

On crossing these woody eminences, the forlorn adventurers would plunge into ravines of frightful depth, where the exhalations of a humid soil steamed up amidst the incense of sweet-scented flowers, which shone through the deep glooms in every conceivable variety of color. Birds, especially of the parrot tribe, mocked this fantastic variety of nature with tints as brilliant as those of the vegetable world. Monkeys chattered in crowds above their heads, and made grimaces like the fiendish spirits of these solitudes; while hideous reptiles, engendered in the slimy depths of the pools, gathered round the footsteps of the wanderers. Here was seen the gigantic boa, coiling his unwieldy folds about the trees, so as hardly to be distinguished from their trunks, till he was ready to dart upon his prey; and alligators lay basking on the borders of the streams, or, gliding under the waters, seized their incautious victim before he was aware of their approach.¹⁷ Many of the Spaniards perished miserably in this way, and others were waylaid by the natives, who kept a jealous eye on their movements, and availed themselves of every opportunity to take them at advantage. Fourteen of Pizarro's men were cut off at once in a canoe which had stranded on the bank of a stream.¹⁸

Famine came in addition to other troubles, and it was with difficulty that they found the means of sustaining life on the scanty fare of the forest,—occasionally the potato, as it grew without cultivation, or the wild cocoa-nut, or, on the shore, the salt and bitter fruit of the mangrove; though the shore was less tolerable than the forest, from the swarms of mosquitos which compelled the wretched adventurers to bury their bodies up to their very faces in the sand. In this extremity of suffering, they thought only of return; and all schemes of avarice and ambition—except

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, ubi supra.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, loc. cit.—Gomara, *Hist. de las Ind.*, cap. 108.—Naharro, *Relacion Sumaria*, MS.

with Pizarro and a few dauntless spirits—were exchanged for the one craving desire to return to Panamá.

It was at this crisis that the pilot Ruiz returned with the report of his brilliant discoveries; and, not long after, Almagro sailed into port with his vessel laden with refreshments, and a considerable reinforcement of volunteers. The voyage of that commander had been prosperous. When he arrived at Panamá, he found the government in the hands of Don Pedro de los Rios; and he came to anchor in the harbor, unwilling to trust himself on shore, till he had obtained from Father Luque some account of the dispositions of the executive. These were sufficiently favorable; for the new governor had particular instructions fully to carry out the arrangements made by his predecessor with the associates. On learning Almagro's arrival, he came down to the port to welcome him, professing his willingness to afford every facility for the execution of his designs. Fortunately, just before this period, a small body of military adventurers had come to Panamá from the mother country, burning with desire to make their fortunes in the New World. They caught much more eagerly than the old and wary colonists at the golden bait held out to them; and with their addition, and that of a few supernumerary stragglers who hung about the town, Almagro found himself at the head of a reinforcement of at least eighty men, with which, having laid in a fresh supply of stores, he again set sail for the Rio de San Juan.

The arrival of the new recruits all eager to follow up the expedition, the comfortable change in their circumstances produced by an ample supply of refreshments, and the glowing pictures of the wealth that awaited them in the south, all had their effect on the dejected spirits of Pizarro's followers. Their late toils and privations were speedily forgotten, and, with the buoyant and variable feelings incident to a freebooter's life, they now called as eagerly on their commander to go forward in the voyage, as they had before

called on him to abandon it. Availing themselves of the renewed spirit of enterprise, the captains embarked on board their vessels, and, under the guidance of the veteran pilot, steered in the same track he had lately pursued.

But the favorable season for a southern course, which in these latitudes lasts but a few months in the year, had been suffered to escape. The breezes blew steadily towards the north, and a strong current, not far from shore, set in the same direction. The winds frequently rose into tempests, and the unfortunate voyagers were tossed about, for many days, in the boiling surges, amidst the most awful storms of thunder and lightning, until, at length, they found a secure haven in the island of Gallo, already visited by Ruiz. As they were now too strong in numbers to apprehend an assault, the crews landed, and, experiencing no molestation from the natives, they continued on the island for a fortnight, refitting their damaged vessels, and recruiting themselves after the fatigues of the ocean. Then, resuming their voyage, the captains stood towards the south until they reached the Bay of St. Matthew. As they advanced along the coast, they were struck, as Ruiz had been before, with the evidences of a higher civilization constantly exhibited in the general aspect of the country and its inhabitants. The hand of cultivation was visible in every quarter. The natural appearance of the coast, too, had something in it more inviting; for, instead of the eternal labyrinth of mangrove-trees, with their complicated roots snarled into formidable coils under the water, as if to waylay and entangle the voyager, the low margin of the sea was covered with a stately growth of ebony, and with a species of mahogany, and other hard woods that take the most brilliant and variegated polish. The sandal-wood, and many balsamic trees of unknown names, scattered their sweet odors far and wide, not in an atmosphere tainted with vegetable corruption, but on the pure breezes of the ocean, bearing health as well as fragrance on their wings. Broad patches

of cultivated land intervened, disclosing hill-sides covered with the yellow maize and the potato, or checkered, in the lower levels, with blooming plantations of cacao.¹⁹

The villages became more numerous; and, as the vessels rode at anchor off the port of Tacamez, the Spaniards saw before them a town of two thousand houses or more, laid out into streets, with a numerous population clustering around it in the suburbs.²⁰ The men and women displayed many ornaments of gold and precious stones about their persons, which may seem strange, considering that the Peruvian Incas claimed a monopoly of jewels for themselves and the nobles on whom they condescended to bestow them. But, although the Spaniards had now reached the outer limits of the Peruvian empire, it was not Peru, but Quito, and that portion of it but recently brought under the sceptre of the Incas, where the ancient usages of the people could hardly have been effaced under the oppressive system of the American despots. The adjacent country was, moreover, particularly rich in gold, which, collected from the washings of the streams, still forms one of the staple products of Barbacoas. Here, too, was the fair River of Emeralds, so called from the quarries of the beautiful gem on its borders, from which the Indian monarchs enriched their treasury.²¹

¹⁹ Xerez, *Conq. del Peru*, ap. Barcia, tom. III. p. 181.—*Relacion sacada de la Biblioteca Imperial de Vienna*, MS.—Naharro, *Relacion Sumaria*, MS.—Montesinos, *Annales*, MS., año 1526.—Zarate, *Conq. del Peru*, lib. 1, cap. 1.—*Relacion del Primer. Descub.*, MS.

²⁰ Pizarro's secretary speaks of one of the towns as containing 3,000 houses. "En esta Tierra havia muchos Mantenimientos, i la Gente tenia mui buena orden de vivir, los Pueblos con sus Calles, i Plaças: Pueblo havia que tenia mas de tres mil Casas, i otros havia menores." *Conq. del Peru*, ap. Barcia, tom. III. p. 181.

²¹ Stevenson, who visited this part of the coast early in the present century, is profuse in his description of its mineral and vegetable treasures. The emerald mine in the neighborhood of Las Esme-

The Spaniards gazed with delight on these undeniable evidences of wealth, and saw in the careful cultivation of the soil a comfortable assurance that they had at length reached the land which had so long been seen in brilliant, though distant, perspective before them. But here again they were doomed to be disappointed by the warlike spirit of the people, who, conscious of their own strength, showed no disposition to quail before the invaders. On the contrary, several of their canoes shot out, loaded with warriors, who, displaying a gold mask as their ensign, hovered round the vessels with looks of defiance, and, when pursued, easily took shelter under the lee of the land.²²

A more formidable body mustered along the shore, to the number, according to the Spanish accounts, of at least ten thousand warriors, eager, apparently, to come to close action with the invaders. Nor could Pizarro, who had landed with a party of his men in the hope of a conference with the natives, wholly prevent hostilities; and it might have gone hard with the Spaniards, hotly pressed by their resolute enemy so superior in numbers, but for a ludicrous accident reported by the historians as happening to one of the cavaliers. This was a fall from his horse, which so astonished the barbarians, who were not prepared for this

raldas, once so famous, is now placed under the ban of a superstition, more befitting the times of the Incas. "I never visited it," says the traveller, "owing to the superstitious dread of the natives, who assured me that it was enchanted, and guarded by an enormous dragon, which poured forth thunder and lightning on those who dared to ascend the river." *Residence in South America*, vol. II. p. 406.

²² "Salieron á los dichos navios quatorce canoas grandes con muchos Indios dos armados de oro y plata, y trahian en la una canoa ó en estandarte y encima de él un bolto de un mucho desio de oro, y dieron una suelta á los navios por avisarlos en manera que no los pudiese enojar, y así dieron vuelta acia á su pueblo, y los navios no los pudieron tomar porque se metieron en los baxos junto á la tierra." *Relacion sacada de la Biblioteca Imperial de Vienna*, MS.

division of what seemed one and the same being into two, that, filled with consternation, they fell back, and left a way open for the Christians to regain their vessels!²³

A council of war was now called. It was evident that the forces of the Spaniards were unequal to a contest with so numerous and well-appointed a body of natives; and, even if they should prevail here, they could have no hope of stemming the torrent which must rise against them in their progress—for the country was becoming more and more thickly settled, and towns and hamlets started into view at every new headland which they doubled. It was better, in the opinion of some,—the faint-hearted,—to abandon the enterprise at once, as beyond their strength. But Almagro took a different view of the affair. "To go home," he said, "with nothing done, would be ruin, as well as disgrace. There was scarcely one but had left creditors at Panamá, who looked for payment to the fruits of this expedition. To go home now would be to deliver themselves at once into their hands. It would be to go to prison. Better to roam a freeman, though in the wilderness, than to lie bound with fetters in the dungeons of Panamá." The only course for them," he concluded, "was

²³ "Al tiempo del romper los unos con los otros, uno de aquellos de caballo cayó del caballo abajo; y como los Indios vieron dividirse aquel animal en dos partes, teniendo por cierto que todo era una cosa, fué tanto el miedo que tubieron que volvieron las espaldas dando voces á los suyos, diciendo, que se habia hecho dos haciendo admiracion dello: lo cual no fué sin misterio; porque á no acaecer esto se presume, que mataran todos los cristianos." (*Relacion del Primer Descub.*, MS.) This way of accounting for the panic of the barbarians is certainly quite as credible as the explanation, under similar circumstances, afforded by the apparition of the militant apostle St. James, so often noticed by the historians of these wars.

²⁴ "No era bien bolver pobres, á pedir limosna, i morir en las Carceles, los que tenian deudas." *Herrera, Hist. General*, dec. 3, lib. 10, cap. 2.

the one lately pursued. Pizarro might find some more commodious place where he could remain with part of the force, while he himself went back for recruits to Panamá. The story they had now to tell of the riches of the land, as they had seen them with their own eyes, would put their expedition in a very different light, and could not fail to draw to their banner as many volunteers as they needed."

But this recommendation, however judicious, was not altogether to the taste of the latter commander, who did not relish the part, which constantly fell to him, of remaining behind in the swamps and forests of this wild country. "It is all very well," he said to Almagro, "for you, who pass your time pleasantly enough, careering to and fro in your vessel, or snugly sheltered in a land of plenty at Panamá; but it is quite another matter for those who stay behind to droop and die of hunger in the wilderness."²⁵ To this Almagro retorted with some heat, professing his own willingness to take charge of the brave men who would remain with him, if Pizarro declined it. The controversy assuming a more angry and menacing tone, from words they would have soon come to blows, as both, laying their hands on their swords, were preparing to rush on each other, when the treasurer Ribera, aided by the pilot Ruiz, succeeded in pacifying them. It required but little effort on the part

²⁵ "Como iba, i venia en los Navios, adonde no le faltaba Vitualla, no padecia la miseria de la hambre, i otras angustias que tenian, i ponian á todos en estrema congoja." (Herrera, Hist. General, dec. 3, lib. 10, cap. 2.) The cavaliers of Cortés and Pizarro, however doughty their achievements, certainly fell short of those knights-errant, commemorated by Hubibras, who,

"As some think,
Of old did neither eat nor drink;
Because, when thorough deserts vast
And regions desolate they past,
Unless they grazed, there's not one word
Of their provision on record;
Which made some confidently write,
They had no stomachs but to fight."

of these cooler counsellors to convince the cavaliers of the folly of a conduct which must at once terminate the expedition in a manner little creditable to its projectors. A reconciliation consequently took place, sufficient, at least in outward show, to allow the two commanders to act together in concert. Almagro's plan was then adopted; and it only remained to find out the most secure and convenient spot for Pizarro's quarters.

Several days were passed in touching at different parts of the coast, as they retraced their course; but everywhere the natives appeared to have caught the alarm, and assumed a menacing, and from their numbers a formidable, aspect. The more northerly region, with its unwholesome fens and forests, where nature wages a war even more relentless than man, was not to be thought of. In this perplexity, they decided on the little island of Gallo, as being, on the whole, from its distance from the shore, and from the scantiness of its population, the most eligible spot for them in their forlorn and destitute condition.²⁶

But no sooner was the resolution of the two captains made known, than a feeling of discontent broke forth among their followers, especially those who were to remain with Pizarro on the island. "What!" they exclaimed, "were they to be dragged to that obscure spot to die by hunger? The whole expedition had been a cheat and a failure, from beginning to end. The golden countries, so

²⁶ Pedro Pizarro, Descub. y Conq., MS.—Relacion sacada de la Biblioteca Imperial de Vienna, MS.—Naharro, Relacion Sumaria, MS.—Zarate, Conq. del Peru, lib. 1, cap. 1.—Herrera, Hist. General, dec. 3, lib. 10, cap. 2.

It was singularly unfortunate, that Pizarro, instead of striking farther south, should have so long clung to the northern shores of the continent. Dampier notices them as afflicted with incessant rain; while the inhospitable forests and the particularly ferocious character of the natives continued to make these regions but little known down to his time. See his Voyages and Adventures, (London, 1776,) vol. I. chap. 14.

much vaunted, had seemed to fly before them as they advanced; and the little gold they had been fortunate enough to glean had all been sent back to Panamá to entice other fools to follow their example. What had they got in return for all their sufferings? The only treasures they could boast were their bows and arrows, and they were now to be left to die on this dreary island, without so much as a rood of consecrated ground to lay their bones in!"²⁷

In this exasperated state of feeling, several of the soldiers wrote back to their friends, informing them of their deplorable condition, and complaining of the cold-blooded manner in which they were to be sacrificed to the obstinate cupidity of their leaders. But the latter were wary enough to anticipate this movement, and Almagro defeated it by seizing all the letters in the vessels, and thus cutting off at once the means of communication with their friends at home. Yet this act of unscrupulous violence, like most other similar acts, fell short of its purpose; for a soldier named Sarabia had the ingenuity to evade it by introducing a letter into a ball of cotton, which was to be taken to Panamá as a specimen of the products of the country, and presented to the governor's lady.²⁸

The letter, which was signed by several of the disaffected soldiery besides the writer, painted in gloomy colors the miseries of their condition, accused the two commanders of being the authors of this, and called on the authorities of Panamá to interfere by sending a vessel to take them from the desolate spot, while some of them might still be found surviving the horrors of their confinement. The

²⁷ "Miserablemente morir adonde aun no havia lugar Sagrado, para sepultura de sus cuerpos." Herrera, Hist. General, dec. 3, lib. 10, cap. 3.

²⁸ "Metieron en un ovillo de algodón una carta firmada de muchos en que sumariamente daban cuenta de las hambres, muertes y desnudez que padecian, y que era cosa de risa todo, pues las riquezas se habian convertido en flechas, y no havia otra cosa." Montesinos, Annales, MS., año 1527.

epistle concluded with a stanza, in which the two leaders were stigmatized as partners in a slaughter house; one being employed to drive in the cattle for the other to butcher. The verses, which had a currency in their day among the colonists to which they were certainly not entitled by their poetical merits, may be thus rendered into corresponding doggerel:

"Look out, Señor Governor,
For the drover while he's near;
Since he goes home to get the sheep
For the butcher, who stays here."²⁹

²⁹ Xerez, Conq. del Peru, ap. Barcia, tom. III. p. 181.—Naharro, Relacion Sumaria, MS.—Balboa, Hist. du Perou, chap. 15.

"Al fin de la peticion que hacian en la carta al Governador puso Juan de Sarabia, natural de Trujillo, esta cuarteta:—

Pues Señor Gobernador,
Mirelo bien por entero
que alla va el recogedor,
y acá queda el carnicero."

Montesinos, Annales, MS., año 1527.