon the craft that had carried them so comfortably, and that might still avail them, was not to be thought of.

As to returning to the open water, that would be like delivering themselves into the very jaws of the danger they were desirous to avoid; for, once seen by the savages, there would not be the slightest chance of escape. They were provided with canoes moored among the tree-trunks that formed the supports of their aerial habitations. Clumsy structures enough; but, no matter how clumsy or slow, they were swifter than the dead-wood; and in the event of a chase the latter would be easily overhauled and captured. Only one course offered any prospect of safety,—to remain all day in the arcade, trusting that none of the savages might have any business near the place. At night they could steal out again, and by an industrious use of their paddles put a safer distance between themselves and the dangerous denizens of the malocca.

Having determined on this, they drew their craft into the darkest corner, and, making it fast to a tree, prepared to pass the time in the pleasantest possible manner.

There was not much pleasure sitting in that silent, sombre shadow; especially as they were in dread that its silence might be disturbed by the wild shout of a savage. They had taken every precaution to escape discovery. The little fire left burning upon the log had been extinguished by Munday, immediately on seeing the two lights first described. They would fain have rekindled it, to cook a breakfast; but fearing that the smoke might be seen, they chose that morning to eat the charqui raw.

After breakfast they could do nothing but keep their seats, and await, with such patience as they might command, the development of events. It was not all darkness around them. As the little creek penetrated the trees in a straight line, they commanded a view of a portion of the lagoon. Their situation was very similar to that of a person inside a grotto or cavern on the sea-shore, which commands a view of the ocean stretching away from its mouth, the bright space gradually widening as it recedes in the distance. Though themselves seated in the midst of obscurity, they could see brightness beyond the opening of the bay,—the sun shining with a golden gleam upon the water.

On this their eyes were kept,—not in the hope of seeing anything there that might give them gratification, but rather desiring that nothing should be seen. Notwithstanding the obscurity that surrounded them, they could not divest themselves of the idea that one passing the entrance of the creek could see them distinctly enough; and this kept them in constant apprehension.

They had no need to keep watch in any other direction. Behind them, and on each side, extended the unbroken wall of tree-tops, shaded with lianas, worked and woven together into a network that appeared impenetrable even to the wild animals of the forest. Who would have looked for an enemy in human shape to come that way?

Up to noon no incident occurred to disturb the tranquillity of the place or in any way add to their apprehensions. Now and then a bird appeared, winging its way over the bright band illumined by the sun, or poising itself for a moment and then plunging downward upon some prey it had detected in the water. All these appearances only increased their confidence; as the presence of the birds, undisturbed at their ordinary avocations, indicated the absence of human beings.

The same conclusion was drawn from the behaviour of a brace of large fish-cows, at some distance outside, directly in front of the arcade. When first noticed, they were engaged in some sort of rude gambol, at which they continued for a full half-hour. After that, one of them swam off, while the other, laying itself along the water, appeared to go to sleep.

It was a tantalising sight to the eyes of the old tapuyo; and it was just as much as he could do to restrain himself from swimming out and attacking the sleeper, either with his knife or the pashuba spear. The danger, however, would have been too great, not from a conflict with the cow, but of being seen by the sharp-eyed savages.

In view of this, the Mundurucú resisted the temptation, and consented, though not without reluctance, to let the peixe-boi continue its slumbers uninterrupted.



Chapter Eighty Three.

Following the Float.

Unfortunately for our adventurers, as well as for the cow-fish itself, other eyes than those of the tapuyo had been watching the gambols of the two cetaceans, and had paid particular attention to the one now taking its siesta on the surface. Neither Munday nor his companions had any suspicion of this; for, excepting the peixe-boi itself, no living creature was in sight. Having observed it for a considerable length of time, still reclining in its attitude of repose, they had almost ceased to think of it; when all at once it was seen to spring clear out of the water, and, after making two or three grotesque plunges, sink suddenly below the surface!

The action was too violent and unnatural to be voluntary. The peixe-boi had evidently been assailed in its sleep by some enemy, from which it was but too eager to retreat.

But what could this enemy be? The tapuyo knew of nothing *under* the water that was likely to have made the attack. There are no sharks nor swordfish in the Gapo, and an alligator would scarcely dare to meddle with a creature of such enormous dimensions. Much less could an enemy have come from the air. There is no bird in South America, not even the great condor itself, that would think of swooping down upon a peixe-boi.

Some of the party said that they had seen something glancing towards the cow-fish at the moment it made the leap,—something that looked like a flash of lightning! What could that be? There was no cloud in the sky, no thunder. It could not have been lightning.

“*Pa terra!*” exclaimed the tapuyo, in evident alarm. “I know what it was. Keep quiet or we are lost!”

“What was it?”

“A harpoon,—look yonder, patron! Don’t you see the water in motion where the juarouá went down?”

“Certainly I do. That’s very natural. The waves are caused by the plunging of the animal.”

“The waves! not that; look again. You see a thin ripple. There’s a cord making it. Yonder’s the float! and close behind that you will see something more. There, there he is!”

Sure enough, there was a rippling line caused by a cord drawn rapidly along the surface; at the end of this a small buoy of wood dragged rapidly after, and close behind a canoe, with an Indian in it, the Indian in a bent attitude, plying his paddle, and evidently in pursuit of the wounded cow-fish. The log was a “float,” the line drawing it along was at its other end attached to a harpoon, and that harpoon had its barbs buried in the body of the peixe-boi!

Such a specimen of a human being, even for a savage, none of the spectators—the tapuyo perhaps excepted—had ever beheld. He was as naked as if he had never been outside the Garden of Eden; and this very nakedness displayed a form that, but for the absence of a hairy

covering, more resembled that of a monkey than a man. A body extremely attenuated, yet pot-bellied, too; a pair of long, thin arms, with legs to match, the latter knotted at the knees, the former balled at the elbows; a huge head, seemingly larger from its mop of matted hair; a face with high cheeks and sunken eyes,—gave him an appearance more demoniac than human. No wonder that little Rosa screamed as he came in sight, and that dismay exhibited itself on the features of several others of the party.

“Hush!” whispered Munday. “Silence all! Not a word, or we shall be seen, and then not he, but perhaps a hundred of his tribe—Hush!”

Fortunately the scream of Rosita had been only slight; and the savage, in eager pursuit of the peixe-boi, had not heard it, for he continued the chase without pause.

He had no difficulty in discovering the whereabouts of his game. The float guided him; for, no matter where the cow went, the tether was still attached to her, and the movement of the log along the surface betrayed to the eye of her pursuer every change of direction.

Two or three times, the savage, dropping his paddle, was enabled to lay hold of the line and commence hauling in; but the great strength of the juarouá, as yet unexhausted, proved too much for him, and he was compelled to let go or be pulled out of his craft.

The latter was but a frail concern, of the smallest and rudest kind,—consisting of a shell of bark, gathered up at both ends and tied by sipos, so as to give it somewhat the shape of an ordinary canoe. Even when paddling with all his strength, its owner could make no great speed; but great speed was not required in the chase of a peixe-boi with a barbed spear sticking through its skin and rankling between its ribs. It only required patience, until the huge creature should become exhausted with its struggles and enfeebled by the loss of blood. Then might the conquest be completed without either difficulty or danger.

For twenty minutes or more the chase continued; the float being dragged hither and thither, until it had crossed the water in almost every direction. Sometimes both log and canoe were in sight, sometimes only one of them, and sometimes neither,—at such times the cow-fish having passed far beyond the limits of clear water visible to the spectators.

On the last of these occasions, several minutes had elapsed before the chase came again in sight. Our adventurers were in hopes they would see no more of either fish, float, or follower. The interest they might otherwise have taken in such a curious spectacle was destroyed by the thought of the danger that would result in their being discovered.

Just as they had begun to congratulate themselves that they were to be spared this misfortune, the float once more came before their eyes, still being dragged along the surface, but with much less rapidity than when last seen. The manatee was coming into the arcade, the canoe following close after, with the hideous savage eagerly plying his paddle, while, with outstretched neck and wild, scintillating orbs, he peered inquiringly into the darkness before him!

There was no chance to escape discovery.

Chapter Eighty Four.

A Cannibal Captured.

The fears of those standing upon the ceiba could not have been greater than that of the savage himself, as his canoe came bumping against the dead-wood, and he saw standing above him a crowd of human forms. A wild cry escaping from his lips expressed his terror and astonishment. Then a second, in louder tone, was intended to give the alarm to his kindred, who might possibly hear it.

With an Indian, as with the wild animals, presence of mind is rather an instinct than an act of reason. Instead of being disconcerted by what he saw, and losing time to recover himself, the Mura at once plunged his paddle into the water, and commenced beating backward, assisted by the recoil of the canoe, which, on striking the dead-wood, had rebounded from it by the violence of the collision.

In a moment he had sculled himself almost clear of the arcade; he was already within a few feet of its mouth, and would soon be back upon the open lagoa, when he would undoubtedly make for the malocca, and bring the whole tribe of cannibals upon them. None of the party thought of pursuing him. There was an attempt made to seize the canoe at the moment of its closing upon the log, but the craft had recoiled so suddenly after the collision, and been paddled so rapidly out of reach, that it all ended in Tipperary Tom getting soused in the water, and nearly drowned before he could be dragged out again. The attempt at seizure might have had a different result had Munday been among those who made it. But he was not.

He was nowhere to be seen upon the log, nor anywhere else! What had become of him? None of them could say. Little Rosa was the only one who could give any explanation of his absence. She thought she had seen him slip off at the back of the log, while the canoe was coming on in front. She was not sure, it was so dark upon that side; and she had been too much engaged in regarding the approach of the savage.

Had he made off to conceal himself among the tree-tops? Had he gone to secure his own safety, and abandoned his friends to their fate? They could not think this. Such a cowardly act would have been contrary to all they knew of the brave Mundurucú, whose faithfulness had so many times been put to the severest test. No one could account for it.

Just at that critical moment when the canoe had reached the mouth of the arcade, a dark round thing, like a human head, rose up in the water some six feet before it, and then another dark thing, wonderfully like a human hand, shot up beside the head, followed by a long and sinewy arm. The hand was seen to strike upward and clutch the canoe close by the stem; and then the craft went down, one end under water, while the other flew up into the air; then there was a capsize,—the savage, with a shriek and a loud splash, falling out; and then there was a struggle,—now under water, now above the surface,—accompanied by strange choking noises, as if two enormous alligators were engaged in a conflict of life and death.

As the astonished spectators continued to gaze upon the scene,—still but imperfectly

comprehended by them,—they saw that the combatants were coming nearer, as if the struggle was being carried on towards the end of the arcade, and was likely to terminate where they stood.

And there it did end, immediately after, by the missing tapuyo making his appearance alongside the log, and dragging beside him the man who had made that involuntary “header” from the canoe.

The latter no longer resisted. The knife-blade glittering between Munday’s teeth—a taste of whose quality the savage had already experienced—hindered him from offering any further resistance; and as they came up to the log, the two were swimming side by side peaceably, only that the action of one was evidently involuntary, while the other was directing it.

It was more like the companionship of a policeman and a thief, than that of two swimmers who chanced to be going the same way. One arm of the Mura was clutched by the Mundurucú, as if the captive was partly supported while being dragged along.

“Reach out there, patron, and pull him up!” cried Munday, as he conducted his captive alongside the log. “I don’t want to kill the animal, though that might be the safest way in the end.”

“No, no, don’t do that!” returned Trevannion, who now, along with all the others, had arrived at a full comprehension of the affair. “We can keep him secure enough; and, if his shouts have not been heard, we need not fear having him along with us.” As the patron spoke, he reached down, and, laying hold of the captive, drew him close to the side of the dead-wood. Then, assisted by Munday in the water and Mozey upon the log, the Mura was hoisted aboard.

Once upon the dead-wood, a more abject wretch than the captive Mura could not have been found. He trembled from head to foot,—evidently believing that he was about to be killed, and perhaps eaten. He had only consented to be taken in the knowledge—which Munday had in some way conveyed to him—that resistance could but end in instant death; and there are few, even amongst the most reckless of savages, who will not yield to this.

As he stood dripping upon the dead-wood, a red stream, trickling down his wet skin from a knife-wound in the shoulder, explained how the tapuyo had made known to him the idleness of resistance. It was a first stab, and not dangerous; but it had given a foretaste of what was to follow, had the struggle been kept up. After receiving this hint, the Mura had surrendered; and the after commotion was caused by his being towed through the water by a captor who was required to use all his strength and energy in supporting him.

While the canoe-man was advancing up the arcade, the Mundurucú, instead of waiting till he came near, had dropped quietly into the water, and swum in an outward direction, as if intending to meet the manatee-hunter, face to face. This he actually did,—met and passed him, but without being seen. The darkness favoured him, as did also the commotion already caused by the wounded cow-fish, which in its passage up the creek had left large waves upon the water. These, striking against the trunks of the trees, created a still further disturbance, amidst which the swimmer’s dark face and long swarthy locks could not have been easily distinguished.

Supporting himself by a branch, he awaited the return of the savage,—knowing that as soon as the latter set eyes upon the others he would instantly beat a retreat. All turned out just as the tapuyo had anticipated; and just as he had designed did he deal with the canoe-man.

In all this, the only thing that appeared singular was the tapuyo's taking so much pains to go out near the entrance, instead of boldly laying hold of the canoe as it passed him on its way inwards, or indeed of waiting for it upon the log,—where any one of the others, had he been a strong swimmer and armed with a knife, might have effected the capture.

Munday, however, had good reasons for acting as he had done. While the canoe was approaching, who could tell that it would come close up? It had done so, even to striking the dead-wood with its bow; but Munday could not rely upon such a chance as that. Had the savage discovered their presence a little sooner, he would have turned and sculled off, before any swimmer could have come up with him.

A similar reason was given for gliding stealthily past, and getting on the other side. Had the Mundurucú acted otherwise, he might have been perceived before he could seize the canoe, and so give time for the manatee-hunter to make off. As this last would have been a terrible contingency, rendering their discovery almost a certainty, the cunning old man knew how important it was that no mismanagement should occur in the carrying out of his design.

"If that rascal's shout has been heard," said Trevannion, "there will be but little chance of our escaping capture. From what you saw, I suppose there are hundreds of these hideous creatures. And we, without weapons, without the means either of attack or defence, what could we do? There would be nothing for it but to surrender ourselves as prisoners."

The Mundurucú was not able to offer a word of encouragement. To have attempted defence against a whole tribe of savages, armed, no doubt, with spears and poisoned arrows, would have been to rush madly on death.

"It is fortunate," continued the ex-miner, "that you have not killed him."

"Why, patron?" demanded the tapuyo, apparently in some surprise.

"It would have made them revengeful; and if we have the ill-luck to be taken, they would have been the more certain to destroy us."

"No, no," answered the Indian,—“not a bit more certain to do that. If, as you say, we have the bad luck to become their captives, we shall be killed all the same. Their old revenge will be strong enough for that; and if not their revenge, they have an appetite that will insure our destruction. You understand, patron?"

This conversation was carried on in a low tone, and only between Trevannion and the tapuyo.

"O Heaven!" groaned the ex-miner, turning his eyes upon his children. "It would be a fearful fate for—for all of us."

"The more reason for doing all we can to avoid falling into their hands."

“But what can we do? Nothing! If they discover our hiding-place before nightfall, then we shall surely be taken.”

“Admit that, master; but if they do not—”

“If they do not, you think there would be some hope of our getting away from them?”

“A good hope,—a good hope.”

“On the raft?”

“Better than that, patron.”

“You have some plan?”

“I’ve been thinking of one; but it’s no use to speak of it, so long as we are in doubt this way. If we are left unmolested until night, then, patron, it will be time to declare it. Could you but promise me that this screecher hasn’t been heard, I think I could promise you that by midnight we should not only be beyond the reach of his bloodthirsty fellows, but in a fair way of getting out of our troubles altogether. Ha! yonder’s something must be looked to; I forgot that.”

“What?”

“The *igarité*. How near it was to betraying us! Its course must be stopped this instant.” And he once more slipped down into the water and swam away.

The canoe, out of which the Mura had been so unceremoniously spilled, and which was now bottom upwards, was drifting outward. It was already within a few feet of the entrance, and in another minute would have been caught by the breeze stirring beyond the branches of the trees. Once outside, it would soon have made way into the open lagoon, and would have formed a conspicuous mark for the eyes of the malocca.

Munday swam silently, but with all his strength, towards it. It must be reached before it could drift outside; and for some time there was apprehension in the minds of the spectators that this might not be done. The only one of them that would have been gratified by a failure was the captive Mura. But the wretch showed no sign of his desire, knowing that there would be danger in his doing so. He was held fast in the strong arms of the negro; while Tipperary Tom stood near, ready to run him through with the spear in case of his making any attempt to escape.

Their apprehensions soon came to an end. The tapuyo overtook it before it had cleared the screening of tree-tops; and, laying hold of a piece of cord which was attached to its stem, took it in tow. In less than five minutes after, it might have been seen right side up, lying like a tender alongside the grand monguba.

Chapter Eighty Five.

A Day Spent in Shadow.

All day long did our adventurers abide in silence, keeping close in their shadowy retreat. Now and then only the Mundurucú swam to the entrance of the arcade; and, screened by the trees, took a survey of the open water outside. He saw only a canoe, larger than that he had captured, with three men in it, out upon the lagoon, about two hundred yards from the edge, and opposite the malocca, which could not itself be seen, as it was some distance back among the trees; but, from the bearings he had taken on the night previous, the tapuyo knew where it lay.

He watched the canoe so long as it remained in sight. The gestures of the savages who were in it showed that they were occupied in fishing, though what sort of fish they might be taking in the flooded lake Munday could not guess. They stayed about an hour; and then, paddling their craft back among the trees, were seen no more.

This gratified the tapuyo and those to whom he made his report. It was evidence that the harpooner had come out alone, and that, while striking the cow-fish, he had not been observed by any of his people. Had that incident been witnessed, every canoe in possession of the tribe would have instantly repaired to the spot.

Since the killing of a juarouá is an event of rare occurrence in the season of the *vasanté*, when it does transpire it causes the same joyful excitement in a malocca of Amazonian Indians as the capture of a great walrus would in a winter village of Esquimaux. It was, therefore, quite clear to our adventurers, that no suspicion had been aroused as to the cause of the harpooner's absence from the malocca, and so they were enabled to endure their imprisonment with calmer confidence, and higher hopes of finally effecting their escape.

How long would this state of things continue? How long might the Mura be away before his absence should excite suspicion and lead to a search?

"As to such a thing as this," said Munday, pointing contemptuously to the shivering captive, "he'll no more be missed than would a coaita monkey that had strayed from its troop. If he's got a wife, which I don't suppose he has, she'll be only too glad to get rid of him. As for any one of them coming after him through affection, as you call it, there you're all out, patron. Among Muras there's no such feeling as that. If they'd seen him strike the juarouá it might have been different. Then their stomachs would have brought them after him, like a flock of hungry vultures. But they haven't seen him; and unless chance guides some one this way we needn't be in any fear for to-day. As for the morrow, if they'll only stay clear till then, I think I can keep my promise, and we shall not only be beyond reach of Muras, but out of this wretched lagoon altogether."

"But you spoke of a plan, good Munday; you have not yet told us what it is."

"Wait, master," he rejoined; "wait till midnight, till the lights go out in the Mura village, and perhaps a little longer. Then you shall know my plan by seeing it carried into execution."

“But does it not require some preparations? If so, why not make them while it is daylight? It is now near night; and you may not have time.”

“Just so, patron; but night is just the preparation I want,—that and this knife.”

Here Munday exhibited his shining blade, which caused the Mura captive to tremble all over, thinking that his time was come. During all the day he had not seen them eat. They had no chance to kindle a fire for cooking purposes, apprehensive that the smoke, seen above the tree-tops, might betray them to the enemy. Some of them, with stronger stomachs than the rest, had gnawed a little of the *charqui* raw. Most had eaten nothing, preferring to wait till they should have an opportunity of cooking it, which the Mundurucú had promised them they should have before morning of the next day. Their abstinence was altogether misunderstood by the Mura. The wretch thought they were nursing their hunger to feed upon his flesh.

Could he have seen himself as he was in their eyes, he might have doubted the possibility of getting up such an appetite. They had taken due precautions to prevent his making his escape. Tied hand and foot by the toughest sipos that could be procured, he was also further secured by being fastened to the monguba. A strong liana, twisted into a rope, and with a turn round one of the buttress projections of the roots, held him, though this was superfluous, since any attempt to slide off into the water must have terminated by his going to the bottom, with neither hands nor feet free.

They were determined, however, on making things doubly sure, as they knew that his escape would be the signal for their destruction. Should he succeed in getting free, he would not need his canoe; he could get back to his village without that, for, as Munday assured them, he could travel through the trees with the agility of an ape, or through the water with the power of a fish; and so could all his people, trained to the highest skill both in climbing and swimming, from the very nature of their existence.

There was one point upon which Trevannion had had doubts. That was, whether they were really in such danger from the proximity of this people as Munday would have them believe. But the aspect of this savage, who could now be contemplated closely, and with perfect coolness, was fast solving these doubts; for no one could have looked in his face and noted the hideous expression there depicted without a feeling of fear, not to say horror. If his tribe were all like him,—and the tapuyo declared that many of them were still uglier,—they must have formed a community which no sane man would have entered except upon compulsion.

No wonder, then, that our adventurers took particular pains to keep their captive along with them, since a sure result of his escape would be that they would furnish a feast for the Mura village. Had he been left to himself, Munday would have taken still surer precautions against his getting off; and it was only in obedience to the sternest commands of Trevannion that he was withheld from acting up to the old adage, “Dead men tell no tales.”

Chapter Eighty Six.

The Cry of the Jaguar.

The night came on without any untoward incident; but no sooner was the sun fairly below the horizon than they became aware of a circumstance that caused them serious annoyance, if not absolute alarm. They saw the full round moon rising, and every indication of the most brilliant moonlight. The Mundurucú, more than any of them, was chagrined at this, because of the importance of having a dark night for carrying out his scheme, whatever it was. In fact, he had declared that a dark night was indispensable, or, at all events, one very different from that which the twilight promised them.

The original intention had been, as soon as night set in, to get the dead-wood once more into the open water, and then, if the wind should be in their favour, to bend the sail and glide off in any direction that would take them away from the malocca. If there should be no wind, they could use the paddles and creep round the edge of the lagoa, going as far as might be before another sun should expose them to view. It was doubtful whether they could row the dead-wood, before daybreak, beyond eyeshot of the savages; but if not, they could again seek concealment among the tree-tops, and wait for night to continue their retreat.

This intention was likely to be defeated by the clear shining of a tropical moon. As she rose higher in the heavens, the lagoa became all white effulgence; and as there was not the slightest ripple upon the water, any dark object passing along its surface would have been seen almost as distinctly as by day. Even the little canoe could not have been carried outside the edge of the trees without the danger of being seen from afar.

That the entrance to the arcade and the tree-line outside could be seen from the malocca was a thing already determined, for the tapuyo had tested it during the day. Through the foliage in front of the village he could see here and there some portions of the scaffoldings, with the *toldos* erected upon them, while its position was also determined by the smoke rising from the different fires.

As soon as night had come on, he and the young Paraense had made a reconnoissance, and from the same place saw the reflection of the fires upon the water below, and the gleaming fires themselves. Of course they who sat or stood around them could see them, should they attempt to go out with the monguba. This scheme, then, could only be resorted to should the moon be obscured, or “put out,” as Munday said, by clouds or fog.

Munday admitted that his plan *might* be put in practice, without the interposition of either; but in this case it would be ten times more perilous, and liable to failure. In any case he did not intend to act until midnight. After that, any time would do before the hour of earliest daybreak. Confiding in the craft of the old tapuyo, Trevannion questioned him no further, but along with the rest waited as patiently as possible for the event.

The water-forest was once more ringing with its nocturnal chorus. Tree-toads and frogs were sending forth their metallic monotonous; *cicadae* and lizards were uttering their sharp *skirling*

notes, while birds of many kinds, night-hawks in the air, *strigidae* among the trees, and water-fowl out upon the bosom of the lagoon, were all responding to one another. From afar came lugubrious vociferations from the throats of a troop of howling monkeys that had made their roost among the branches of some tall, overtopping tree; and once—what was something strange—was heard a cry different from all the rest, and on hearing which all the rest suddenly sank into silence.

That was the cry of the jaguar tiger, the tyrant of the South American forest. Munday recognised it on the instant, and so did the others; for they had heard it often before, while descending the Solimoës. It would have been nothing strange to have heard it on the banks of the mighty river, or any of its tributaries. But in the Gapo, it was not only strange, but significant, that scream of the jaguar. “Surely,” said Trevannion on hearing it, “surely we must be in the neighbourhood of land.”

“How, patron?” replied the Mundurucú, to whom the remark was particularly addressed. “Because we hear the voice of the *jauarité*? Sometimes the great tiger gets overtaken by the inundation, and then, like ourselves, has to take to the tree-tops. But, unlike us, he can swim whenever he pleases, and his instinct soon guides him to the land. Besides, there are places in the Gapo where the land is above water, tracts of high ground that during the *vasanté* become islands. In these the *jauarité* delights to dwell. No fear of his starving there, since he has his victims enclosed, as it were, in a prison, and he can all the more conveniently lay his claws upon them. The cry of that *jauarité* is no sure sign of dry land. The beast may be twenty miles from *terra firma*.”

While they were thus conversing, the cry of the jaguar once more resounded among the tree-tops, and again was succeeded by silence on the part of the other inhabitants of the forest.

There was one exception, however; one kind of creatures not terrified into stillness by the voice of the great cat, whose own voices now heard in the interval of silence, attracted the attention of the listeners. They were the Muras. Sent forth from the malocca, their shouts came pealing across the water, and entered the shadowy aisle where our adventurers sat in concealment, with tones well calculated to cause fear; for nothing in the Gapo gave forth a harsher or more lugubrious chant.

Munday, however, who had a thorough knowledge of the habits of his national enemies, interpreted their tones in a different sense, and drew good augury from them. He said that, instead of grief, they betokened joy. Some bit of good luck had befallen them, such as the capture of a cow-fish, or a half-score of monkeys. The sounds signified feasting and frolic. There was nothing to denote that the sullen savage by their side was missed from among them. Certainly he was not mourned in the malocca.

The interpretation of the tapuyo fell pleasantly upon the ears of his auditors, and for a while they felt hopeful. But the gloom soon came back, at sight of that brilliant moon,—a sight that otherwise should have cheered them,—as she flooded the forest with her silvery light, till her rich rays, scintillating through the leafy llianas, fell like sparks upon the sombre surface of the water arcade.

Chapter Eighty Seven.

The Moon Put Out.

Midnight came, and still the moon shone too clear and bright.

Munday began to show uneasiness and anxiety. Several times had he taken that short swim, like an otter from its earth or a beaver from its dome-shaped dwelling, each time returning to his companions upon the log, but with no sign of his having been gratified by the excursion. About the sixth trip since night had set in, he came swimming back to the dead-wood with a more pleased expression upon his countenance.

"You've seen something that gratifies you?" said Trevannion, interrogatively; "or heard it, perhaps?"

"Seen it," was the laconic reply.

"What?"

"A cloud."

"A cloud! Well?"

"Not much of a cloud, patron; no bigger than the spread skin of the cow-fish there; but it's in the east, and therefore in the direction of Gran Pará. That means much."

"What difference can it make in what direction it is?"

"Every difference! If from Gran Pará 'tis up the great river. Up the great river means rain,—perhaps thunder, lightning, a storm. A storm is just what we want."

"O, now I see what you mean. Well?"

"I must go back to the mouth of the *igarapé*, and take another look at the sky. Have patience, patron, and pray for me to return with good news." So saying, the tapuyo once again slipped down into the water, and swam towards the entrance of the arcade.

For a full half-hour was he absent; but long before his return the news he was to bring back had been told by signs that anticipated him. The moonbeams, hitherto seen striking here and there through the thinner screen of the foliage, had been growing dimmer and dimmer, until they were no longer discernible, and uniform darkness prevailed under the shadow of the trees. So dark had it become, that, when the swimmer returned to the ceiba, they were only warned of his approach by the slight plashing of his arms, and the next moment he was with them.

"The time has come," said he, "for carrying out my scheme. I've not been mistaken in what I saw. The cloud, a little bit ago not bigger than the skin of the *juarouá*, will soon cover the whole sky. The rags upon its edge are already blinding the moon; and by the time we can get under

the scaffolds of the malocca it will be dark enough for our purpose.”

“What! the scaffolds of the malocca! You intend going there?”

“That is the intention, patron.”

“Alone?”

“No. I want one with me,—the young master.”

“But there is great danger, is there not?” suggested Trevannion, “in going—”

“In going there is,” interrupted the tapuyo; “but more in not going. If we succeed, we shall be all safe, and there’s an end of it. If we don’t, we have to die, and that’s the other end of it, whatever we may do.”

“But why not try our first plan? It’s now dark enough outside. Why can’t we get off upon the raft?”

“Dark enough, as you say, patron. But you forget that it is now near morning. We couldn’t paddle this log more than a mile before the sun would be shining upon us, and then—”

“Dear uncle,” interposed the young Paraense, “don’t interfere with his plans. No doubt he knows what is best to be done. If I am to risk my life, it is nothing more than we’re all doing now. Let Munday have his way. No fear but we shall return safe. Do, dear uncle! let him have his way.”

As Munday had already informed them, no preparation was needed,—only his knife and a dark night. Both were now upon him, the knife in his waist-strap, and the dark night over his head. One other thing was necessary to the accomplishment of his purpose,—the captured canoe, which was already prepared, laying handy alongside the log.

With a parting salute to all,—silent on the part of the tapuyo, but spoken by the young Paraense, a hope of speedy return, an assurance of it whispered in the ear of Rosita,—the canoe was shoved off, and soon glided out into the open lagoon.

Chapter Eighty Eight.

An Hour of Suspense.

Scarce had the canoe with its living freight faded out of sight, when Trevannion repented his rashness in permitting his nephew to risk his life in a scheme so ill understood as the tapuyo's.

He had no suspicion of the Indian's good faith. It was not that that caused him regret; only a certain compunction for having so easily consented to expose to a dread danger the life of his brother's son,—a life intrusted to his care, and for which he should be held answerable by that brother, should it be his fortune ever to see him again.

But it was of no use to indulge in these regrets. They were now idle. The act which had caused them was beyond recall. The canoe must go on to its destination. What was that? Trevannion could not even conjecture. He only knew that Munday had started for the malocca; but his purpose in going there was as much a mystery as though he had pretended to have gone on a voyage to the moon.

Trevannion even felt angry with the tapuyo, now that he was out of reach, for having concealed the plan of his enterprise and the extent of the danger to be encountered. But there was now no alternative but to await the return of the tapuyo, or the time that would tell he was never more to return.

It had been fixed by the Indian himself, in a speech whispered into the ear of Trevannion as he pushed off the canoe. It was this: "A word, patron! If we're not back before daylight, stay where you are till to-morrow night. Then, if it be dark, do as we proposed for to-night. Steal out and away. But don't fear of our failing. I only say that for the worst. The Mundurucú has no fear. *Pa terra!* in an hour's time we shall be back, bringing with us what we're in need of,—something that will carry us clear of our enemies and of the Gapo."

So the party remained seated on the log. Each had his own conjecture about Munday's plan, though all acknowledged it to be a puzzle.

The surmise of Tipperary Tom was sufficiently original. "I wondher now," said he, "if the owld chap manes to set fire to their town! Troth, it's loike enough that's what he's gone afther. Masther Dick sayed it was ericted upon scaffolds wid bames of wood an' huts upon them that looked loike the laves of threes or dry grass. Shure them would blaze up loike tindher, an' create a moighty conflagrayshin."

The opinion of Tom's auditors did not altogether coincide with his. To set the malocca on fire, even if such a thing were possible, could do no good. The inhabitants would be in no danger from conflagration. They would only have to leap into the flood to save themselves from the fire; and, as they could all swim like water-rats, they would soon recover a footing among the trees. Besides, they had their great rafts and canoes, that would enable them to go wherever they wished. They could soon erect other scaffolds, and construct other huts upon them. Moreover, as Munday and Richard had informed them, the scaffolds of the malocca were placed a score

of yards apart. The flames of one would not communicate with the other through the green foliage of that humid forest. To fire the whole village with any chance of success, it would be necessary to have an incendiary under each scaffold, all applying the torch together. It could not be for that purpose the tapuyo had gone forth.

While engaged in the debate, they got so engrossed by it as to become neglectful of a duty enjoined upon them by the tapuyo, to keep a strict watch over the captive. It was Tipperary Tom and the Mozambique, who had been charged with this guardianship. Both, however, confident that it was impossible for the savage to untie himself, had only glanced now and then to see that he was there, his bronze-coloured body being scarcely visible in the obscurity.

As it grew darker, it was at length impossible for them to distinguish the captive from the brown surface of the ceiba, except by stooping down over him, and this both neglected to do. Little dreamt they of the sort of creature they were dealing with, who could have claimed rivalry with the most accomplished professors of the famous rope-tricks.

As soon as he saw that the eyes of his sentinels were no longer upon him, he wriggled himself out of the sipos with as much ease as if he had been an eel, and, sliding gently from the log, swam off.

It was a full half-hour after his departure before either of the sentinels thought of giving any attention to the state of their prisoner. When they did so, it was to find him gone, and the coils of tree-rope lying loosely upon the log. With simultaneous exclamations of alarm, they turned towards Trevannion, and then all looked in the direction of the lagoa, thinking they might see a swimmer going out. Instead of that they saw, through the dim light, what appeared to be a fleet of canoes, with men in them violently wielding their paddles, and directing their crafts right into the arcade!



Chapter Eighty Nine.

Scuttling the Canoes.

The Mundurucú and his young companion, having paddled their craft out of the little creek, turned its head towards the Mura village. Though the fires were no longer blazing so brightly as at an earlier hour of the night, there was still a red glow seen here and there, that told the position of the scaffolds, and served as a beacon to direct their course. But they needed no such pilotage. The border of the forest was their guide, and along this they went, taking care to keep close in under its shadow. It was dark enough out upon the open water to prevent their being observed; but the Mundurucú was accustomed to act with extreme circumspection, and more than ever since the mistake we recorded some time before.

As the malocca was but a short distance from the forest border, the tree-line would bring them close to its water frontage. Beyond that he could trust to the guidance of the surrounding fires.

Less than half an hour's use of the paddle—its blade dipped gently in the water—brought them within a hundred yards of the outskirts of the village. Although the expedition was not to end here, it was not their design to take the canoe any farther. I say *their* design, for by this time the young Paraense had been made acquainted with his companion's purpose. The chief reason why Munday had not disclosed it to Trevannion was, that the patron, deeming it too dangerous, might have put a veto upon its execution. What this plan was, will be learnt by a relation of the mode in which it was carried out.

Tying the canoe to a tree in such a way that they could easily detach it again, the two slipped over the gunwale, and laid themselves silently along the water. Each was provided with a swimming-belt; for the task they had undertaken might require them to remain a good while afloat; and, moreover, it would be necessary for them now and then to remain still, without making any noise by striking the water to sustain themselves, while, furthermore, they would need at times to have both arms free for a different purpose. Thus accoutred, and Munday armed with his knife, they swam under the scaffolds.

They were careful not to cause the slightest commotion,—careful, too, to keep out of the narrow belts of light that fell slantingly from the fires above. These were becoming fewer, and fast fading, as the fires, one after another, went out. It appeared certain that the whole village was asleep. No human form was seen, no voice heard; no sign of human beings, save the scaffolding that had been constructed by them, and the half-score of boats in the water underneath, moored to the trunks of the supporting trees.

It was to these vessels that the Mundurucú was directing himself and his coadjutor. Though his eyes were everywhere, his mind was fixed upon them. There were, in all, about half a score of them, six being *igarités*, or canoes rudely constructed of tree-bark, similar in shape and fashion to that they had just parted from, but three of them of larger size, each capable of containing about eight men. The others were large rafts or punts of rude fabrication, each big enough to support a toldo hut, with a whole family, and a number of friends to boot.

Only to the canoes did the tapuyo direct his attention. On swimming past the punts he did not even stay to regard them. To all the igarités, however, except one,—and it the largest,—he paid a visit; stopping a considerable time alongside each, but lying so low in the water that only his head could have been seen above the surface, and scarcely that through the treble shadow of the night, the scaffolds, and the tree-tops. It was only visible to his companion, whose face was all the while within three feet of his own, and whose hands were employed in assisting him in his subtle task. What was this task, so silent and mysterious?

In each of the five canoes to which the swimmers had paid their silent visit, and just after their departure from it, could have been heard a gurgling sound, as of water gushing up through a hole in the bottom. It was heard, but only by him who had made the hole and the companion who had held the craft in its place while the knife-blade was accomplishing its purpose. To its sharp point the soft tree-bark had yielded, and in ten minutes' time the five canoes, one after another, were scuttled, and, if left to themselves, in a fair way of going to the bottom.

But they were not left to themselves. They would have been, but for the negligence of Tom and the sable Mozambique. Just as the scuttlers had concluded their part of the task, and were about to climb into the sixth canoe, that had been left seaworthy, a dark form that might have been taken for some demon of the flood was seen to rise out of the water, and stand dripping upon one of the rafts. It stood only for a second or two,—just long enough to draw breath,—and then, laying hold of a knotted liana that formed a sort of stair, it climbed to the scaffolding above.

Dim as was the light, the Mundurucú recognised the dripping climber as the captive he had left on the log. "*Santos dios!*" he muttered, in a hoarse whisper, "'tis the Mura. They've let him escape, and now we're discovered. Quick, young master. Into the igarité. All right; there are two paddles: you take one, I the other. There's not a moment to be lost. In ten minutes more we should have been safe; but now—see! they are filling fast. Good! If he gives us but ten minutes before raising the alarm—Ha! there it is. Off! off!"

While the tapuyo was speaking, still in a muttered undertone, a wild yell was heard upon the scaffolding above. It was a signal sent forth by the returned captive to warn his slumbering nation, not that their navy was being scattered in its very dock by an unknown enemy, for he had neither seen the scuttler nor suspected what had been going on, but simply to tell his tribe of the adventure that had befallen himself, and conduct them in all haste to the spot where he had parted from his detested but careless captors. He had seen the two of them go off in the igarité, impudently appropriating his own vessel before his face. Where could they have gone, but to make a nocturnal investigation of the malocca?

It was for this reason he had himself approached it so stealthily, not raising any note of alarm until he felt safe upon the scaffolding of his own habitation. Then did he send forth that horrid haloo-loo.

Scarce had its echoes ceased to reverberate through the village, when it was answered by a hundred voices, all shouting in a similar strain, all giving a response to the tribe's cry of alarm. Men could be heard springing from their hammocks, and dropping down upon the platforms, the timbers of which creaked under quick, resonant footsteps. In the dim light some were seen hastily snatching up their bows, and preparing to descend to their canoes, little suspecting that

they would find them scuttled and already half swamped.

As Munday had said, there was not a moment to be lost; and, acting up to his words, he did not permit one to be lost. In the large igarité propelled by the two paddles, he and his assistant stole off among the trees, and were soon out upon the lagoon, pulling, as fast as their strength and skill would permit them, in the direction of the creek.



Chapter Ninety.

The Log Left Behind.

The escape of their captive had caused the keenest apprehensions to the people upon the raft, which were scarce intensified at the sight of the canoe entering the arcade.

By the simplest reasoning they had leaped to the quick conclusion that the latter was but the sequence of the former. The Mura had swum back to his malocca. They knew he could easily do it. He had *learned* his kindred, and it was they who now manned the igarité that was making approach. It was only the first of a whole fleet. No doubt there was a score of others coming on behind, each containing its complement of cannibals. The manatee-hunter had got back to his village in time to tell of the two who had gone there in his own canoe. These, unaware of his escape, had, in all probability, been surprised and taken prisoners. Shouts had been heard from the village just before the man was missed. It was this, in fact, that had caused them to think of their prisoner. On finding that he had given them the slip, they interpreted the shouts in two ways. They were either salutations of welcome to the returned captive, or cries of triumph over the death or capture of the tapuyo and his companion.

More like the latter. So thought they upon the log; and the thought was strengthened by the appearance of the big canoe at the entrance of the arcade. Its crew were Mura savages, guided to their place of concealment by him who had stolen away.

These conjectures, varied though they were, passed through their minds with the rapidity of thought itself; for scarce ten seconds had elapsed from the time of their sighting the canoe until it was close up to the ceiba.

Then to their great joy, they saw they had been reasoning wrongly. The two forms had been magnified into ten, partly through the deception of the dim light, and partly because they had been springing from side to side while paddling the canoe and steering it into the creek.

As they drew near, the others could see that they were in a state of the wildest excitement, working with all their strength, and gazing anxiously behind them.

“Quick, uncle,” cried Richard, as the igarité struck against the dead-wood. “Quick! all of you get aboard here.”

“*Pa terra!*” added the tapuyo. “Do as he tells you. By letting your prisoner get off you’ve spoiled my plans. There’s no time to talk now. Into the igarité! If the others are still afloat—then—then—Haste, patron! Everybody into the igarité!”

As the Indian gave these directions, he himself sprang on to the log; and tearing down the skin sail, he flung it into the canoe. After it he pitched several pieces of the charqui, and then descended himself.

By this time all the others had taken their seats in the canoe, Richard having caught little Rosa

in his arms as she sprang down.

There was not a moment of delay. The two paddles belonging to the igarité were grasped, one by Munday himself, the other by the negro, who was next best rower, while the two bladed with the bones of the cow-fish were in the hands of Trevannion and his nephew.

There were thus four available oars to the craft, that promised a fair degree of speed.

With a last look at the log that had carried them safely, though slowly,—a look that, under other circumstances, might have been given with regret,—they parted from it, and in a score of seconds they had cleared the craft from the branches of the trees, and were out upon the bosom of the lagoon.

“In what direction?” inquired Trevannion, as for a moment their strokes were suspended.

“Stay a minute, patron,” replied the tapuyo, as he stood up in the igarité and gazed over the water in the direction of the Mura village. “Before starting, it’s as well to know whether they are able to follow us. If not, it’s no use killing ourselves by hard work.”

“You think there’s a chance they may not come after us?”

“A chance,—yes. It would have been a certainty if you had not let that ape loose. We should now be as safe from pursuit as if a hundred leagues lay between us and them. As it is, I have my fears; there was not time for them to go down,—not all of them. The small ones may, but the big igarité,—it would be still afloat; they could bale out and caulk up again. After all, it won’t carry the whole tribe, and there’s something in that,—there’s something in that.”

While the tapuyo thus talked he was standing with his head craned out beyond the edge of the igarité, scanning the water in the direction of the village. His final words were but the involuntary utterance of what was passing in his mind, and not addressed to his companions. Richard alone knew the meaning, for as yet the others had received no explanation of what had passed under the scaffolds. There was no time to give a detailed account of that. It would be soon enough when the igarité was fairly on its way, and they became assured of their safety.

No one pressed for an explanation. All, even Trevannion himself, felt humiliated by the thought that they had neglected their duty, and the knowledge that but for that very neglect the danger that threatened them would have been now at an end.

The dawn was already beginning to appear along the eastern horizon, and although it was far from daylight, there was no longer the deep darkness that but a short while before shrouded the water. Out on the lagoon, at any point within the circumference of a mile, a large object, such as a canoe, could have been seen. There was none in sight.

This looked well. Perfect stillness reigned around the Mura village. There was no human voice to be heard, where but the moment before there had been shouting and loud talking, both men and women taking part in what appeared a confused conversation. The fires, too, were out, or at all events no longer visible from the lagoon.

Munday remarked that the silence augured ill. "I fear they are too busy to be making a noise," said he. "Their keeping quiet argues that they have the means, as well as the intention, to come after us. If they had not, you would hear their howls of disappointment. Yes: we may be sure of it. They're emptying such of their canoes as may still be above water."

"Emptying their canoes! what mean you by that?"

Munday then explained the nature of his late expedition, now that its failure could no longer be charged upon himself. A few words sufficed to make the whole thing understood, the others admiring the bold ingenuity of the plan as strongly as they regretted having given cause for its being frustrated.

Though no pursuers had as yet appeared, that was no reason why they should stay an instant longer by the entrance to the arcade; so, once more handling the paddles, they put the great *igarité* to its best speed.



Chapter Ninety One.

The Enemy in Sight.

There was no debating the question as to the course they should take. This was opposite to the direction in which lay the malocca. In other words, they struck out for the open water, almost in the same track by which they had come from the other side while navigating the tree-trunk.

Trevannion had suggested keeping "in shore" and under the shadow of the tree-tops.

"No use," said the tapuyo; "in ten minutes more there will be light over the water. We'll be seen all the same, and by following the line of the forest we should give our pursuers the advantage; they, by keeping straight across, would easily overtake us. The trees go round in a circle, don't you see?"

"True," replied Trevannion; "I did not think of that. It is to be hoped we shall not have pursuers."

"If we have they will soon come up with us, for they have more paddles, and are better skilled in the use of them; if they come after us at all, they will be sure to overtake us."

"Then we shall be captured,—perhaps destroyed." This was spoken in a whisper in the ear of the tapuyo.

"It don't follow,—one or the other. If it did, I shouldn't have much hope in handling this bit of a stick. We may be pursued, overtaken, and still get off in the end. They may not like close quarters any more than we. That, you see, depends on how many of their vessels are gone to the bottom, and how many are still afloat. If more than half that were scuttled have sunk, we may dread their arrows more than their oars. If more than half are above water, we shall be in more danger from their speed."

Notwithstanding the enigmatical character of the tapuyo's speeches, Trevannion, as well as the others, was able to understand them. He simply meant that, if the enemy were left without a sufficient number of canoes to pursue them in large force, they would not think of boarding, but would keep at a distance, using their arrows in the attack.

It was by no means a pleasant prospect; still, it was pleasanter than the thought of coming to close quarters with a crowd of cannibal savages, and being either hacked to pieces with their knives, clubbed to death with their *macanas*, or dragged overboard and drowned in the lagoon.

"In five minutes more," continued the tapuyo, "we shall know the best or the worst. By that time it will be light enough to see in under the trees yonder. By that time, if they have a single igarité above water, she'll be baled out. By that time they should be after us. If we don't see them in five minutes, we need never look for them again."

A minute—another—a third elapsed, and still no appearance of pursuers or pursuit. Slower still seemed the fourth, though it too passed, and no movement on the water. Every heart beat with

hope that the time would transpire without any change. But, alas! it was not to be so. The black line was broken by the bow of a canoe, and in an instant after the craft itself was seen gliding out from under the shadow of the trees. The tapuyo's prediction was fulfilled.

"The big igarité!" he exclaimed. "Just what I had fears of; I doubted its going down in time. Eight in it! Well, that's nothing, if the others have sunk."

"But stay a moment," returned Richard; "see yonder! Another coming out, farther down to the right!"

"That's the cockle-shell we took from the harpooner. There are two in it, which is all it will hold. Only ten, as yet. Good! if that's their whole strength, we needn't fear their coming to close quarters. Good!"

"I can make out no more," said the young Paraense, who had suspended paddling to get a better view of the pursuers. "I think there are no more."

"Just my thoughts," rejoined the tapuyo. "I had that idea all along. I was sure the small craft had gone down. You remember we heard a splashing before we got well off,—it was caused by the sinking of the igarités. Our hope is that only the big one has kept afloat. As yet I see no others."

"Nor I," added Richard. "No, there are but the two."

"Thank Heaven for that!" exclaimed Trevannion. "There will be but ten against us. Though we are not equal in numbers, surely we should be a match for such puny savages as these. O that we only had arms!"

As he said this, the ex-miner looked into the bottom of the canoe to see what there was available in the way of weapons. There was the pashuba spear, which Munday had pitched in along with the strips of charqui; and there was another weapon equally effective in hands skilled in its use. It was a sort of barbed javelin or harpoon, the one with which the manatee-hunter had struck the juarouá. During the day, while doing nothing else, Munday had amused himself by completing the conquest of the peixe-boi, which he found, by the line and float, had got entangled among the tree-tops. Its carcass had been left where it was killed, for it was the weapon only which he coveted. In addition to these, there were the paddles,—those manufactured from the shoulder-blades of the cow-fish,—looking like weapons that it would be awkward to have come in contact with one's skull in a hostile encounter. Last, and not least to be depended upon, there was the tapuyo's own knife, in the use of which he had already given proofs of his skill. In a hand-to-hand contest with ten savages, armed as these might be, there was not so much to be dreaded.

But Munday assured them that there would be no danger of a close fight. There were no more canoes in sight. Twenty minutes had now elapsed since the two had shot out from the trees, and if there had been others they would long since have declared themselves. Arrows or javelins were the only weapons they would have to dread; and with these they would most certainly be assailed.

“They’ll be sure to overtake us,” said he; “there are six of them at the paddles, and it’s easy to see that they’re already gaining ground. That’s no reason why we should wait till they come up. When the fight takes place, the farther we’re away from their village the better for us; as who knows but they may fish up some of their swamped canoes, and come at us with a reserve force. To the paddles, then, and pull for our lives!”



Chapter Ninety Two.

The Chase.

On swept the igarité containing the crew of our adventurers; on came its kindred craft, manned by savage men, with the little canoe close following, like a tender in the wake of a huge man-of-war. They were not long in doubt as to what would be the upshot of the chase. It had not continued half an hour before it became clear, to pursuers as well as pursued, that the distance between the two large igarités was gradually growing less. Gradually, but not rapidly; for although there were six paddles plying along the sides of the pursuers and only four on the pursued, the rate of speed was not so very unequal.

The eight full-grown savages—no doubt the picked men of their tribe—were more than a fair complement for their craft, that lay with gunwales low down in the water. In size she was somewhat less than that which carried our adventurers; and this, along with the heavier freight, was against her. For all this, she was gaining ground sufficiently fast to make the lessening of the distance perceptible.

The pursued kept perfect silence, for they had no spirit to be noisy. They could not help feeling apprehensive. They knew that the moment the enemy got within arrow's reach of them they would be in danger of death. Well might such a thought account for their silence.

Not so with their savage pursuers. These could be in no danger unless by their own choice. They had the advantage, and could carry on war with perfect security to themselves. It would not be necessary for them to risk an encounter empty-handed so long as their arrows lasted; and they could have no fear of entering into the fight. Daring where there was no danger, and noisy where there was no occasion, they pressed on in the pursuit, their wild yells sent pealing across the water to strike terror into the hearts of the enemy.

Our adventurers felt no craven fear, not a thought of surrender, not an idea of submitting to be taken captives. By the most solemn asseverations the tapuyo had assured them that it would be of no use, and they need expect no mercy from the Muras. He had said so from the first; but now, after having taken one of their number captive and treated him with contempt, after scuttling their fleet of igarités, their natural instinct of cruelty would be intensified by a thirst for revenge, and no quarter need be looked for by any one who might fall into their hands.

Remembering the hideous creature who had escaped, seeing him again in his canoe as the pursuers came within distinguishing distance, seeing nine of his comrades quite as hideous as himself, and some of them in appearance far more formidable, the statement of the tapuyo did not fail to have an effect.

The crew of the chased igarité gave up all thought of surrender, each declaring his determination to fight to the death. Such was their mood when the savages arrived within bowshot.

The first act of hostility was a flight of arrows, which fell short of the mark. Seeing that the

distance was too great for them to do any havoc, the six who had been propelling the igarité dropped their bows, and once more took to the paddles.

The other two, however, with the spare man in the little canoe, were free to carry on their arrowy assault; and all three continued to twang their bows, sending shaft after shaft towards the chased igarité. Only one of the three appeared to have much skill in his aim or strength in his arm. The arrows of the other two either fell short or wide of the object aimed at, while his came plump into the igarité.

He had already sent three,—the first passing through the broad-spread ear of the negro,—no mean mark; the second scratching up the skin upon Tom's cheek; while the third, fired aloft into the air, dropped down upon the skin of the peixe-boi that sheltered little Rosa in the bottom of the boat, penetrating the thick, tough hide, and almost impaling the pretty creature underneath it.

This dangerous marksman was identified. He was the hero of the harpoon,—the captive who had given them the slip; and certain it is that he took more pains with his aim, and put more strength into his pull, than any of his competitors.

His fourth arrow was looked for with fearful apprehension. It came whistling across the water. It passed through the arm of his greatest enemy,—the man he most desired it to pierce,—the Mundurucú.

The tapuyo started up from his stooping attitude, at the same time dropping his paddle, not upon the water, but into the igarité. The arrow was only through the flesh. It did nothing to disable him, and he had surrendered the oar with an exclamation of anger more than pain. The shaft was still sticking in his left arm. With the right he pulled it out, drawing the feather through the wound, and then flung it away.

In another instant he had taken up the harpoon, with the long cord still attached to it, and which he had already secured to the stern of the igarité. In still another he was seen standing near the stern, balancing the weapon for a throw. One more instant and the barbed javelin was heard passing with a crash through the ribs of the savage archer! "Pull on! pull on!" cried he; and the three paddlers responded to the cry, while the pursuing savages, astounded by what they had seen, involuntarily suspended their stroke, and the harpooner, impaled upon the barbed weapon, was jerked into the water and towed off after the igarité, like one of his own floats in the wake of a cow-fish.

A wild cry was sent forth from the canoe of the savages. Nor was it unanswered from the igarité containing the crew of civilised men. The negro could not restrain his exultation; while Tom, who had nothing else to do, sprang to his feet, tossed his arms into the air, and gave tongue to the true Donnybrook Challenge.

For a time the pursuers did nothing. Their paddles were in hands that appeared suddenly paralysed. Astonishment held them stiff as statues.

Stirred at length by the instinct of revenge, they were about to pull on. Some had plunged their oar-blades into the water, when once more the stroke was suspended.

They perceived that they were near enough to the retreating foe. Nearer, and their lives would be in danger. The dead body of their comrade had been hauled up to the stern of the great igarité. The harpoon had been recovered, and was once more in the hands of him who had hurled it with such fatal effect.

Dropping their bladed sticks, they again betook them to their bows. A shower of arrows came around the igarité, but none fell with fatal effect. The body of their best archer had gone to the bottom of the Gapo. Another flight fell short, and the savage bowmen saw the necessity of returning to their paddles.

Failing to do so, they would soon be distanced in the chase. This time they rowed nearer, disregarding the dangerous range of that ponderous projectile to which their comrade had succumbed. Rage and revenge now rendered them reckless; and once more they seized upon their weapons.

They were now less than twenty yards from the igarité. They were already adjusting the arrows to their bow-strings. A flight of nine going all together could not fail to bring down one or more of the enemy.

For the first time our adventurers were filled with fear. The bravest could not have been otherwise. They had no defence,—nothing to shield them from the threatening shower. All might be pierced by the barbed shafts, already pointing towards the igarité. Each believed that in another moment there might be an arrow through his heart.

It was a moment of terrible suspense, but our adventurers saw the savages suddenly drop their bows, some after sending a careless shot, with a vacillating, pusillanimous aim, and others without shooting at all. They saw them all looking down into the bottom of their boat, as if there, and not elsewhere, was to be seen their most dangerous enemy.

The hole cut by the knife had opened. The caulking, careless from the haste in which it had been done, had come away. The canoe containing the pursuers was swamped, in less than a score of seconds after the leak had been discovered. Now there was but one large canoe upon the lagoon, and one small one,—the latter surrounded by eight dark human heads, each spurting and blowing, as if a small school of porpoises was at play upon the spot.

Our adventurers had nothing further to fear from pursuit by the savages, who would have enough to do to save their own lives; for the swim that was before them, ere they could recover footing upon the scaffolds of the malocca, would tax their powers to the utmost extent.

How the castaways meant to dispose of themselves was known to the crew of the igarité before the latter had been paddled out of sight. One or two of them were observed clinging to the little canoe, and at length getting into it. These, weak swimmers, no doubt, were left in possession of the craft, while the others, knowing that it could not carry them all, were seen to turn round and swim off towards the malocca, like rats escaping from a scuttled ship.

In twenty minutes' time, both they and the fishing-canoe were out of sight, and the great igarité that carried Trevannion and his fortunes was alone upon the lagoon.

Chapter Ninety Three.

Conclusion.

A volume might be filled with the various incidents and adventures that befell the ex-miner and his people before they arrived at Gran Pará,—for at Gran Pará, did they at length arrive. But as these bore a certain resemblance to those already detailed, the reader is spared the relation of them. A word only as to how they got out of the Gapo.

Provided with the Indian *igarité*, which, though a rude kind of craft, was a great improvement upon the dead-wood,—provided also with four tolerable paddles, and the skin of the cow-fish for a sail,—they felt secure of being able to navigate the flooded forest in any direction where open water might be found.

Their first thought was to get out of the lagoa. So long as they remained within the boundaries of that piece of open water, so long would their solicitude be keen and continuous. The savages might again come in search of them. Prompted by their cannibal instincts, or by revenge for the loss of one of their tribe, they would be almost certain to do so. The total destruction of their fleet might cause delay. But then there might be another malocca belonging to a kindred tribe,—another fleet of *igarités* not far off; and this might be made available.

With these probabilities in view, our adventurers gave their whole attention to getting clear of the lagoa. Was it land-locked, or rather “tree-locked,”—hemmed in on all sides by the flooded forest? This was a question that no one could answer, though it was the one that was of first and greatest importance.

After the termination of the chase, however, or as soon as they believed themselves out of sight, not only of their foiled foemen, but their friends at the malocca, they changed their course, steering the *igarité* almost at right angles to the line of pursuit.

By guidance of the hand of God, they steered in the right direction. As soon as they came within sight of the trees, they perceived a wide water-way opening out of the lagoa, and running with a clear line to the horizon beyond. Through this they directed the *igarité*, and, favoured by a breeze blowing right upon their stern, they rigged up their rude sail. With this to assist their paddling, they made good speed, and had soon left the lagoa many miles behind them.

They saw no more of the Muras. But though safe, as they supposed themselves, from pursuit, and no longer uneasy about the ape-like Indians, they were still very far from being delivered. They were yet in the Gapo,—that wilderness of water-forests,—yet exposed to its thousands of dangers.

They found themselves in a labyrinth of what appeared to be lakes, with land around them, and islands scattered over their surface, communicating with each other by canals or straits, all bordered with a heavy forest. But they knew there was no land,—nothing but tree-tops laced together with lianas, and supporting heavy masses of parasitical plants.

For days they wandered through its wild solitudes, here crossing a stretch of open water, there exploring some wide canal or narrow *igarápe*, perhaps to find it terminating in a *cul-de-sac*, or *bolson*, as the Spaniards term it, hemmed in on all sides by an impenetrable thicket of tree-tops, when there was no alternative but to paddle back again. Sometimes these false thoroughfares would lure them on for miles, and several hours—on one occasion a whole day—would be spent in fruitless navigation.

It was a true wilderness through which they were wandering, but fortunately for them it had a character different from that of a desert. So far from this, it more resembled a grand garden, or orchard, laid for a time under inundation.

Many kinds of fruits were met with,—strange kinds that had never been seen by them before; and upon some of these they subsisted. The Mundurucú alone knew them,—could tell which were to be eaten and which avoided. Birds, too, came in their way, all eaten by the Indians, as also various species of arboreal quadrupeds and quadrumana. The killing and capturing of these, with the gathering of nuts and fruits to supply their simple larder, afforded them frequent opportunities of amusement, that did much to beguile the tediousness of their trackless straying. Otherwise it would have been insupportable; otherwise they would have starved.

None of them afterwards was ever able to tell how long this Gypsy life continued,—how long they were afloat in the forest. Engrossed with the thought of getting out of it, they took no note of time, nor made registry of the number of suns that rose and set upon their tortuous wanderings. There were days in which they saw not the sun, hidden from their sight by the umbrageous canopy of gigantic trees, amidst the trunks of which, and under their deep shadows, they rowed the *igarité*.

But if not known how long they roamed through this wilderness, much less can it be told how long they might have remained within its mazes, but for a heaven-sent vision that one morning broke upon their eyes as their canoe shot out into a stretch of open water.

They saw a ship,—a ship sailing through the forest!

True, it was not a grand ship of the ocean,—a seventy-four, a frigate, or a trader of a thousand tons; nevertheless it was a ship, in the general acceptation of the term, with hull, masts, spars, sails, and rigging. It was a two-masted schooner, a trader of the Solimoës.

The old tapuyo knew it at a glance, and hailed it with a cheer. He knew the character of the craft. In such he had spent some of the best years of his life, himself one of the crew. Its presence was proof that they were once more upon their way, as the schooner was upon hers.

“Going down,” said the tapuyo, “going down to Gran Pará. I can tell by the way she is laden. Look yonder. *Sarsaparilla*, *Vanilla*, *Cascarilla*, *Maulega de Tortugos*, *Sapucoy*, and *Tonka* beans,—all will be found under that toldo of palm-leaves. Galliota ahoy! ahoy!”

The schooner was within short hailing distance.

“Lay to, and take passengers aboard! We want to go to Pará. Our craft isn’t suited for such a long voyage.”

The galliota answered the hail, and in ten minutes after the crew of the *igarité* was transferred to her decks. The canoe was abandoned, while the schooner continued on to the city of Gran Pará. She was not in the Solimoës itself, but one of its parallel branches, though, in two days after having taken the castaways aboard, she sailed out into the main stream, and thence glided merrily downward.

Those aboard of her were not the less gay,—the crew on discovering that among the passengers that they had picked up were the son and brother of their patron; and the passengers, that the craft that was carrying them to Gran Pará, as well as her cargo, was the property of Trevannion. The young Paraense found himself on board one of his father's traders, while the ex-miner was completing his Amazonian voyage in a "bottom" belonging to his brother.

The tender attention which they received from the *capatoz* of the galliota restored their health and spirits, both sadly shattered in the Gapo; and instead of the robber's garb and savage mien with which they emerged from that sombre abode, fit only for the abiding-place of beasts, birds, and reptiles, they soon recovered the cheerful looks and decent habiliments that befitted them for a return to civilisation.

A few words will tell the rest of this story.

The brothers, once more united,—each the owner of a son and daughter,—returned to their native land. Both widowers, they agreed to share the same roof,—that under which they had been born. The legal usurper could no longer keep them out of it. He was dead.

He had left behind him an only son, not a gentleman like himself, but a spendthrift. It ended in the ill-gotten patrimony coming once more into the market and under the hammer, the two Trevannions arriving just in time to arrest its descent upon the desk, and turn the "going, going" into "gone" in their own favour.

Though the estate became afterwards divided into two equal portions,—as nearly equal as the valuer could allot them,—and under separate owners, still was there no change in the name of the property; still was it the Trevannion estate. The owner of each moiety was a Trevannion, and the wife of each owner was a Trevannion, without ever having changed her name. There is no puzzle in this. The young Paraense had a sister,—spoken of, but much neglected, in this eventful narrative, where not even her name has been made known. Only has it been stated that she was one of "several sweet children."

Be it now known that she grew up to be a beautiful woman, fair-haired, like her mother, and that her name was Florence. Much as her brother Richard, also fair-haired, came to love her dark semi-Spanish cousin Rosita, so did her other dark semi-Spanish cousin, Ralph, come to love her; and as both she and Rosita reciprocated these cousinly loves, it ended in a mutual bestowing of sisters, or a sort of cross-hands and change-partners game of cousins,—whichever way you like to have it.

At all events, the Trevannion estates remained, and still remain, in the keeping of Trevannions.

Were you to take a trip to the "Land's End," and visit them,—supposing yourself to be endorsed with an introduction from me,—you would find in the house of young Ralph, firstly, his father, old

Ralph, gracefully enacting the *rôle* of grandfather; secondly, the fair Florence, surrounded by several olive-shoots of the Trevannion stock; and, lastly,—nay, it is most likely you will meet him first, for he will take your hat from you in the hall,—an individual with a crop of carrotty hair, fast changing to the colour of turnips. You will know him as Tipperary Tom. “Truth will yez.”

Cross half a dozen fields, climb over a stile, under the shadow of gigantic trees,—oaks and elms; pass along a plank foot-bridge spanning a crystal stream full of carp and trout; go through a wicket-gate into a splendid park, and then follow a gravelled walk that leads up to the walls of a mansion. You can only do this coming from the other house, for the path thus indicated is not a right of way.

Enter the dwelling to which it has guided you. Inside you will encounter, first, a well-dressed darkey, who bids you welcome with all the airs of an M.C. This respectable Ethiopian, venerable in look—partly on account of his age, partly from the blanching of his black hair—is an old acquaintance, by name Mozey.

He summons his master to your side. You cannot mistake that handsome gentleman, though he is years older than when you last saw him. The same open countenance, the same well-knit, vigorous frame, which, even as a boy, were the characteristics of the young Paraense.

No more can you have forgotten that elegant lady who stands by his side, and who, following the fashion of her Spanish-American race, frankly and without affectation comes forth to greet you. No longer the little Rosa, the *protégée* of Richard, but now his wife, with other little Rosas and Richards, promising soon to be as big as herself, and as handsome as her husband.

The tableau is almost complete as a still older Richard appears in the background, regarding with a satisfied air his children and grandchildren, while saluting their guest with a graceful gesture of welcome.

Almost complete, but not quite. A figure is absent from the canvas, hitherto prominent in the picture. Why is it not still seen in the foreground? Has death claimed the tapuyo for his own?

Not a bit of it. Still vigorous, still life-like as ever, he may be seen any day upon the Amazon, upon the deck of a galliote, no longer in the humble capacity of a tapuyo, but acting as *capatoz*,—as patron.

His old patron had not been ungrateful; and the gift of a schooner was the reward bestowed upon the guide who had so gallantly conducted our adventurers through the dangers of the Gapo, and shared their perils while they were “afloat in the forest.”

The End.

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