

in some tropic forest, "conquering the souls" (including, of course, the bodies) of Indians; he may have gone back to his old work in England, and been the very Ballard who was hanged and quartered three years afterwards for his share in Babington's villainous conspiracy: I know not. This book is a history of men; of men's virtues and sins, victories and defeats; and Eustace is a man no longer; he is become a thing, a tool, a Jesuit; which goes only where it is sent, and does good or evil indifferently as it is bid; which, by an act of moral suicide, has lost its soul, in the hope of saving it; without a will, a conscience, a responsibility (as it fancies), to God or man, but only to "The Society." In a word, Eustace, as he says himself, is "dead." Twice dead, I fear. Let the dead bury their dead. We have no more concern with Eustace Leigh.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE BANKS OF THE META.

"My mariners,
Souls that have toil'd, and wrought, and thought with me—
Death closes all: but something ere the end,
Some work of noble note, may yet be done,
Not unbecoming men that strove with gods!"

TENNYSON'S *Ulysses*.

NEARLY three years are passed and gone since that little band had knelt at evensong beneath the giant tree of Guayra—years of seeming blank, through which they are to be tracked only by scattered notes and mis-spelt names. Through untrodden hills and forests, over a space of some eight hundred miles in length by four hundred in breadth, they had been seeking for the Golden City, and they had sought it in vain. They had sought it along the wooded banks of the Orinoco, and beyond the roaring foam-world of Maypures, and on the upper waters of the mighty Amazon. They had gone up the streams even into Peru itself, and, had trodden the cinchona groves of Loxa, ignorant, as all the world was then, of their healing virtues. They had seen the virgin snows of Chimborazo towering white above the thunder-cloud, and the giant cone of Cotopaxi blackening in its sullen wrath, before the fiery streams rolled down its sides. Foiled in their search at the back of the Andes, they had turned eastward once more, and plunged from the Alpine cliffs into "the green and misty ocean of the Montana." Slowly and painfully they had worked their way northward again, along the eastern foot of the inland Cordillera, and now they were bivouacking, as it seems, upon one of the many feeders of the Meta, which flow down from the Suma Paz into the forest-covered plains. There they sat, their watch-fires glittering on the stream, beneath the shadow of enormous trees. Amyas and Cary, Brimblecombe, Yeo and the Indian lad, who had followed them in all their wanderings, alive and well; but as far as ever from Manoa, and its fairy lake, and golden palaces, and all the wonders of the Indian's tale. Again and again in their wanderings they

had heard taint rumors of its existence, and started off in some fresh direction, to meet only a fresh disappointment, and hope deferred, which maketh sick the heart.

There they sit at last—four-and-forty men out of the eighty-four who left the tree of Guayra:—where are the rest?

“Their bones are scatter’d far and wide,
By mount, by stream, and sea.”

Drew, the master, lies on the banks of the Rio Negro, and five brave fellows by him, slain in fight by the poisoned arrows of the Indians, in a vain attempt to penetrate the mountain gorges of the Parima. Two more lie amid the valleys of the Andes, frozen to death by the fierce slaty hail which sweeps down from the condor’s eyrie; four more were drowned at one of the rapids of the Orinoco; five or six more wounded men are left behind at another rapid among friendly Indians, to be recovered when they can be; perhaps never. Fever, snakes, jaguars, alligators, cannibal fish, electric eels, have thinned their ranks month by month, and of their march through the primæval wilderness no track remains except those lonely graves.

And there the survivors sit, beside the silent stream, beneath the tropic moon; sun-dried and lean, but strong and bold as ever, with the quiet fire of English courage burning undimmed in every eye, and the genial smile of English mirth fresh on every lip; making a jest of danger and a sport of toil, as cheerily as when they sailed over the bar of Bideford in days which seem to belong to some antenatal life. Their beards have grown down upon their breasts; their long hair is knotted on their heads, like women’s, to keep off the burning sunshine; their leggings are of the skin of the delicate Guazu-puti deer; their shirts are patched with Indian cotton-web; the spoils of jaguar, puma and ape hang from their shoulders. Their ammunition is long since spent, their muskets, spoilt by the perpetual vapor-bath of the steaming woods, are left behind as useless in a cave by some cataract of the Orinoco; but their swords are bright and terrible as ever; and they carry bows of a strength which no Indian arm can bend, and arrows pointed with the remnants of their armor; many of them, too, are armed with the pocuna or blowgun of the Indians—more deadly, because more silent, than the firearms which they have left behind them. So

they have wandered, and so they will wander still, the lords of the forest and its beasts; terrible to all hostile Indians, but kindly, just, and generous to all who will deal faithfully with them; and many a smooth-chinned Carib and Ature, Solimo and Guahiba, recounts with wonder and admiration the righteousness of the bearded heroes, who proclaimed themselves the deadly foes of the faithless and murderous Spaniard, and spoke to them of the great and good queen beyond the seas, who would send her warriors to deliver and avenge the oppressed Indian.

The men are sleeping among the trees, some on the ground, and some in grass-hammocks slung between the stems. All is silent, save the heavy plunge of the tapir in the river, as he tears up the water-weeds for his night’s repast. Sometimes, indeed, the jaguar, as he climbs from one tree-top to another after his prey, wakens the monkeys clustered on the boughs, and they again arouse the birds, and ten minutes of unearthly roars, howls, shrieks and cacklings make the forest ring as if all Pandemonium had broke loose; but that soon dies away again; and, even while it lasts, it is too common a matter to awaken the sleepers, much less to interrupt the council of war which is going on beside the watch-fire, between the three adventurers and the faithful Yeo. A hundred times have they held such a council, and in vain; and, for aught they know, this one will be as fruitless as those which have gone before it. Nevertheless, it is a more solemn one than usual; for the two years during which they had agreed to search for Manoa are long past, and some new place must be determined on, unless they intend to spend the rest of their lives in that great wilderness.

“Well,” says Will Cary, taking his cigar out of his mouth, “at least we have got something out of those last Indians. It is a comfort to have a puff at tobacco once more, after three weeks’ fasting.”

“For me,” said Jack Brimblecombe, “Heaven forgive me! but when I get the magical leaf between my teeth again, I feel tempted to sit as still as a chimney, and smoke till my dying day, without stirring hand or foot.”

“Then I shall forbid you tobacco, Master Parson,” said Amyas; “for we must be up and away again tomorrow. We have been idling here three mortal days, and nothing done.”

"Shall we ever do anything? I think the gold of Manoa is like the gold which lies where the rainbow touches the ground, always a field beyond you."

Amyas was silent awhile, and so were the rest. There was no denying that their hopes were all but gone. In the immense circuit which they had made, they had met with nothing but disappointment.

"There is but one more chance," said he at length, "and that is the mountains to the east of the Orinoco, where we failed the first time. The Incas may have moved on to them when they escaped."

"Why not?" said Cary; "they would so put all the forests, beside the Llanos and half-a-dozen great rivers, between them and those dogs of Spaniards."

"Shall we try it once more?" said Amyas. "This river ought to run into the Orinoco; and once there, we are again at the very foot of the mountains. What say you, Yeo?"

"I cannot but mind, your worship, that when we came up the Orinoco, the Indians told us terrible stories of those mountains, how far they stretched, and how difficult they were to cross, by reason of the cliffs aloft, and the thick forests in the valleys. And have we not lost five good men there already?"

"What care we? No forests can be thicker than those we have bored through already; why, if one had had but a tail, like a monkey, for an extra warp, one might have gone a hundred miles on end along the tree tops, and found it far pleasanter walking than tripping in withes, and being eaten up with creeping things, from morn till night."

"But remember, too," said Jack, "how they told us to beware of the Amazons."

"What, Jack, afraid of a parcel of women?"

"Why not?" said Jack, "I wouldn't run from a man as you know; but a woman—it's not natural, like. They must be witches or devils. See how the Caribs feared them. And there were men there without necks, and with their eyes in their breasts, they said. Now how could a Christian tackle such customers as them?"

"He couldn't cut off their heads, that's certain; but, I suppose, a poke in the ribs will do as much for them as for their neighbors."

"Well," said Jack: "if I fight, let me fight honest flesh

and blood, that's all, and none of these outlandish monsters. How do you know but that they are invulnerable by Art-magic?"

"How do you know that they are? And as for the Amazons," said Cary, "woman's woman, all the world over. I'll bet that you may wheedle them round with a compliment or two, just as if they were so many burghers' wives. Pity I have not a court-suit and a Spanish hat. I would have taken an orange in one hand and a handkerchief in the other, gone all alone to them as ambassador, and been in a week as great with Queen Blackfacealinda as ever Raleigh is at Whitehall."

"Gentlemen!" said Yeo, "where you go, I go; and not only I, but every man of us, I doubt not; but we have lost now half our company, and spent our ammunition, so we are no better men, were it not for our swords, than these naked heathens round us. Now it was, as you all know, by the wonder and noise of their ordnance (let alone their horses, which is a breakneck beast I put no faith in) that both Cortes and Pizarro, those imps of Satan, made their golden conquests, with which if we could have astounded the people of Manoa—"

"Having first found the said people," laughed Amyas. "It is like the old fable. Every craftsman thinks his own trade the one pillar of the commonweal."

"Well! your worship," quoth Yeo, "it may be that being a gunner I overprize guns. But it don't need slate and pencil to do this sum: Are forty men without shot as good as eighty with?"

"Thou art right, old fellow, right enough, and I was only jesting for very sorrow, and must needs laugh about it lest I weep about it. Our chance is over, I believe, though I dare not confess as much to the men."

"Sir," said Yeo, "I have a feeling on me that the Lord's hand is against us in this matter. Whether He means to keep this wealth for worthier men than us, or whether it is His will to hide this great city in the secret place of His presence from the strife of tongues, and so to spare them from sinful man's covetousness, and England from that sin and luxury which I have seen gold beget among the Spaniards, I know not, sir; for who knoweth the counsels of the Lord? But I have long had a voice within which saith, 'Salvation Yeo, thou shalt never behold the Golden City which is on earth, where heathens

worship sun and moon and the hosts of heaven; be content, therefore, to see that Golden City which is above, where is there neither sun nor moon, but the Lord God and the Lamb are the light thereof."

There was a simple majesty about old Yeo when he broke forth in utterances like these, which made his comrades, and even Amyas and Cary, look on him as Mussulmans look on madmen, as possessed of mysterious knowledge and flashes of inspiration; and Brimblecombe whose pious soul looked up to the old hero with a reverence which had overcome all his Churchman's prejudices against Anabaptists, answered gently,—

"Amen! my masters all: and it has been on my mind, too, this long time, that there is a providence against our going east; for see how this two years past, whenever we have pushed eastward, we have fallen into trouble, and lost good men; and whenever we went Westward-ho, we have prospered; and do prosper to this day."

"And what is more, gentlemen," said Yeo, "if, as Scripture says, dreams are from the Lord, I verily believe mine last night came from Him; for as I lay by the fire, sirs, I heard my little maid's voice calling of me, as plain as ever I heard in my life; and the very same words, sirs, which she learned from me and my good comrade William Penberthy to say, 'Westward-ho! jolly mariners all!' a bit of an ungodly song, my masters, which we sang in our wild days; but she stood and called it as plain as ever mortal ears heard, and called again till I answered, 'Coming; my maid, coming!' and after that the dear chuck called no more—God grant I find her yet!—and so I woke."

Cary had long since given up laughing at Yeo about the "little maid," and Amyas answered—

"So let it be, Yeo, if the rest agree: but what shall we do to the westward?"

"Do?" said Cary; there's plenty to do; for there's plenty of gold and plenty of Spaniards, too, they say, on the other side of these mountains; so that our swords will not rust for lack of adventures, my gay knights-errant all."

So they chattered on, and before night was half through a plan was matured, desperate enough—but what cared those brave hearts for that? They would cross the Cordillera to Santa Fé de Bogotá, of the wealth whereof both Yeo and Amyas had often heard in the Pacific: try to

seize either the town or some convoy of gold going from it; make for the nearest river (there was said to be a large one which ran northward thence), build canoes, and try to reach the Northern Sea once more; and then, if Heaven prospered them, they might seize a Spanish ship, and make their way home to England—not, indeed, with the wealth of Manoa, but with a fair booty of Spanish gold. This was their new dream. It was a wild one: but hardly more wild than the one which Drake had fulfilled, and not as wild as the one which Oxenham might have fulfilled, but for his own fatal folly.

Amyas sat watching late that night, sad of heart. To give up the cherished dream of years was hard; to face his mother, harder still; but it must be done for the men's sake. So the new plan was proposed next day, and accepted joyfully. They would go up to the mountains and rest awhile; if possible, bring up the wounded whom they had left behind: and then, try a new venture, with new hopes, perhaps new dangers; they were inured to the latter.

They started next morning cheerfully enough, and for three hours or more paddled easily up the glassy and windless reaches, between two green flower-bespangled walls of forest, gay with innumerable birds and insects; while down from the branches which overhung the stream long trailers hung to the water's edge, and seemed admiring in the clear mirror the images of their own gorgeous flowers. River, trees, flowers, birds, insects,—it was all a fairy-land; but it was a colossal one; and yet the voyagers took little note of it. It was now to them an everyday occurrence, to see trees full two hundred feet high one mass of yellow or purple blossom to the highest twigs, and every branch and stem one hanging garden of crimson and orange orchids or vanillas. Common to them were all the fantastic and enormous shapes with which Nature bedecks her robes beneath the fierce suns and fattening rains of the tropic forest. Common were forms and colors of bird, and fish, and butterfly, more strange and bright than ever opium-eater dreamed. The long processions of monkeys, who kept pace with them along the tree-tops, and proclaimed their wonder in every imaginable whistle, and grunt, and howl had ceased to move their laughter, as much as the roar of the jaguar and the rustle of the boa had ceased to move their fear, and when a brilliant green and

rose colored fish, flat-bodied like a bream, flat-finned like a salmon, and saw-toothed like a shark, leapt clean on board of the canoe to escape the rush of the huge alligator (whose loathsome snout, ere he could stop, actually rattled against the canoe within a foot of Jack Brimblecombe's hand), Jack, instead of turning pale, as he had done at the sharks upon a certain memorable occasion, coolly picked up the fish, and said, "He's four pound weight! If you can catch 'pirai' for us like that, old fellow, just keep in our wake, and we'll give you the cleanings for wages."

Yes. The mind of man is not so "infinite," in the vulgar sense of that word, as people fancy; and however greedy the appetite for wonder may be, while it remains unsatisfied in everyday European life, it is as easily satiated as any other appetite, and then leaves the senses of its possessor as dull as those of a city gourmand after a Lord Mayor's feast. Only the highest minds,—our Humboldts, and Bonplands, and Schomburgks (and they only when quickened to an almost unhealthy activity by civilization)—can go on long appreciating where Nature is insatiable, imperious, maddening, in her demands on our admiration. The very power of observing wears out under the rush of ever new objects; and the dizzy spectator is fain at last to shut the eyes of his soul, and take refuge (as West Indian Spaniards do) in tobacco and stupidity. The man, too, who has not only eyes but utterance,—what shall he do where all words fail him? Superlatives are but inarticulate, after all, and give no pictures even of size any more than do numbers of feet and yards: and yet what else can we do, but heap superlative on superlative, and cry, "Wonderful, wonderful and after that wonderful, past all whooping?" What Humboldt's self cannot paint, we will not try to daub. The voyagers were in a South American forest, readers. Fill up the meaning of those words, each as your knowledge enables you, for I cannot do it for you.

Certainly those adventurers could not. The absence of any attempt at word-painting, even of admiration at the glorious things which they saw, is most remarkable in all early voyages, both Spanish and English. The only two exceptions which I recollect are Columbus—(but then all was new, and he was bound to tell what he had seen)—and Raleigh; the two most gifted men, perhaps, with the exception of Humboldt, who ever set foot in tropical America; but even they dare nothing but a few feeble

hints in passing. Their souls had been dazzled and stunned by a great glory. Coming out of our European Nature into that tropic one, they had felt like Plato's men, bred in the twilight cavern, and then suddenly turned round to the broad blaze of day; they had seen things awful and unspeakable: why talk of them, except to say with the Turks, "God is great!"

So it was with these men. Among the higher-hearted of them the grandeur and the glory around had attuned their spirits to itself, and kept up in them a lofty, heroic, reverent frame of mind; but they knew as little about the trees and animals in an "artistic" or "critical" point of view, as in a scientific one. This tree the Indians called one unpronounceable name, and it made good bows; that, some other name, and it made good canoes; of that, you could eat the fruit; that, produced the caoutchouc gum useful for a hundred matters; that, was what the Indians (and they likewise) used to poison their arrows with; from the ashes of those palm-nuts you could make good salt; that tree, again, was full of good milk if you bored the stem: they drank it, and gave God thanks, and were not astonished. God was great: but that they had discovered long before they came into the tropics. Noble old child-hearted heroes, with just romance and superstition enough about them to keep them from that prurient hysterical wonder and enthusiasm, which is simply, one often fears, a product of our scepticism! We do not trust enough in God, we do not really believe His power enough, to be ready, as they were, as every one ought to be on a God-made earth, for anything and everything being possible; and then, when a wonder is discovered, we go into ecstasies and shrieks over it, and take to ourselves credit for being susceptible of so lofty a feeling, true index, forsooth, of a refined and cultivated mind.

They paddled onward hour after hour, sheltering themselves as best they could under the shadow of the southern bank, while on their right hand the full sun-glare lay upon the enormous wall of mimosas, figs and laurels, which formed the northern forest, broken by the slender shafts of bamboo tufts, and decked with a thousand gaudy parasites; bank upon bank of gorgeous bloom piled upward to the sky, till where its outline cut the blue, flowers and leaves, too lofty to be distinguished by the eye, formed a broken rainbow of all hues quivering in the ascending

streams of azure mist, until they seemed to melt and mingle with the very heavens.

And as the sun rose higher and higher, a great stillness fell upon the forest. The jaguars and the monkeys had hidden themselves in the darkest depths of the woods. The birds' notes died out one by one; the very butterflies ceased their flitting over the tree-tops, and slept with outspread wings upon the glossy leaves undistinguishable from the flowers around them. Now and then a colibri whirled downward toward the water, hummed for a moment around a pendent flower, and then the living gem was lost in the deep blackness of the inner wood, among tree-trunks as huge and dark as the pillars of of some Hindoo shrine; or a parrot swung and screamed at them from an overhanging bough; or a thirsty monkey slid lazily down a liana to the surface of the stream, dipped up the water in his tiny hand, and started chattering back, as his eyes met those of some foul alligator peering upward through the clear depths below. In shaded nooks beneath the boughs the capybaras, rabbits as large as sheep, went paddling sleepily round and round, thrusting up their unwieldy heads among the blooms of the blue water-lilies; while black and purple water-hens ran up and down upon the rafts of floating leaves. The shining snout of a fresh-water dolphin rose slowly to the surface; a jet of spray whirled up; a rainbow hung upon it for a moment; and the black snout sank lazily again. Here and there, too, upon some shallow pebbly shore, scarlet flamingoes stood dreaming knee-deep, on one leg; crested cranes pranced up and down, and admired their own finery; and ibises and egrets dipped their bills under water in search of prey; but before noon even those had slipped away, and there reigned a stillness which might be heard—such a stillness (to compare small things with great) as broods beneath the rich shadows of Amyas' own Devon woods, or among the lonely sweeps of Exmoor, when the heather is in flower—a stillness in which, as Humboldt says, "If beyond the silence we listen for the faintest undertones, we detect a stifled, continuous hum of insects, which crowd the air close to the earth; a confused swarming murmur which hangs round every bush, in the cracked bark of trees, in the soil undermined by lizards, millepedes and bees; a voice proclaiming to us that all Nature breathes, that under a thousand different forms life swarms

in the gaping and dusty earth, as much as in the bosom of the waters, and the air which breathes around."

At last a soft and distant murmur, increasing gradually to a heavy roar, announced that they were nearing some cataract; till turning a point, where the deep alluvial soil rose into a low cliff fringed with delicate ferns, they came full in sight of a scene at which all paused: not with astonishment, but with something very like disgust.

"Rapids again!" grumbled one. "I thought we had had enough of them on the Orinoco."

"We shall have to get out, and draw the canoes overland, I suppose. Three hours will be lost, and in the very hottest of the day, too."

"There's worse behind; don't you see the spray behind the palms?"

"Stop grumbling, my masters, and don't cry out before you are hurt. Paddle right up to the largest of those islands, and let us look about us."

In front of them was a snow-white bar of raging foam, some ten feet high, along which were ranged three or four islands of black rock. Each was crested with a knot of lofty palms, whose green tops stood out clear against the bright sky, while the lower half of their stems loomed hazy through a luminous veil of rainbowed mist. The banks right and left of the fall were so densely fringed with a low hedge of shrubs, that landing seemed all but impossible; and their Indian guide, suddenly looking round him and whispering, bade them beware of savages; and pointed to a canoe which lay swinging in the eddies under the largest island, moored apparently to the root of some tree.

"Silence all!" cried Amyas, "and paddle up thither and seize the canoe. If there be an Indian on the island, we will have speech of him; but mind and treat him friendly; and on your lives, neither strike nor shoot, even if he offers to fight."

So, choosing a line of smooth backwater just in the wake of the island, they drove their canoes up by main force, and fastened them safely by the side of the Indian's, while Amyas, always the foremost, sprang boldly on shore, whispering to the Indian boy to follow him.

Once on the island, Amyas felt sure enough, that if its wild tenant had not seen them approach, he certainly had not heard them, so deafening was the noise which filled his brain, and seemed to make the very leaves upon the

bushes quiver, and the solid stone beneath his feet to reel and ring. For two hundred yards and more above the fall nothing met his eye but one white waste of raging foam, with here and there a transverse dyke of rock, which hurled columns of spray and surges of beaded water high into the air,—strangely contrasting with the still and silent cliffs of green leaves which walled the river right and left, and more strangely still with the knots of enormous palms upon the islets which reared their polished shafts a hundred feet into the air, straight and upright as masts, while their broad plumes and golden-clustered fruit slept in the sunshine far aloft, the image of the state-liest repose amid the wildest wrath of Nature.

He looked round anxiously for the expected Indian: but he was nowhere to be seen; and, in the meanwhile, as he stept cautiously along the island, which was some fifty yards in length and breadth, his senses, accustomed as they were to such sights, could not help dwelling on the exquisite beauty of the scene; on the garden of gay flowers, of every imaginable form and hue, which fringed every boulder at his feet, peeping out amid delicate fern-fans and luxuriant cushions of moss; on the chequered shade of the palms, and the cool air, which wafted down from the cataracts above the scents of a thousand flowers. Gradually his ear became accustomed to the roar, and, above its mighty undertone, he could hear the whisper of the wind among the shrubs, and the hum of myriad insects; while the rock manakin, with its saffron plumage, flittered before him from stone to stone, calling cheerily, and seeming to lead him on. Suddenly, scrambling over the rocky flower-beds to the other side of the isle, he came upon a little shady beach, which, beneath a bank of stone some six feet high, fringed the edge of a perfectly still and glassy bay. Ten yards farther, the cataract fell sheer in thunder: but a high fern-fringed rock turned its force away from that quiet nook. In it the water swung slowly round and round in glassy dark-green rings, among which dimpled a hundred gaudy fish, waiting for every fly and worm which spun and quivered on the eddy. Here, if anywhere, was the place to find the owner of the canoe. He leapt down upon the pebbles; and as he did so, a figure rose from behind a neighboring rock, and met him face to face.

It was an Indian girl; and yet, when he looked again,—was it an Indian girl? Amyas had seen hundreds of these

delicate dark-skinned daughters of the forest, but never such a one as this. Her stature was taller, her limbs were fuller and more rounded; her complexion, though tanned by light, was fairer by far than his own sunburnt face; her hair, crowned with a garland of white flowers, was not lank, and straight, and black, like an Indian's, but of a rich, glossy brown, and curling richly and crisply from her very temples to her knees. Her forehead, though low, was upright and ample; her nose was straight and small; her lips, the lips of a European; her whole face of the highest and richest type of Spanish beauty; a collar of gold, mingled with green beads, hung round her neck, and golden bracelets were on her wrists. All the strange and dim legends of white Indians, and of nations of a higher race than Carib, or Arrowak, or Solimo, which Amyas had ever heard, rose up in his memory. She must be the daughter of some great cacique, perhaps of the lost Incas themselves—why not? And full of simple wonder he gazed upon that fairy vision, while she, unabashed in her free innocence, gazed fearlessly in return, as Eve might have done in Paradise, upon the mighty stature, and the strange garments, and above all, on the bushy beard and flowing yellow locks of the Englishman.

He spoke first, in some Indian tongue, gently and smilingly, and made a half-step forward; but quick as light she caught up from the ground a bow, and held it fiercely toward him, fitted with the long arrow, with which, as he could see, she had been striking fish, for a line of twisted grass hung from its barbed head. Amyas stopped, laid down his own bow and sword, and made another step in advance, smiling still, and making all Indian signs of amity; but the arrow was still pointed straight at his breast, and he knew the mettle and strength of the forest nymphs well enough to stand still and call for the Indian boy; too proud to retreat, but in the uncomfortable expectation of feeling every moment the shaft quivering between his ribs.

The boy, who had been peering from above, leaped down to them in a moment; and began, as the safest method, grovelling on his nose upon the pebbles, while he tried two or three dialects, one of which at last she seemed to understand, and answered in a tone of evident suspicion and anger.

"What does she say?"

"That you are a Spaniard and a robber, because you have a beard."

"Tell her that we are no Spaniards, but that we hate them; and are come across the great waters to help the Indians to kill them."

The boy translated his speech. The nymph answered by a contemptuous shake of the head.

"Tell her, that if she will send her tribe to us, we will do them no harm. We are going over the mountains to fight the Spaniards, and we want them to show us the way."

The boy had no sooner spoken, than, nimble as a deer, the nymph had sprung up the rocks, and darted between the palm-stems to her canoe. Suddenly she caught sight of the English boat, and stopped with a cry of fear and rage.

"Let her pass!" shouted Amyas, who had followed her close. "Push your boat off and let her pass. Boy, tell her to go on; they will not come near her."

But she hesitated still, and with arrow drawn to the head, faced first on the boat's crew, and then on Amyas, till the Englishmen had shoved off full twenty yards.

Then, leaping into her tiny piragua, she darted into the wildest whirl of the eddies, shooting along with vigorous strokes, while the English trembled as they saw the frail bark spinning and leaping amid the muzzles of the alligators and the huge dog-toothed trout; but with the swiftness of an arrow she reached the northern bank, drove her canoe among the bushes, and leaping from it, darted through some narrow opening in the bush, and vanished like a dream.

"What fair virago have you unearthed?" cried Cary, as they toiled up again to the landing-place.

"Beshrew me," quoth Jack, "but we are in the very land of the nymphs, and I shall expect to see Diana herself next, with the moon on her forehead."

"Take care, then, where you wander hereabouts, Sir John; lest you end as Actæon did, by turning into a stag, and being eaten by a jaguar."

"Actæon was eaten by his own hounds, Mr. Cary, so the parallel don't hold. But surely she was a very wonder of beauty!"

Why was it that Amyas did not like this harmless talk? There had come over him the strangest new feeling; as

if that fair vision was his property, and the men had no right to talk about her, no right to have even seen her. And he spoke quite surlily as he said—

"You may leave the women to themselves, my masters: you'll have to deal with the men ere long: so get your canoes up on the rock, and keep good watch."

"Hillo!" shouted one in a few minutes, "here's fresh fish enough to feed us all round. I suppose that young cat-a-mountain left it behind her in her hurry. I wish she had left her golden chains and ouches into the bargain."

"Well," said another, "we'll take it as fair payment, for having made us drop down the current again to let her ladyship pass."

"Leave that fish alone," said Amyas; "it's none of yours."

"Why, sir!" quoth the finder in a tone of sulky deprecation.

"If we are to make good friends with the heathens, we had better not begin by stealing their goods. There are plenty more fish in the river; go and catch them, and let the Indians have their own."

The men were accustomed enough to strict and stern justice in their dealings with the savages: but they could not help looking slyly at each other, and hinting, when out of sight, that the captain seemed in a mighty fuss about his new acquaintance.

However, they were expert by this time in all the Indian's fishing methods; and so abundant was the animal life which swarmed around every rock, that in an hour fish enough lay on the beach to feed them all; whose forms and colors, names and families, I must leave to the reader to guess from the wondrous pages of Sir Richard Schomburgk, for I know too little of them to speak without the fear of making mistakes.

A full hour passed before they saw anything more of their Indian neighbors; and then from under the bushes shot out a canoe, on which all eyes were fixed in expectation.

Amyas, who expected to find there some remnant of a higher race, was disappointed enough at seeing on board only the usual half-dozen of low-browed, dirty Orsons, painted red with arnotto; but a gray-headed elder at the stern seemed, by his feathers and gold ornaments, to be some man of note in the little woodland community.

The canoe came close up to the island; Amyas saw that

they were unarmed, and laying down his weapons, advanced alone to the bank, making all signs of amity. They were returned with interest by the old man, and Amyas' next care was to bring forward the fish which the fair nymph had left behind, and through the medium of the Indian lad, to give the cacique (for so he seemed to be) to understand that he wished to render every one his own. This offer was received, as Amyas expected, with great applause, and the canoe came alongside; but the crew still seemed afraid to land. Amyas bade his men throw the fish one by one into the boat, and then proclaimed by the boy's mouth, as was his custom with all Indians, that he and his were enemies of the Spaniards, and on their way to make war against them,—and that all which they desired was a peaceable and safe passage through the dominions of the mighty potentate and renowned warrior whom they beheld before them; for Amyas argued, rightly enough, that even if the old fellow aft was not the cacique, he would be none the less pleased at being mistaken for him. Whereon the ancient worthy, rising in the canoe, pointed to heaven, and earth, and the things under, and commenced a long sermon, in tone, manner and articulation very like one of those which the great black-bearded napes were in the habit of preaching every evening when they could get together a congregation of little monkeys to listen, to the great scandal of Jack, who would have it that some evil spirit set them on to mimic him; which sermon, being partly interpreted by the Indian lad, seemed to signify that the valor and justice of the white men had already reached the ears of the speaker, and that he was sent to welcome them into those regions by the Daughter of the Sun.

"The Daughter of the Sun!" quoth Amyas; "then we have found the lost Incas after all."

"We have found something," said Cary; "I only hope it may not be a mare's nest, like many another of our finding."

"Or an adder's," said Yeo. "We must beware of treachery."

"We must beware of no such thing," said Amyas, pretty sharply. "Have I not told you fifty times, that if they see that we trust them, they will trust us, and if they see that we suspect them, they will suspect us? And when two parties are watching to see who strikes the first blow, they

are sure to come to fisticuffs from mere dirty fear of each other."

Amyas spoke truth; for almost every atrocity against savages which had been committed by the Spaniards, and which was in later and worse times committed by the English, was wont to be excused in that same base fear of treachery. Amyas' plan, like that of Drake, and Cook, and all great English voyagers, had been all along to inspire at once awe and confidence, by a frank and fearless carriage; and he was not disappointed here. He bade the men step boldly into their canoes, and follow the old Indian whither he would. The simple children of the forest bowed themselves reverently before the mighty strangers, and then led them smilingly across the stream, and through a narrow passage in the covert, to a hidden lagoon, on the banks of which stood, not Manoa, but a tiny Indian village.