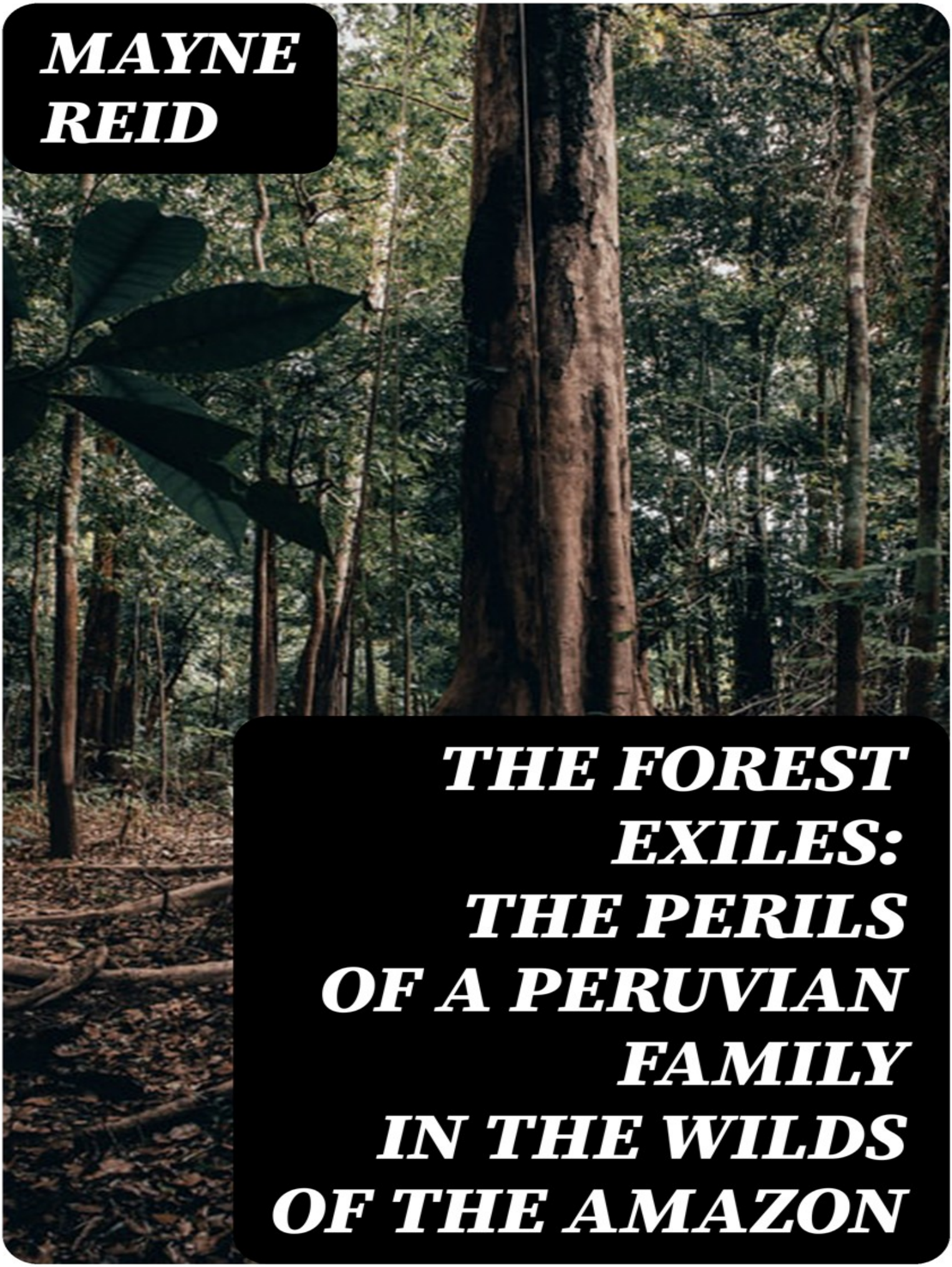

MAYNE REID

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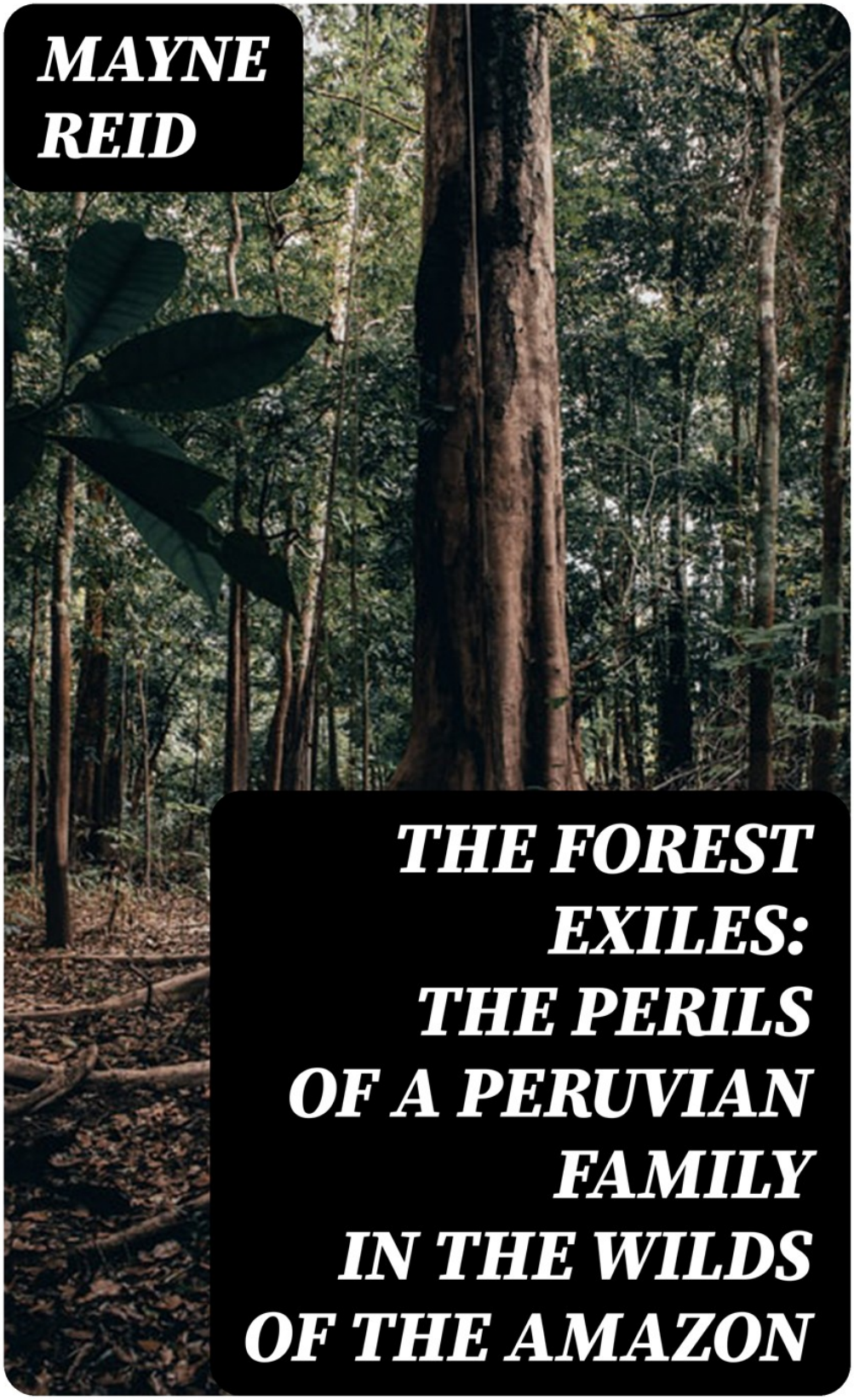

THE FOREST EXILES: THE PERILS OF A PERUVIAN FAMILY IN THE WILDS OF THE AMAZON

Mayne Reid

The Forest Exiles: The Perils of a Peruvian Family in the Wilds of the Amazon

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Chapter One.

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The biggest Wood in the World.

Boy reader, I am told that you are not tired of my company. Is this true?

“Quite true, dear Captain,—quite true!” That is your reply. You speak sincerely? I believe you do.

In return, believe *me*, when I tell you I am not tired of yours; and the best proof I can give is, that I have come once more to seek you. I have come to solicit the pleasure of your company,—not to an evening party, nor to a ball, nor to the Grand Opera, nor to the Crystal Palace, nor yet to the Zoological Gardens of Regent’s Park,—no, but to the great zoological garden of Nature. I have come to ask you to accompany me on another “campaign,”—another “grand journey” through the fields of Science and Adventure. Will you go?

“Most willingly—with you, dear Captain, anywhere.”

Come with me, then.

Again we turn our faces westward; again we cross the blue and billowy Atlantic; again we seek the shores of the noble continent of America.

“What! to America again?”

Ha! that is a large continent, and you need not fear that I am going to take you over old ground. No, fear not that! New scenes await us; a new *fauna*, a new *flora*,—I might almost say, a new earth and a new sky!

You shall have variety, I promise you,—a perfect contrast to the scenes of our last journey.

Then, you remember, we turned our faces to the cold and icy North,—now our path lies through the hot and sunny South. Then we lived in a log-hut, and closed every cranny to keep out the cold,—now, in our cottage of palms and cane, we shall be but too glad to let the breeze play through the open walls. Then we wrapped our bodies in thick furs,—now we shall be content with the lightest garments. Then we were bitten by the frost,—now we shall be bitten by sand-flies, and mosquitoes, and bats, and snakes, and scorpions, and spiders, and stung by wasps, and centipedes, and great red ants! Trust me, you shall have a change!

Perhaps you do not contemplate *such* a change with any very lively feelings of pleasure. Come! do not be alarmed at the snakes, and scorpions, and centipedes! We shall find a cure for every bite—an antidote for every bane.

Our new journey shall have its pleasures and advantages. Remember how of old we shivered as we slept, coiled up in the corner of our dark log-hut and smothered in skins,—now we shall swing lightly in our netted hammocks under the gossamer leaves of the palm-tree, or the feathery frondage of the ferns. Then we gazed upon leaden skies, and at night looked upon the cold constellation of the Northern Bear;—now, we shall have over us an azure canopy, and shall nightly behold the sparkling glories of the

Southern Cross, still shining as bright as when Paul and his little Virginie with loving eyes gazed upon it from their island home. In our last journey we toiled over bleak and barren wastes, across frozen lakes, and marshes, and rivers;—now we shall pass under the shadows of virgin forests, and float lightly upon the bosom of broad majestic streams, whose shores echo with the voices of living nature.

Hitherto our travels have been upon the wide, open prairie, the trackless plain of sand, the frozen lake, the thin scattering woods of the North, or the treeless snow-clad "Barrens." Now we are about to enter a great forest,—a forest where the leaves never fade, where the flowers are always in bloom,—a forest where the woodman's axe has not yet echoed, where the colonist has hardly hewed out a single clearing,—a vast primeval forest,—the largest in the world.

How large, do you ask? I can hardly tell you. Are you thinking of Epping, or the New Forest? True, these are large woods, and have been larger at one time. But if you draw your ideas of a great forest from either of these you must prepare yourself for a startling announcement—and that is, that the forest through which I am going to take you is *as big as all Europe*! There is one place where a straight line might be drawn across this forest that would measure the enormous length of two thousand six hundred miles! And there is a point in it from which a circle might be described, with a diameter of more than a thousand miles, and the whole area included within this vast circumference would be found covered with an unbroken forest!

I need scarce tell you what forest I allude to, for there is none other in the world of such dimensions—none to compare with that vast, trackless forest that covers the valley of the mighty Amazon!

And what shall we see in travelling through this tree-covered expanse? Many a strange form of life—both vegetable and animal. We shall see the giant “ceiba” tree, and the “zamang,” and the “caoba,” twined by huge parasites almost as thick as their own trunks, and looking as though they embraced but to crush them; the “juvia,” with its globe-shaped fruits as large as the human head; the “cow-tree,” with its abundant fountains of rich milk; the “seringa,” with its valuable gum—the caoutchouc of commerce; the “cinchona,” with its fever-killing bark; the curious “volador,” with its winged seeds; the wild indigo, and the arnatto. We shall see palms of many species—some with trunks smooth and cylindrical, others covered with thorns, sharp and thickly set—some with broad entire leaves, others with fronds pinnate and feathery, and still others whose leaves are of the shape of a fan—some rising like naked columns to the height of an hundred and fifty feet, while others scarcely attain to the standard of an ordinary man.

On the water we shall see beautiful lilies—the snow-white *nymphs*, and the yellow *nuphars*. We shall see the *Victoria regia* covering the pool with its massive wax-like flowers, and huge circular leaves of bronze green. We shall see tall flags like Saracen spears, and the dark green culms of gigantic rushes, and the golden *arundinaria*—the bamboo, and “cana brava,”—that rival the forest trees in height.

Many a form of animal life we may behold. Basking in the sun, we may behold the yellow and spotted body of the jaguar—a beautiful but dreaded sight. Breaking through the thick underwood, or emerging slowly from the water, we may catch a glimpse of the sombre tapir, or the red-brown capivara. We may see the ocelot skulking through the deep shade, or the margay springing upon its winged prey. We may see the shaggy ant-bear tearing at the cones of sand-clay, and licking up the white termites; or we may behold the scaly armadillo crawling over the sun-parched earth, and rolling itself up at the approach of danger. We may see human-like forms,—the *quadrumana*—clinging among the high branches, and leaping from tree to tree, like birds upon the wing; we may see them of many shapes, sizes, and colours, from the great howling monkeys, with their long prehensile tails, down to the little saïmiris and ouistitis not larger than squirrels.

What beautiful birds, too!—for this forest is their favourite home. Upon the ground, the large curassows, and guans, and the “gallo,” with his plumage of bright red. Upon the trees, the macaws, and parrots, and toucans, and trogons. In the waters, the scarlet flamingoes, the ibises, and the tall herons; and in the air, the hawks, the zamuros, the king-vultures, and the eagles.

We shall see much of the reptile world, both by land and water. Basking upon the bank, or floating along the stream, we may behold the great water lizards—the crocodile and caiman; or the unwieldy forms of the *cheloniae*—the turtles. Nimbly running along the tree-trunk, or up the slanting lliana, we may see the crested iguana, hideous to behold.

On the branches that overhang the silent pool we may see the “water-boa,” of huge dimensions, watching for his prey—the peccary, the capivara, the paca, or the agouti; and in the dry forest we may meet with his congener the “stag-swallower,” twined around a tree, and waiting for the roebuck or the little red-deer of the woods.

We may see the mygale, or bird-catching spider, at the end of his strong net-trap, among the thick foliage; and the tarantula, at the bottom of his dark pitfall, constructed in the ground. We may see the tent-like hills of the white ants, raised high above the surface, and the nests of many other kinds, hanging from high branches, and looking as though they had been constructed out of raw silk and pasteboard. We may see trees covered with these nests, and some with the nests of wasps, and still others with those of troupials and orioles—birds of the genus *icterus* and *cassicus*—hanging down like long cylindrical purses.

All these, and many more strange sights, may be seen in the great forest of the Amazon valley; and some of them we shall see—*voilà*!

Chapter Two.

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The Refugees.

Upon a bright and lovely evening, many years ago, a party of travellers might have been seen climbing up that Cordillera of the Andes that lies to the eastward of the ancient city of Cuzco. It was a small and somewhat singular

party of travellers; in fact, a travelling family,—father, mother, children, and one attendant. We shall say a word of each of them separately.

The chief of the party was a tall and handsome man, of nearly forty years of age. His countenance bespoke him of Spanish race, and so he was. He was not a Spaniard, however, but a Spanish-American, or “Creole,” for so Spaniards born in America are called to distinguish them from the natives of Old Spain.

Remember—Creoles are *not* people with negro or African blood in their veins. There is a misconception on this head in England, and elsewhere. The African races of America are either negroes, mulattoes, quadroons, quinteroons, or mestizoes; but the “Creoles” are of European blood, though born in America. Remember this. Don Pablo Romero—for that was the name of our traveller—was a Creole, a native of Cuzco, which, as you know, was the ancient capital of the Incas of Peru.

Don Pablo, as already stated, was nearly forty years of age. Perhaps he looked older. His life had not been spent in idleness. Much study, combined with a good deal of suffering and care, had made many of those lines that rob the face of its youthful appearance. Still, although his look was serious, and just then sad, his eye was occasionally seen to brighten, and his light elastic step showed that he was full of vigour and manhood. He had a moustache, very full and black, but his whiskers were clean shaven, and his hair cut short, after the fashion of most people in Spanish America. He wore velvet pantaloons, trimmed at the bottoms with black stamped leather, and upon his feet were

strong boots of a reddish yellow colour—that is, the natural colour of the tanned hide before it has been stained. A dark jacket, closely buttoned, covered the upper part of his body, and a scarlet silk sash encircled his waist, the long fringed ends hanging down over the left hip. In this sash were stuck a Spanish knife and a pair of pistols, richly ornamented with silver mountings. But all these things were concealed from the view by a capacious poncho, which is a garment that in South America serves as a cloak by day and a blanket by night. It is nearly of the size and shape of an ordinary blanket, with a slit in the centre, through which the head is passed, leaving the ends to hang down. Instead of being of uniform colour, several bright colours are usually woven into the poncho, forming a variety of patterns. In Mexico a very similar garment—the scrape—is almost universally worn. The poncho of Don Pablo was a costly one, woven by hand, and out of the finest wool of the vicuña, for that is the native country of this useful and curious animal. Such a poncho would cost 20 pounds, and would not only keep out cold, but would turn rain like a “macintosh.” Don Pablo’s hat was also curious and costly. It was one of those known as “Panama,” or “Guayaquil,”—hats so called because they are manufactured by Indian tribes who dwell upon the Pacific coast, and are made out of a rare sea-grass, which is found near the above-mentioned places. A good Guayaquil hat will cost 20 pounds; and although, with its broad curling brim and low crown, it looks not much better than Leghorn or even fine straw, yet it is far superior to either, both as a protection against rain, or, what is of more importance in southern countries, against a hot tropical sun. The best of

them will wear half a lifetime. Don Pablo's "sombrero" was one of the very best and costliest; and this, combined with the style of his other habiliments, betokened that the wearer was one of the "ricos," or higher class of his country.

The costume of his wife, who was a dark and very beautiful Spanish woman, would have strengthened this idea. She wore a dress of black silk with velvet bodice and sleeves, tastefully embroidered. A mantilla of dark cloth covered her shoulders, and on her head was a low broad-brimmed hat, similar to those usually worn by men, for a bonnet is a thing unknown to the ladies of Spanish America. A single glance at the Doña Isidora would have satisfied any one that she was a lady of rank and refinement.

There were two children, upon which, from time to time, she gazed tenderly. They were her only ones. They were a boy and girl, nearly of equal size and age. The boy was the elder, perhaps thirteen or more, a handsome lad, with swarth face, coal-black eyes, and curly full-flowing dark hair. The girl, too, who would be about twelve, was dark—that is to say, brunette in complexion. Her eyes were large, round, and dreamy, with long lashes that kept the sun from shining into them, and thus deepened their expression.

Perhaps there are no children in the world so beautiful as those of the Spanish race. There is a smoothness of skin, a richness in colour, and a noble "hidalgo" expression in their round black eyes that is rare in other countries. Spanish women retain this expression to a good age. The men lose it earlier, because, as I believe, they are oftener of corrupted morals and habits; and these, long exercised, certainly stamp their lines upon the face. Those which are mean, and

low, and vicious, produce a similar character of countenance, while those which are high, and holy, and virtuous, give it an aspect of beauty and nobility.

Of all beautiful Spanish children none could have been more beautiful than our two little Creole Spaniards, Leon and Leona—for such were the names of the brother and sister.

There yet remains one to be described, ere we complete the account of our travelling party. This one was a grown and tall man, quite as tall as Don Pablo himself, but thinner and more angular in his outlines. His coppery colour, his long straight black hair, his dark and wild piercing eye, with his somewhat odd attire, told you at once he was of a different race from any of the others. He was an Indian—a South American Indian; and although a descendant from the noble race of the Peruvian Incas, he was acting in the capacity of a servant or attendant to Don Pablo and his family. There was a familiarity, however, between the old Indian—for he was an old man—and Don Pablo, that bespoke the existence of some tie of a stronger nature than that which exists between master and servant. And such there was in reality. This Indian had been one of the patriots who had rallied around Tupac Amaru in his revolution against the Spaniards. He had been proscribed, captured, and sentenced to death. He would have been executed, but for the interference of Don Pablo, who had saved his life. Since then Guapo—such was the Indian’s name—had remained not only the retainer, but the firm and faithful friend, of his benefactor.

Guapo’s feet were sandalled. His legs were naked up to the knees, showing many an old scar received from the cactus plants and the thorny bushes of acacia, so common in the mountain-valleys of Peru. A tunic-like skirt of woollen cloth,—that home-made sort called “bayeta,”—was fastened around his waist, and reached down to the knees; but the upper part of his body was quite bare, and you could see the naked breast and arms, corded with strong muscles, and covered with a skin of a dark copper colour. The upper part of his body was naked only when the sun was hot. At other times Guapo wore a species of poncho like his master, but that of the Indian was of common stuff—woven out of the coarse wool of the llama. His head was bare.

Guapo’s features were thin, sharp, and intelligent. His eye was keen and piercing; and the gait of the old man, as he strode along the rocky path, told that it would be many years before he would show any signs of feebleness or tottering.

THE FLIGHT OF THE REFUGEES.—*Page* 16.

There were four animals that carried our travellers and their effects. One was a horse ridden by the boy Leon. The second was a saddle mule, on which rode Doña Isidora and Leona. The other two animals were not mounted. They were beasts of burden, with “yerguas,” or pack-saddles, upon which were carried the few articles that belonged to the travellers. They, were the camels of Peru—the far-famed llamas. Don Pablo, with his faithful retainer, travelled afoot.

You will wonder that one apparently so rich, and on so distant a journey, was not provided with animals enough to carry his whole party. Another horse at least, or a mule, might have been expected in the cavalcade. It would not

have been strange had Guapo only walked—as he was the arriero, or driver, of the llamas—but to see Don Pablo afoot and evidently tired, with neither horse nor mule to ride upon, was something that required explanation. There was another fact that required explanation. The countenance of Don Pablo wore an anxious expression, as if some danger impended; so did that of the lady, and the children were silent, with their little hearts full of fear. They knew not *what* danger, but they knew that their father and mother were in trouble. The Indian, too, had a serious look; and at each angle of the mountain road he and Don Pablo would turn around, and with anxious eyes gaze back in the direction that led towards Cuzco. As yet they could distinguish the spires of the distant city, and the Catholic crosses, as they glistened under the evening sunbeam. Why did they look back with fear and distrust? Why? *Because Don Pablo was in flight, and feared pursuers*! What? Had he committed some great crime? No. On the contrary, he was the *victim of a noble virtue*—the virtue of patriotism! For that had he been condemned, and was now in flight—flying to save not only his liberty but his life! yes, *his life*; for had the sentinels on those distant towers but recognised him, he would soon have been followed and dragged back to an ignominious death.

Young reader, I am writing of things that occurred near the beginning of the present century, and before the Spanish-American colonies became free from the rule of Old Spain. You will remember that these countries were then governed by viceroys, who represented the King of Spain, but who in reality were quite as absolute as that monarch

himself. The great viceroys of Mexico and Peru held court in grand state, and lived in the midst of barbaric pomp and luxury. The power of life and death was in their hands, and in many instances they used it in the most unjust and arbitrary manner. They were themselves, of course, natives of Old Spain—often the pampered favourites of that corrupt court. All the officials by which they were surrounded and served were, like themselves, natives of Spain, or "Gachupinos," (as the Creoles used to call them,) while the Creoles—no matter how rich, or learned, or accomplished in any way—were excluded from every office of honour and profit. They were treated by the Gachupinos with contempt and insult. Hence for long long years before the great revolutions of Spanish America, a strong feeling of dislike existed between Creole Spaniards and Spaniards of Old Spain; and this feeling was quite independent of that which either had towards the Indians—the aborigines of America. This feeling brought about the revolution, which broke out in all the countries of Spanish America (including Mexico) about the year 1810, and which, after fifteen years of cruel and sanguinary fighting, led to the independence of these countries.

Some people will tell you that they gained nothing by this independence, as since that time so much war and anarchy have marked their history. There is scarcely any subject upon which mankind thinks more superficially, and judges more wrongly, than upon this very one. It is a mistake to suppose that a people enjoys either peace or prosperity, simply because it is quiet. There is quiet in Russia, but to its millions of serfs war continuous and eternal; and the same

may be said of many other countries as well as Russia. To the poor slave, or even to the over-taxed subject, peace is no peace, but a constant and systematised struggle, often more pernicious in its effects than even the anarchy of open war. A war of this kind numbers its slain by millions, for the victims of famine are victims of *political crime* on the part of a nation's rulers. I have no time now to talk of these things. Perhaps, boy reader, you and I may meet on this ground again, and at no very distant period.

Well, it was not in the general rising of 1810 that Don Pablo had been compromised, but previous to that. The influence of the European Revolution of 1798 was felt even in distant Spanish America, and several ebullitions occurred in different parts of that country at the same time. They were premature; they were crushed. Those who had taken part in them were hunted to the death. Death! death! was the war-cry of the Spanish hirelings, and bitterly did they execute their vengeance on all who were compromised. Don Pablo would have been a victim among others, had he not had timely warning and escaped; but as it was, all his property was taken by confiscation, and became the plunder of the rapacious tyrant.

We are introduced to him just at the period of his escape. By the aid of the faithful Guapo he had hastily collected a few things, and with his wife and family fled in the night. Hence the incompleteness of his travelling equipage. He had taken one of the most unfrequented paths—a mere bridle-road—that led from Cuzco eastward over the Cordillera. His intent was to gain the eastern slope of the Andes mountains, where he might conceal himself for a

time in the uninhabited woods of the Great *Montaña*, and towards this point was he journeying. By a *ruse* he had succeeded in putting the soldiers of the despot on a false track; but it was not certain that they might not yet fall into the true one. No wonder then, when he gazed back towards Cuzco, that his look was one of apprehension and anxiety.

Chapter Three.

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The Poison-Trees.

Following the rugged and winding path, the travellers had climbed to a height of many thousand feet above the ocean level. There was very little vegetation around them. Nothing that deserved the name of tree, if we except a few stunted specimens of quenoa trees (*Polylepis racemosa*), and here and there patches of the Ratanhia shrub (*Krameria*), which covered the hill-sides. Both these are used by the mountain Indians as fuel, but the Ratanhia is also a favourite remedy against dysentery and blood-spitting. Its extract is even exported to European countries, and is to be found in the shop of the apothecary.

Now and then a beautiful species of locust was seen with its bright red flowers. It was the “Sangre de Christo” of the Peruvian *flora*.

Don Pablo Romero was a naturalist, and I may here tell you a pleasant and interesting fact—which is, that many of the earliest patriots and revolutionists of Spanish America were men who had distinguished themselves in natural

science—in fact, were the “savans” of these countries. I call this a pleasant fact, and you may deem it a curious one too, because men of science are usually lovers of peace, and not accustomed to meddle either in war or politics. But the truth of the matter is this,—under the government of the viceroys all books, except those of a monkish religion, were jealously excluded from these countries. No political work whatever was permitted to be introduced; and the people were kept in the grossest ignorance of their natural rights. It was only into learned institutions that a glimmering of the light of freedom found its way, and it was amongst the professors of these institutions that the “rights of men” first began to be discussed. Many of these noble patriots were the first victims offered up on the altar of Spanish-American independence.

Don Pablo, I have said, was a naturalist; and it was perhaps the first journey he had ever made without observing attentively the natural objects that presented themselves along his route. But his mind was busy with other cares; and he heeded neither the *fauna* nor *flora*. He thought only of his loved wife and dear children, of the dangers to which he and they were exposed. He thought only of increasing the distance between them and his vengeful enemies. During that day they had made a toilsome journey of fifteen miles, up the mountain—a long journey for the llamas, who rarely travel more than ten or twelve; but the dumb brutes seemed to exert themselves as if they knew that danger threatened those who guided them. They belonged to Guapo, who had not been a mere servant, but a cultivator, and had held a small “chacra,” or

farm, under Don Pablo. Guapo's voice was well known to the creatures, and his "hist!" of encouragement urged them on. But fifteen miles was an unusual journey, and the animals began to show symptoms of fatigue. Their humming noise, which bears some resemblance to the tones of an Eolian harp, boomed loud at intervals as the creatures came to a stop; and then the voice of Guapo could be heard urging them forward.

The road led up a defile, which was nothing more than the bed of a mountain-torrent, now dry. For a long distance there was no spot of level ground where our travellers could have encamped, even had they desired to stop. At length, however, the path led out of the torrent-bed, and they found themselves on a small ledge, or table, covered with low trees. These trees were of a peculiar kind, very common in all parts of the Andes, and known as *molle* trees. They are more properly bushes than trees, being only about ten or twelve feet in height. They have long delicate pinnate leaves, very like those of the acacia, and, when in fruit, they are thickly covered with clusters of small bright red berries. These berries are used among some tribes of Indians for making a highly valuable and medicinal beer; but the wood of the tree is of more importance to the people of those parts as an article of fuel, because the tree grows where other wood is scarce. It is even considered by the sugar-refiners as the best for their purpose, since its ashes, possessing highly alkaline properties, are more efficient than any other in purifying the boiling juice of the sugar-cane. The leaves of this beautiful tree, when pressed, emit a strong aromatic smell; and a very curious property ascribed

to it by the more ignorant people of the mountains will be illustrated by the dialogue which follows:—

“Let us pass the night here,” said Don Pablo, halting, and addressing himself to Guapo. “This level spot will serve us to encamp. We can sleep under the shade of the bushes.”

“What! *mi amo*! (my master) Here?” replied the Indian, with a gesture of surprise.

“And why not here? Can any place be better? If we again enter the defile we may find no other level spot. See! the llamas will go no farther. We must remain therefore.”

“But, master,” continued Guapo—“see!”

“See what?”

“The trees, master!”

“Well, what of the trees? Their shade will serve to screen us from the night dew. We can sleep under them.”

“Impossible, master—*they are poison trees*!”

“You are talking foolishly, Guapo. These are *molle* trees.”

“I know it, señor; but they are poison. If we sleep under them we shall not awake in the morning—we shall awake no more.”

And Guapo, as he uttered these words, looked horrified.

“This is nonsense; you are superstitious, old man. We must abide here. See, the llamas have lain down. They will not move hence, I warrant.”

Guapo turned to the llamas, and thinking that their movements might influence the decision of his master, began to urge them in his accustomed way. But it is a peculiarity of these creatures not to stir one step beyond what they consider a proper journey. Even when the load is above that which they are accustomed to carry—that is to

say, 120 pounds—neither voice nor whip will move them. They may be goaded to death, but will not yield, and coaxing has a like effect. Both knew that they had done their day's work; and the voice, the gesticulations and blows of Guapo, were all in vain. Neither would obey him any longer. The Indian saw this, and reluctantly consented to remain; at the same time he continued to repeat his belief that they would all most certainly perish in the night. For himself, he expressed his intention to climb a ledge, and sleep upon the naked rocks; and he earnestly entreated the others to follow his example.

Don Pablo listened to the admonitions of his retainer with incredulity, though not with any degree of disdain. He knew the devotedness of the old Indian, and therefore treated, what he considered a more superstition, with a show of respect. But he felt an inclination to cure Guapo of the folly of such a belief; and was, on this account, the more inclined to put his original design into execution. To pass the night under the shade of the molle trees was, therefore, determined upon.

All dismounted. The llamas were unloaded; their packs, or *yerguas*, taken off; the horse and mule were unsaddled; and all were permitted to browse over the little space which the ledge afforded. They were all trained animals. There was no fear of any of them straying.

The next thing was to prepare supper. All were hungry, as none of the party had eaten since morning. In the hurry of flight, they had made no provision for an extended journey. A few pieces of *charqui* (jerked or dried beef) had been brought along; and, in passing near a field of "oca," Guapo

had gathered a bunch of the roots, and placed them on the back of his llama. This oca is a tuberous root (*Oxalis tuberosa*), of an oval shape and pale red colour, but white inside. It resembles very much the Jerusalem artichoke, but it is longer and slimmer. Its taste is very agreeable and sweetish—somewhat like that of pumpkins, and it is equally good when roasted or boiled. There is another sort of tuberous root (*Tropaeolum tuberosum*), called “ulluca” by the Peruvians, which is more glutinous and less pleasant to the taste. This kind is various in form, being either round, oblong, straight, or curved, and of a reddish, yellow colour outside, though green within. It is insipid when boiled with water, but excellent when dressed with Spanish peppers (*Capsicum*). Out of the *oca*, then, and *charqui*, the supper must be made; and for the purpose of cooking it, a fire must be kindled with the wood of the mollé.

For a long time there was a doubt about whether it would be safe to kindle this fire. The sun had not yet gone down, and the smoke might attract observation from the valley below. If the pursuers were on their track, it might be noticed; as upon this lonely route a fire would indicate nothing else than the camp of some one on a journey. But the stomachs of our travellers cried for food, and it was at length resolved to light the fire, but not until after sunset, when the smoke could be no longer seen, and the blaze would be hidden behind the thick bushes of molle.

Don Pablo walked off from the camp, and wandered among the trees to see if he could find something that might contribute a little variety to their simple supper. A small, broom-like plant, that grew among the mollé trees,

soon attracted his attention. This was the *quiñoa* plant (*Chenopodium quiñoa*), which produces a seed, not unlike rice, though smaller in the grain, whence it has received in commerce the name “petty rice.” The quiñoa seeds, when boiled, are both pleasant and nutritious, but especially so when boiled in milk. Previous to the discovery of America, “quiñoa” was an article of food, supplying the place of wheat. It was much used by the natives, and is still collected for food in many parts. Indeed, it has been introduced into some European countries, and cultivated with success. The leaves, when young, can be used as spinach, but the seeds are the most sought after for food.

Don Pablo having called Leon to assist him, a quantity of the seeds were soon collected into a vessel, and carried to the place which they had chosen for their camp; and, as it was now dark enough, the fire was kindled and the cooking-pot got ready. The Doña Isidora, although a fine lady, was one of those who had all her life been accustomed to look after her household affairs: and this, it may be remarked, is a somewhat rare virtue among the Peruvian ladies, who are generally too much given to dress and idleness. It was not so, however, with the wife of Don Pablo. She knew how to look after the affairs of the *cuisine*, and could dress any of the peculiar dishes of the country with the best of cooks. In a short while, therefore, an excellent supper was ready, of which all ate heartily, and then, wrapping themselves up in their ponchos, lay down to sleep.

Chapter Four.

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The Supper of Guapo.

I have said all ate of the supper. This is not strictly true. One of the party did not touch it, and that was old Guapo. Why? Was he not hungry like the rest? Yes; as hungry as any of them. Why then did he not eat of the *charqui* and ocas? Simply because Guapo had a supper of a very different kind, which he carried in his pouch, and which he liked much better than the charqui stew. What was it? It was “coca.”

“Chocolate,” you will say, or, as some call it, “cocoa,” which should be called, to name it properly, “cacao.” No, I answer—it was not chocolate, nor cocoa, nor cacao neither.

“It must have been cocoa-nuts, then?” No; nor yet cocoa-nuts. The “coca,” upon which Guapo made his supper, and which contented his stomach perfectly for the night, was an article very different from either the cacao which makes chocolate, or the nut of the cocoa-palm. You are now impatient to hear what sort of thing it was, and I shall tell you at once.

The coca is a small tree or shrub about six feet in height, which grows in the warmer valleys among the Andes mountains. Its botanical name is *Erythroxylon coca*. Its leaves are small and of a bright green colour, and its blossoms white. Its fruits are very small scarlet berries. It is a native plant, and, therefore, found in a wild state; but it is cultivated by the planters of these countries in fields regularly laid out, and hence called “cocales.” This plant is raised from the seed, and when the young shoots have attained the height of about eighteen inches, they are

transplanted and put down again at the distance of about a foot apart from each other. Now as these little bushes require a humid atmosphere, maize-plants are sown between the rows to protect them from the sun. In other places arbours of palm-leaves are constructed over the coca-plants. When no rain falls, they are watered every five or six days. After about two and a half years of this nursing, the coca-bush is ready for use, and it is the leaves alone that are valuable. These are gathered with great care, just as the Chinese gather the leaves of the tea-plant; and, as in China, women are principally employed in this labour. The leaves are said to be ripe, not when they have withered and turned brown, but at a period when they are full-grown and become brittle. When this period arrives, they are picked from the tree, and laid out on coarse woollen cloths to dry in the sun. When dried, they remain of a pale green colour; but should they get damp during the process, they become darker, and are then of inferior quality, and sell for a less price. When fully dried, they are carefully packed in bags and covered up with dry sand, and are thus ready for the market. Their price, on the spot where the crop is produced, is about one shilling English per pound. They are, therefore, full as costly to produce as tea itself, although the coca-bush will yield three crops of leaves in one year—that is, a crop every four months; and one hundred plants will produce about an arroba (25 pounds) at a crop. The coca-plant will continue to give fresh leaves for a long period of years, unless attacked and destroyed by ants, which is not unfrequently the case.

Now, why have I so minutely described the coca-bush? Because, that, in the economy of the life of those Indians who inhabit the countries of the Andes mountains, this curious plant plays a most important part. Scarcely one of these people is to be met with who is not an eater of coca—a “coquero.” With them it is what the tea-tree is to the Chinese. Indeed, it is a curious fact, that in all parts of the world some stimulating vegetable is used by the human race. Tea in China; the betel-leaf, and the nut of the areca palm, among the Southern Asiatics; the poppy in the East; with tobacco, and many like things, in other countries.

But the coca not only supplies the Indian with a solace to his cares, it forms the chief article of his food. With a supply of coca, an Indian will support himself five or six days without eating anything else. The poor miners, in the Peruvian mines, are all “coqueros;” and it is alleged that, without coca, they would be unable to undergo the painful toil to which their calling subjects them. When used to excess, the coca produces deleterious effects on the human system; but, if moderately taken, it is far more innocent in its results than either opium or tobacco.

The coca-leaf is not eaten alone. A certain preparation is necessary, and another substance is mixed with it before it produces the proper effect. But let us watch the movements of Guapo, and we shall see how he does it, for Guapo is a confirmed coquero.

Guapo, true to his promise, does not sleep under the molle trees. He leaves the party, and, with a melancholy air, has climbed up and seated himself upon a projecting rock, where he intends to pass the night. His last glance at Don