

# La Goya

## A Passion of the Peruvian Desert

By Samuel Mathewson Scott

*October.*

YES, you are right. It is a queer existence for a civilised man to lead ; but habit subdues us to all things. Here I have lived for two years on this barren rock, overlooking the little bay where the desert meets the sea. A lonely life, too, for there are only three of us, myself and the two young Peruvians, Manuel and Francisco, who share the duties of the hacienda with me. The estate is so vast, and needs so much attention, that there are rarely more than two of us together at a time. They were educated in England in the days before the Chilian War, when all Peru was rich, and they are the best of companions for a moody man. Like all their race, they know none of our gloomy introspection. Life for them is pleasure and laughter : and if they indulge more effusively in affection and more emphatically in hatred than we do, one soon grows accustomed to demonstrations. Had you told me, once upon a time, that I could have endured such a life, I should have laughed at you ; now it is a delight to me. It is free as no other life could be. We are lords of all about us ; we make our own laws, set our own fashions, deter-

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mine our own conventions ; we have no one to envy, no one to imitate.

The whole of this northern coast of Peru, from Ecuador for many a weary league south to beyond Sechura, and back to the sun-baked outposts of the Andes, is a waste of desert broken only here and there by fertile valleys and quebradas where the scanty waters of the western slopes of the mountains find outlets to the sea. It is the ideal land of eternal sunshine. Rain falls but once in seven years. It is the wild torrential rain of the tropics, and after it is over the desert becomes a garden of green grass and flowers. The sun soon turns this verdure to natural hay, which endures through the long years of drought, and with the bean-like fruit of the algarroba trees in the quebradas, affords pasturage for great herds of goats and horses and cattle. The year is one long summer. It is October already, but who would dream it ? Here in this realm of wind and sand and sunlight and sea, it might be June or January or any other month. There is a fascination in this monotony of climate. It provokes us to laziness, inertness, insouciance. It makes us dread the land where seasons change, where rains and snows and storms challenge resistance, and where no to-morrow is like to-day. Here there is Lotus in the air, even though the dreams that come are but stupid lapses of common sense. Why should we struggle when life can be so easy ?

Better fifty years of Europe than a cycle of Cathay ? You may think so, but I doubt it. There is a beauty in the ceaseless roaring of the wind and the beating of the surf. Habit, habit, what slaves it makes of us ! Treeless deserts and shifting sands, blistering suns and icy midnights, even the low-browed Indians become a part of ourselves, and change would seem like exile. Where days glide on to days, and cares are as flies that we can  
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brush away, it's hard to muster courage for seriousness. Even the basis of those cares is simple enough—our cotton, our cattle, and the charcoal, nothing more.

I said there were only three of us, but I must not forget the fourth, old Juan, our major-domo, the intermediary between ourselves and the *peons*, or Indian labourers. Unfortunately, fate has made him a friend rather than a servant. He is a full-blooded Indian, and he cannot be less than sixty. He was born on this hacienda, and was a factor in it long before we ever came here. His whole experience of life is limited by its boundaries. Yet he is a born ruler of men; with iron will, fluent tongue, and a physical energy that is marvellous, he wields an unquestioned authority over the people. In spite of his years he never knows fatigue. He has a grand body and Herculean shoulders, but life on horseback has stunted and bowed his legs. The head is massive and powerful, with a face as wrinkled, brown, and grotesque as a Japanese mask. His anger would make even a Salvini envious. The clenched fists, the blazing eyes, the trembling body towering to its height, and the rolling voice full of a thousand terrible modulations, make up a picture that recalls our dreams of patriarchal grandeur. The peons cower like curs before it. Then he has a slave-like, inborn submission and devotion to his masters, coupled with the more modern, but still instinctive, sense that those who would rule must first learn to obey. With it all, he is a cynic of the first water. He knows no illusions, his laugh is a masterpiece of amused contempt. In the old days of his youth he took all that his narrow life offered. Now the oracle of the country side, he can rival La Rochefoucauld in his sneers at women, and he could have enjoyed Voltaire. His one occasional weakness is drink, the native weakness; and sometimes, in a maudlin mood, after listening humbly to my reproaches, he will tell me of the  
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gay days that are gone, and of the joys life has for him even now, and finish with a sigh—"O Patroncito, what a pity it is that I must die!"

I don't suppose the world contains a happier race than the Cholos—the Indians who form the great bulk of the coast population of Peru. They gather in little communities or villages, cultivate small chacras or farms along the rivers, and work as labourers on the haciendas during the cotton season; or else they become the half-serflike tenantry of the large estates, live among the quebradas of the desert, wherever *water* is found, breed herds of goats, and do such work for their patron, or master, as the needs of the hacienda require. They are a kindly, listless, gentle people; not exactly lazy, but slow, and without much energy. They have no ambitions or torturing aspirations. Their wants are easily met, the chacras and the herds supply most of them; the proceeds of their labour are sufficient for the purchase of the little fineries with which they deck themselves for a fiesta. And is life anything more than food and satisfied vanity?

But don't from this conclude that they are dull and besotted; far from it. Win their confidence and you will find them full of gay chatter, light jests and pretty sentiments, and their hospitality is spontaneous and boundless to those whom they like and who treat them with kindness. Naturally those who dwell together in villages are cleverer and more civilised than those who are isolated in the desert; almost all of them can read and write.

The morals of the community are a study; they are singularly like no morals at all. Such a conclusion, however, would be superficial. They are very punctilious in the observance of the conventions sanctioned by their point of view. I suppose that not five per cent. of the Cholo population are legally married;

married ; yet prostitution, in our sense, is unknown. Their union is a mutual agreement, without many conditions. A woman reaches maturity when she is between fourteen and fifteen. During all her girlhood she has lived in a house where privacy, as we know it, is unthought of. She has heard every part of the human body spoken of, as the most natural thing in the world. She cannot imagine why a moral or formal distinction should be drawn between them. For all that she is as innocent as a baby. It is only the awakening of her passions through the development of her physical nature that gives her an instinctive knowledge of the relation of the sexes. At one of the everlasting fandangoes, she meets some man who shows a preference for her ; later on he proves his love by making her small presents and paying her small attentions. Wooings are brief in this land of the sun. If her parents agree, she is his ; if they oppose, he settles the difficulty with a coup and runs away with her to his home. Thus she becomes his wife, and his dominion over her is supreme. He may ill treat her and neglect her, he may have four or five other women scattered about the country, either at their homes or with some of his relatives, it makes no difference ; so long as she is with him and he supports her, she will be faithful. This is an almost invariable rule, and it is the basis of her respectability. He may grow tired of her before a year is over and send her back to her people perhaps with a very lively reminder of her hard luck to keep her company ; her father's house will be freely open to her and no shame of any sort will attach to her. As the months go by another lover may appear who cares little about the past. They know nothing of our sentimental yesterdays. As a rule though, the men are kind and good to their *compromisas* and remain with them all their lives.

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When young, the women are very attractive, with gorgeous eyes and perfect teeth, glossy raven hair and graceful voluptuous figures. They soon grow stout and fade, however, but the beauty of the eyes always remains.

Religion is only a name among the natives. True they call their children after all the saints in the calendar—and they duly celebrate all the feasts of the church, but there is more of form than of faith in their devotion. It is fear not love that moves them. Wherever a village is able to maintain a *cura*, a church adorns one side of the principal plaza. From the belfry, bells jangle discordantly all day long, and black robed women flock to masses and prayers; but superstition has more place than piety in their hearts. The priests are ignorant and corrupt, debauched and licentious. They think little of the value of example as a teacher. With them, religion is a business that has its set hours; those over, playtime comes. So religion rests with equal lightness on the people. Children must be baptized, confession must be made now and then, an Ave Maria and the sign of the cross are a sure protection in danger, a candle burned before a saint brings the fulfilment of wishes, scapulas ward off the devil, the good see heaven, the bad are burned; but Mary and the church are indulgent with human frailty; all this they know and believe, and feel secure. I must confess that there are occasions when they show a marked aptitude for mendacity, and they do not always respect the laws of property; yet their kindly hearts keep them out of any serious mischief. Docile and obedient, they respect authority and endure even oppression without complaint. Were it not for the taxes and the excisemen they would never know a trouble.

Such are my people, such is the halcyon placidity of their lives—as level as the desert but as full of sunshine. Do you wonder  
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that the spirit is contagious and that I say I am content? It is a purely physical existence, always on horseback and out of doors, but health such as ours amply repays all the sacrifices that seem to bewilder you. Ennui comes of excess, not of simplicity.

Well, the night is running away. Over the reef, at the mouth of the harbour, the waves are howling like drunken men in a quarrel. The wind is full of ghostly suggestions. The halyards of the flag-poles on the verandah are tapping like woodpeckers against a tree. In the great reaches of the rushing tide the *balsa* at the buoy tugs on its chain like an impatient captive. Across the bay, the lights of the native villages twinkle like fallen stars. A hazy moonlight makes the world mysterious. The rhythm of the sea is quick, like the heart-beats of desire. While the world sleeps, Nature is astir. Good-night.

*November.*

I did not think when I last wrote you that my next letter would be a confession, but it seems that it must be.

Forty miles to the south of us, across the desert, lies the valley of the Chira, the principal river of this northern region, crowded with little villages and towns, to one of which I had despatched old Juan on a commission. The other morning, while I was sitting at my lonely breakfast, I heard the jingle of the unmistakable silver spurs on the verandah, and the old man entered, still wrapped in his *poncho* after his long night ride—for here most journeys are made at night with a brief bivouac for rest, to escape the merciless sun.

He made his report and paused.

“Well, what’s the news on the river, Juan?” I asked him.

“Patron,” he said, tentatively; “next week there is to be a great fandango at Amotape. Wouldn’t you like to go?”

“O pshaw!

“O pshaw! what’s the use, Juan? It’s always the same old story: nothing but a long ride, no sleep, and less fun.”

My indifference to such pleasures, which, to his mind, are all the reward life gives us for the trouble of living, is Juan’s greatest trial.

“But, señor, the prettiest Cholitas from all along the river are to be there; you can’t fail to enjoy it.”

I laughed.

“O well, Juan, mi amigo, we’ll see when the time comes.”

The poor old fellow sighed, for the answer, which he had heard so often before, seemed hopeless; and so the matter dropped.

When, however, a few days later, Manuel came in from the cotton-fields in one of our valleys, where he had been slaving for a week, and heard of the approaching fiesta, he would listen to none of my objections; go we must. So one afternoon we set out; he, Juan and I, and our boys, for the river.

The desert is truly trackless; there is not a road across it, only narrow trails, which the shifting sands are for ever obliterating; but the boys are unerring guides. Even on the darkest night, some instinct keeps them to the faint silver line that to our eyes is imperceptible. We sped along over sandy tracts and rocky stretches, dotted with withered thorn bushes. Touches of green relieved the glaring expanse as we crossed the little quebradas, where the algarroba trees send down their long tap roots, sometimes fifty feet, to the retentive sub-soil, where the water still lingers. The sun blazed fiercely, but the air was dry and elastic. The wind blows always from the southward; from the sea by day, from the shore by night, heaping the sand into great crescent-shaped, moving hills or *medenas*, that creep stealthily over the level waste, growing hour by hour, and burying all things that lie in their path. It was night when we descended the steep cliffs into the  
valley,

valley, and rode along the silent *chacras* into the town—scattered suburbs of cane huts, a few rows of more pretentious mud-covered houses, then the white plastered dwellings of the plaza.

The narrow, dusty streets were alight with lamps and thronged with merrymakers wending their way to the *picantes* and dances. Some of the men awkwardly sported the cheap ready-made raiment that is beginning to invade even this country, but most of them adhered to the more graceful old costume of stiffly starched shirts, white trousers, and coloured sashes. The women wore gay prints of every hue, ribbons and flowers, and trinkets; while over the head and shoulders was wrapped the soft black *manta*, or the more festive pale blue and white scarf of Guadalupe with its deep fringes of native lace.

Juan, who is nothing if not an epicure, readily discovered the best *picante*, and soon we were at supper. A *picante* might be called in English the native gala day restaurant. Throughout the fiesta food may be had day and night; all the world dines there, for the women are too busy holidaying to waste the time in household duties. *Seco*, or dry stew of goat's meat with rice and sweet potatoes, slightly flavoured; *churasco*, fried steak with onions and an egg; *Chicharones*, or the small pieces of pork that separate from the fat in rendering lard—a popular delicacy with the Indians; *salchichones*, or sausages; and last, and best of all, the *tamales*—a highly-seasoned stew of pork and chicken, steamed in an outer paste of ground maize, wrapped in thick pudding-cloths of maize leaves. The dust of the road that filled our throats and the *aji*, or the hot red pepper, with which the dishes were plentifully sprinkled, made very welcome the great gourdfuls of *chicha* with which they served us. *Chicha* was the royal beverage of the Inca long before the conquest; the native beer, brewed from maize. It is the favourite still, in spite of all modern innovations.

innovations. Gourds serve for everything, plates and cups, and bowls and platters, work-baskets, water-bottles, and even bath-tubs, and the service is apt to be a wooden spoon, although crockery and pewter are now common enough.

While we were feasting, Juan had been scouting for the most promising fandango. Half an hour later I found myself comfortably stretched on a bench in a large bare room, puffing at my pipe, and yielding to the pleasant languor that follows a long ride and a hearty supper. The *bancos*, or seats, built around the lime-whitened walls, were crowded with guests. Juan's promise had been fulfilled, for certainly the prettiest girls of the river were around us ; a fact which had instantly impressed Manuel, for he was passing from group to group, scattering gay nothings and laughter everywhere. Fortunately we were too well known for our presence to be an embarrassment to our simpler friends. The natural abandon of such a gathering is its only charm to a civilized man—yet, had we been the greatest strangers, old Juan's diplomacy would soon have set every one at ease. He has a marvellous mastery over awkward situations.

The mirth was a little subdued, although bottles and glasses were circulating and healths were being drunk. It is a gross breach of etiquette to toast back to the person who has toasted you ; that each may have his share you must pay your salutations to another. Every one, men and women alike, were smoking the little yellow papered cigarettes, in unconscious emulation of the open petroleum lamps that lighted up the scene and made swaying shadows of the corners. The dancing was only beginning, in spite of the fact that at one side of the room the orchestra was bravely striving to stir up some excitement. In unison with a rather metallic guitar, a blind harpist tugged at the strings of a strangely shaped instrument with an enormous sounding board.

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On either side of him sat two men, who emphasised the broken time of the dance by pounding on the sounding board with their hands, while the harpist sang the familiar words of the song, or improvised with considerable cleverness new verses for the occasion. The whole orchestra joined in the chorus in a high nasal key. Noise was more important than melody.

The dance is always the same, and is performed by couples as many as the floor will accommodate; all present mark time by the clapping of hands. In these diversions old and young participate; they have known the dance from childhood. The women far surpass the men in grace, they show less self-consciousness and effort. With the most expert, the movement is from the hips entirely, and a woman has reached perfection when she can go through the measures with a bottle balanced on her head. I have never seen a man who was able to perform this feat. There are three figures; in the first, the pair advance and retire and turn, waving their handkerchiefs while their feet move to the rhythm of the music. During a pause the man approaches a large table covered with bottles, where the hostess is dispensing Anizado, a fiery liquor distilled from aniseed and alcohol, and purchases a large tumbler-full, which he and his companion sip alternately. The second figure runs more quickly. The song and the music are louder. With knees bent in an attitude of supplication, the man hovers about the woman who spins coquettishly before him. There is much of liberty but little of license, still the suggestion remains. Again a pause. Amidst bravos and handclapping, the third figure begins. Feet speed in and out, the bodies whirl and sway to the flash of the handkerchiefs. The song and the music wax louder and faster in half barbaric excitement. Shouts and cries encourage and applaud the dancers. The tumult is deafening, the dance delirious. Squibs

sputter beneath the flying feet. As if possessed they advance and turn and retreat, until, through sheer exhaustion, they are forced to stop.

Perhaps you think it a vulgar scene—yet I enjoyed it. After all, physical pleasure is our real joy. To lie there indolently and watch the lamplight gleam on dusky bosoms; to see the dark eyes flash in the excitement of noise and movement; to forget tomorrow, and to recall half forgotten yesterdays; to think of whiter breasts and nimbler tongues; of the life that is over and gone, all in a sensuous thoughtless way, is a pleasant enough sensation. For what is the use of pondering over life and of trying to find something in it that is really worth the trouble? We know it is only the drift of years, the desire of youth, the regret of age and then the eternal silence. It is better to let our pulses throb while they can; to give over the wondering and the idealising, and to take such joy of life as our senses give us. There may be a morning of sermons and soda water somewhere, but who cares? So I lay there and smoked.

The crowd gathered about the door jostled and swayed, and as it finally parted, an old woman and a young girl entered and took seats across the room directly opposite me. The girl threw back her scarf and revealed a face that at once brought me back to realities. As usual, philosophy surrendered to life, and I watched her intently. Her beauty was thrilling. She was about sixteen, just in the prime of her womanhood, for after that age these women grow stout. Her face was perfect in type. A flush of rose gave life to the faint duskiness of her cheeks where two dimples played at hide and seek with their twin brothers lurking at the corners of her full mouth. From some forgotten strain, she had inherited the Inca nose with its broad base, its exquisite aquiline curve, and its fine nostrils; to my mind, in its purity,  
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the most perfect of human features. Like all her race, she had teeth of ivory. Don't think I am raving when I tell you that I have never seen eyes in which so many emotions seemed to lurk. They were dark, of course, in a setting of high arched brows and long sweeping lashes, otherwise they defy description. Her forehead was low, but broader than is usual, though the waves of her black glossy hair sent out a faint ripple or two of down upon her temples.

There was an unmistakable superiority about her which her companions seemed to recognise, for they approached her with deference. Even her dress displayed more taste than that of the women about her, yet she was arrayed according to the same simple rules.

There was no use trying to be indifferent before such a picture. I crossed over to where she was sitting and bowed elaborately.

"Good evening, Señorita," and in the Spanish fashion, I told her my name and assured her I was at her orders.

"Your servant, Gregoria Paz," she replied with perfect composure.

"Señorita Goya," I said, using the pretty diminutive of her name, "I am sorry to confess that I do not dance, but will you not permit me to sit here and talk to you?"

Most of the women would have been shy and awkward at first, but she made way for me most courteously. A natural coquetry gave grace to every movement she made; yet she tempered it with an air of dignity and reserve that put even me upon my best behaviour. The sensation was certainly amusing. My attentions pleased her, that was evident; but whenever I ventured upon even conversational liberties she had a way of tossing back her head and looking at me out of the corners of her great flashing eyes,

eyes, as she blew the smoke of her cigarette ceilingward, that was inscrutable. Where had she learned it all? That was the question. I wondered if one of Pizarro's haughty dons had wooed and won some great-great-grandmother of hers in the long ago.

Nobody dared to disturb us, and time flew along as we laughed and chatted. She lived in the village across the river, where her father owned some small gardens, she said. Would she let me come to see her? Their house was too humble for such a guest as I, but it was always at my disposal.

The dance was growing uproarious. I had noticed that Manuel, in the midst of his own flirtations, had been keeping an amused eye upon my occupation. I saw him walk over to the old harpist, and soon after I became conscious that we were the centre of observation, for the old man was improvising verses in praise of myself and complimenting the Goya on her good fortune. This naturally prompted a response from me, in the shape of refreshments for the devoted and perspiring orchestra.

A little later, Manuel and I withdrew to snatch what sleep we could before setting out on our ride under the morning stars. Even old Juan discreetly joined in the chaff with which Manuel pelted me as we galloped home.

And—would you believe it?—yesterday I sent the good old fellow off to the Goya with a little trinket and a letter that would, in its fervent flourishes, remind you most ludicrously of the valentines of your youth; and I am awaiting her reply as impatiently as the most orthodox of lovers.

*December.*

To-day is like anything but your idea of the last one of December; warm and bright, with a bustling, noisy, dusty wind from the desert to make a field of daisies out of the deep green stretches

stretches of the ocean ; and the way in which I spent Christmas was quite as wide a departure from your conventions.

For a week before the festival I had been busy with my men at the far end of the hacienda. I won't tell you about the blazing heat of the summer desert, our little bivouacs behind the sandhills, our haphazard meals, and all the other commonplaces of this life of ours. Although I was anxious to conclude the work, I couldn't deny my good fellows their holiday ; but we laboured on until the last light had faded out of the west. A hasty dinner in a little hut, a few stern injunctions to the peons as to prompt return, and I found myself confronted with Christmas Eve. However, I was not without resources. Amotape was only six miles away, and the festivities promised there were attracting the whole country-side. For two or three days previous, little donkey-borne parties of holiday-makers had passed us on the trails bound for that centre of delight. Then I felt sure the Goya would be there. I had not been able to see her since our first meeting, but I had given old Juan and my messengers many a long ride through the night to carry her my hyperbolic letters, laden with sighs, reproaches, and protestations. Juan assured me that her parents gladly favoured my suit, while her little answers, that needed many a re-reading before I could fathom their scrawled, mis-spelt lines, had not left me hopeless. At first they had been stiff and formal, condescending thanks, and nothing more ; but latterly they had taken on a more sympathetic tone. So I turned my horse toward Amotape.

The stars twinkled here and there ; far in the east a line of clouds over the hills still hid the rising moon. Every now and then a rocket burst and added to the splendour of the heavens. The town was *en fête* when I arrived ; every house was lighted up ; from every corner came the clatter and the song of a fandango.

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Through wide open doorways I caught sight of gaily illuminated *nacimientos*, altar-like structures, adorned with the most fantastic and incongruous assortment of trifles, which in a measure take the place of our Christmas-trees. The plaza was thronged. Happy groups squatted on the ground or sauntered about, watching the fireworks that were being discharged from a temporary stand. The exhibition was really very creditable. Even the *blasé* I found a pleasure in the flaming wheels and constellated bombs. Would you believe it, the poor creatures, who have little more than baked *camotes* to live on, spent over a thousand soles on that display?

Acquaintances greeted me everywhere, and I speedily learned that the Goya was present. Soon I came across them all, a family party, seated in a circle, gazing with the silence of a year's accumulated wonder at the blaze of sparks and fire. Yes, she was there. The moon showed me a pretty picture, truly. Round her shoulders was drawn a light scarf; flowers intensified the blackness of her heavy hair. Her face seemed very fair; her eyes were as deep as the night.

After the usual round of salutations I sat down beside her.

"How finely we are dressed to-night, Goyita."

"*Una pobre, como yo?*" she replied disparagingly.

"A poor girl like you, Goyita? That's more your fault than mine. What a fool you are not to care for me."

"Fool, indeed!" she replied with a toss of her head, "You'd never have let me come to see these fireworks."

"And since when have I had the reputation of a tyrant, *querida*? Pshaw, you might have fireworks every day if you wished. Why do you treat me so cruelly? You know that I adore you. Is it the custom of your countrywomen to reward devotion with disdain?"

And so we set to whispering. She was anxious to know if we  
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observed Christmas in my country. She readily understood when I told her of Santa Claus and the Christmas trees and even the mistletoe, but the story of the snow puzzled her. I could only describe it to her as a feathery rain that fell and lingered, and when it was over, left the world silent and white like the desert under the moonlight.

But I knew that the wonderland of conversation would hardly take the place of the tangible delights about us, in the Goya's mind. So, accompanied by the whole family, we made the round of the dances and nacimientos. I fancy the youngster was not at all displeased at the sensation created by her appearance under the escort of the big Gringo, as they call us foreigners.

The nacimiento is a common form of Christmas celebration in all Spanish American countries. Along the side of a room, a stage is erected and covered with fancy cloth. The centre of this is so arranged as to represent the Manger with the Babe. Round about, on a setting of artificial rockwork interspersed with lakes of looking-glass and waterfalls of threads, are placed groups of plaster puppets depicting the principal Biblical scenes from the Creation to the birth of Christ. Candles light up every point. Among the poor, to whom puppets and rockwork are impossible, the ornaments are a most inappropriate assortment of dolls, toys, coloured pictures, and even playing cards.

The great street door is wide open. All are welcome to the Christmas cheer. Music and dancing are continuous, and servants move among the guests with trays laden with *copitas* of pisco, anizado and coñac. Whatever their faults, these people are never lacking in the virtue of hospitality.

At about half past eleven, the Goya and many of the other women departed to change their gay attire for more devotional garments in order that they might attend the midnight mass. I

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had promised to meet her after the mass was over, but a sense of curiosity tempted me to join the crowds that hurried churchward at the insistent clanging of the bells in the tower.

The bare body of the building was in darkness. Huddled on the floor were all the women of the *pueblo*, hooded in their black mantas; men filled the side aisles and the spaces around the door. There was scarcely a point of colour. The altar blazed with hundreds of candles. The priest was an imposing personage in spite of his coarse sensual face. The service was a string of unintelligible mummeries, yet it was not without dignity although the rustic trousers of the assistants that dangled beneath their laced vestments, and the nasal nondescript responses of the choir threatened momentary disillusion. There was, in a gallery, something that pretended to be an orchestra, very reedy, very noisy and very energetic. Near where I stood, an old man from time to time beat drowsy and irrelevant rattles on a small drum. Stray candles in front of special altars made heavy shadows of the pillars. Now and then a dog wandered in, searching for a lost master. The cloud of incense intensified the heat, without perceptibly diminishing the pungent human odours. Yet there was something religious in it all, if it were only the heavy drag of time. I couldn't distinguish the Goya among the kneeling figures, and the novelty of the spectacle soon wore off; I don't know how often I adjourned to the square for a cigarette.

It must have been half past one before the mass was over. Then began a quaint ceremony, the *Pastoras*. A canopy was brought out and held above the priest who advanced towards the body of the church. Six little girls, dressed in white, and two boys, attired and disguised as old men, appeared before him. The *piccolo* of the orchestra began to shriek a ballad-tune. The little  
voices

voices tried to follow while the little feet performed an awkward dance. I could catch only a few of the words :

Hermanas pastoras,  
Vamos á adorar  
Al recién nacido—

Shepherd sisters, let us go to worship the new born child.

Then a procession was formed which marched slowly round the church between two lines of worshippers. The singing children walked in front. The priest carried in his arms a figure of the infant Christ. When the altar was regained, he again seated himself beneath the canopy and each of the little girls repeated the song in turn, followed by a chorus of all. The scene was ended by the two boys, who during the whole ceremony had performed pantomimic buffooneries while the orchestra piped, and the little girls circled in the dance. Then the procession reformed and left the church to repeat the performance at each house in which was a nacimiento. The congregation dispersed.

I hurried to the plaza and waited. Soon the Goya came out and we all sat down on the stone benches, there in the moonlit square with its soft white walls of houses. They all clamoured for "Pascuas," Christmas presents. I sent for a bottle of anizado. I don't know why, but it was pleasant to sit there at her feet and pay her compliments which her lips pretended to misunderstand, although her eyes responded: the stilted extravagant Spanish compliments which lay tribute on all the stars and flowers in the universe, and which sound so absurd in our reserved English. Indian, savage, what you will, she was still a pretty woman, and I—I asked no more.

The bottle finished they went to bed, while I roved about  
among

among the fandangos, drinking everything from beer to bitters with the same Christian goodwill. The moon was paling when I took a cup of coffee at a little Chinese stall ; in the East were the streaks of white that betokened day ; and so in the balmy morn of the equator, under much the same sky as that which shone upon its first birth, dawned Christmas ; that Christmas which, no doubt, you at the same moment were saluting with all the accessories of civilisation in an atmosphere of ennui, away in the land of snows.

I awoke about ten. The heat was numbing. It seemed as if there were nothing in life that could justify exertion. Still I remembered that her mother had asked me to breakfast, or more truthfully, I had invited myself, and I knew they would be making great preparations for me. So, followed by my boy, I crossed the river.

I found that she lives in a little addition of two rooms that adjoins her father's house ; a rambling structure of cane and mud, with a low, heavily thatched-roof, bare walls, and the naked earth for a floor. In front, faced with a half wall, which contains the door or gate, is a large covered space, surrounded by wide benches of board, which serve as beds for as many weary travellers as care to ask the hospitality of the house. Next, behind, is the living-room of the family, hung with hammocks. Upon the walls are saddles, bridles, lassos, coils of rope and raw-hide, long sword-like *machetas* for cutting cane, *alforjas*, or saddle bags woven of cotton, and all the paraphernalia of the road. In the corners stood shovels and other implements, rude tables, benches, and chairs of home manufacture ; boxes for clothing and stores filled up the intervening spaces. To the rear of the apartment opened bedrooms and passages that led to kitchens and enclosures. To the left of the main building, with a door of its own in front, was the sanctuary of the Goya.

I was

I was received with great cordiality, a spontaneous kindness mingled with respect, such as you would never find among a similar class in Europe. Her father is a Serrano, an Indian of the mountains. Like many of those people, he wears his hair closely cropped, with the exception of a wide shock in front that hangs like a thick fringe over his forehead. Besides cultivating his gardens, he carries on a trade with the interior, whence he brings back *dulces* and *chancaca*—a paste of raw sugar. The *dulces* are conserves of fruits and sugar similar to Guava jelly, and almost sickeningly sweet. The people are very fond of them.

If the Goya's mother ever possessed any of her daughter's beauty she must have lost it long ago, for no trace of it remains. But what she lacks in grace she makes up in virtue, for she is the jolliest, happiest, most gossipy old dame I have met for many a day. She has several children, all of whom, with the exception of a young sister, are older than the Goya.

They gave me a great feast at which I sat alone, while all the rest waited upon me. The Goya was very quiet; she seemed to be watching me intently, as if she were trying to penetrate the screen of manners and compliments to discover the real effect of their efforts to please me. All through the afternoon, even until I left, she kept up her pondering. I wish I knew what her final impression was. It would be interesting to know just what was going on in that little brain, which is separated from mine by all the forces of the universe save that of human sympathy. And, after all, what is it that we are always seeking up and down the world but that one quality that knows no law of intellect, race, or station?

Well, such was my Christmas. It might fairly be called a merry one. I trust yours was no worse.

January.

*January.*

My Christmas visit was not thrown away, for the Goya is mine! Taking advantage of the festival of Los Reyes, or Twelfth Night, which is observed here as in all Catholic countries, I sent the Goya a present and a letter, of which the ardour was not all insincere. She returned a quaint answer to my prayers: "Perhaps what I asked might happen, perhaps it might never be." But this was foundation enough for my old oracle Juan to declare the omens favourable. So, having despatched a messenger ahead to announce our coming, he and I set out with our saddle bags stuffed with the elements of a grand supper. It was dark when we reached the house. The Goya came to meet us as we dismounted and, for the first time, she shyly, but unresistingly, allowed me to kiss her. A table was prepared for me in one corner, where I supped, attended by my lady love. Juan, in his element, presided at the spread which loaded the great table. Amid the general mirth we two were forgotten.

It was a gorgeous scene that met my eyes next morning, dreamy as my own lazy mood, as I lay smoking in the hammock of her sitting-room, looking out through the open door. The house has a beautiful situation on a high, sandy eminence, overlooking the spreading, winding valley of the river, which is shut in by steep water-scored cliffs that mark the limits of the desert. Below, quivering in the glaring light, a thousand shades of green, dimmed by the hazy smoke of charcoal fires, mingled with the golden flashes of the river. Waving clumps of palm hedged in the darker stretches of cotton plantations. Feathery algarroba woods held in their clearings the brighter greens of gardens and banana groves. Far away inland rose the first hills of the Andes,

so faintly seen they seemed a part of the cloudless sky itself. At the foot of the slope the sun shone on little patches of colour, where women were washing clothes in the water. Near by, making its pendulum-like voyages from shore to shore, was the long dug-out canoe of the ferry by which I had crossed the night before. There is no ford, and horses and mules have to be towed, swimming behind the little craft to the accompaniment of ceaseless shouts and splashing. At the landing-places bustling groups were busy unsaddling and resaddling. The bright dresses of the women beneath their black mantas, the ponchos and white hats of the men, the gay saddle cloths spread on the sand, and the many coloured alforjas thrown together in heaps, looked in the distance like an old-fashioned nosegay. With a chorus of laughter, some boys were swimming; as they rested for a moment in the shallows, the sun lit up their dark wet bodies with a glitter of bronze. Over all the landscape hung the gauzy curtains of the heat-waves—just like the dissolving tableaux in a pantomime.

The light grew blinding, and with a wide swing of the hammock, I kicked the door half shut. She had left me after serving my coffee, turning her head as she passed the threshold to whisper the assurance that she would come back soon again. Certainly she is different from the rest of them. I looked round the room. She has managed to give an individuality even to it. The dull walls were not to her fancy, it seemed, for she had endeavoured to hide them under strips of coloured paper and pictures of every sort, from the roughest woodcuts of a newspaper, to the gaudy circulars of patent medicines. She had even secured a yard or two of real wall-paper somewhere, and had spent much pains in distributing it to advantage. On the floor she had spread here and there an empty sack in the manner of a rug. Under a tiny but most unflattering mirror at one end of the chamber, stood her  
table

table with her sewing machine and work, an earthen water cooler, a little clock that seemed to have forgotten that its principal purpose in life was to note the flight of time ; a box and a trinket or two, all in the daintiest order ; while in the centre rose the greatest of all her treasures, a huge glass lamp, which she had lighted with great ceremony on my arrival the previous evening.

Ere long she returned, radiant from her bath, and took a seat on a small stool near me. She wore a simple gown, open at the throat ; around the polished ebony of her hair she had tied a bright red ribbon, which secured a single flower. In her eyes still lingered the languor of passion. I had never before realised how beautiful she was. She held up her seductive mouth provokingly, but as I rose to kiss her she drew back quickly, and placing her little tapered hand upon her lips, laughed at me roguishly with her dark eyes. The Goyita needs no flatterer to tell her of her charms ; she knows them only too well.

The day flew by as if the hours were minutes. I soon found out her weakness, and I told her stories of my own country ; of balls, and jewels, and flowers ; of pretty women and gay dresses, and of all the pageants I could remember ; she listened as a child to a fairy tale. At the noontide breakfast she had still another fascination in store for me. From the depths of her clothes-chest she brought out her four silver spoons, and from a cupboard on the wall, her plates with the flowered border. She waited upon me with thoughtful attentions, that might have flattered a prince. The instinct of service resisted all my coaxings, however ; she did not know me well enough yet to sit at the table beside me.

In the evening, hand in hand, we wandered through the chacras by the river, past hedges of tangled vines and flowers, and under the rustling fronds of the banana trees. I told her I wanted to build her a house near that of old Juan, in a quebrada  
some

some miles from my own habitation. She slowly shook her head.

"You will not come? What nonsense; you don't know how happy you will be; I will give you everything you can think of."

"Oh, no, no, no; not that!"

"Why not?"

"Oh, I know what it means. After I have given you all the love of my heart and soul, you will go away to your own country, and I shall never be able to love again."

"And do you want to love again?" I asked, coldly.

She paused, and looked at me for a moment, then threw her arms about my neck, and kissed me in savage abandonment.

Still, I could not shake her resolution.

"Here, yes, for ever and for ever, if you will; this has always been my home, and if you leave me I shall still have known no other. But there, no. If, after I had become accustomed to a life with you, you should deceive me, how could I come back, and ever be happy here again?"

"But, Goyita mia," I declared, "I have no intention of returning to my home."

"Would you think of me when the occasion came?" she replied, as sadly as if she had already fathomed woman's fate.

But I must stop writing. I am sick for sleep. It was two this morning when I started back. The long ride through the desert, under the voluptuous moon that drew across it the light bars of cloud, as a woman in the shame of her passion throws her white arm over her eyes; the long, long ride, in which my thoughts flew back, false to my latest love, to the old, old life, and the days that are no more. To you, the whole adventure may appear a disgrace to my intelligence; yet it was not all debased; it had much of beauty. A hundred miles for a woman! and  
that

that a woman three hundred years behind the world I once knew—yet I mention it. Well, it was worth the telling, if you are not so bound up in your century that you can see nothing human outside of it.

*March.*

Again and again I visited the Goya; she never wearied me. She had learned the secret many a more brilliant woman has failed to discover, she never let me feel sure. I could not induce her to consent to leave her father's house—she seemed to have a vague fear of such a change. I was beginning to despair, so I consulted old Juan.

“Patron,” said this authority, “order the house to be built at once; send me the men, and I will attend to it for you. Don't fear, she will come as soon as it is finished. I know these women; their no always means yes. But I am afraid you are spoiling her. When you are wooing a woman, it is all very well to promise her everything; that is part of the game. But once she has yielded she is yours and she has to obey you—if she doesn't, beat her. Never beg a woman to do anything, just tell her she must do it. Let her always see that you are in authority; that is the only attitude she will understand. Patron mio, you know perfectly well that you cannot ride a mule without your spurs, and there isn't much difference between women and mules.”

If I did not quite share Juan's philosophy, I nevertheless accepted his advice—I ordered the house to be built and said nothing to the Goya about it.

Meanwhile the carnival arrived, and Manuel, Francisco and I went to Amotape to celebrate it. I think that of all their festivals, the natives enjoy this one most. Indeed the enthusiasm pervades

pervades every class, even to the aristocratic Spaniards of the large cities. All formality is set aside and good-natured licence reigns. The Indians inaugurate the sports several days before the carnival really begins. With their pockets full of red, green and blue powders, egg shells filled with coloured water, and *chisquetes* or squirts charged with eau-de-cologne, the men go from house to house and attack all the women of the family with this holiday ammunition. With screams and laughter, the fire is vigorously returned; pretty faces are streaked with powder, and clothes are drenched with the coloured waters until both sides are tired out.

We arrived on Shrove Tuesday, the last day of the feast when the fun is at its height. I found the Goya sadly disarrayed but glowing with enjoyment. She was so disappointed when I declined to join in the sport that to appease her I had to submit to having my face daintily smeared with a powder puff. I was then permitted to become a spectator, while she and my two companions gave themselves up to the spirit of the day. The Goya was the leader of the girls against Manuel and Francisco. These two enthusiasts fully armed for the fray sped down the village street in pursuit of the first maiden who showed herself—perhaps to be met at the next corner or doorway by an ambushed volley that brought them to a standstill or forced them into ignominious retreat. Showers of water were poured from balconies and windows. The wetter and dirtier they became, the happier they seemed to be. The Goya was breathless with laughter. Her stratagems were masterly, and during the entire afternoon she outwitted the enemy at every point.

At nightfall, I was host at a grand dinner at the Chinese Fonda, to which I invited all her friends. Here new pranks suggested themselves, and the scene became so hilarious that even I had to yield, much to the detriment of my raiment if not of my

dignity. One cannot be Anglo-Saxon in such surroundings. Finally, having exhausted our powders and ourselves as well, we gave up the sport.

Some weeks later I had occasion to go to Payta, the principal seaport of this region, a wretched dirty little town that clusters along the base of the wrinkled cliffs like an eruption of toadstools under an ant hill, and quite as brown and ugly. My road led past the Goya's house. She was seated on the floor, cutting out a dress, but on seeing me she bundled the work into a heap and jumped up clapping her hands.

"I am so glad you have come," she cried, "I was just going to send you a message to tell you of the grand fiesta that will take place at La Huaca on Saturday, and to beg you to take me. You will, won't you?"

"I am very sorry, my Goya, but it is impossible. I am going to Payta, and I cannot return before Sunday morning."

Her face fell, for to her gay little soul a fiesta was the breath of life. She was silent for a moment, then she looked at me beseechingly.

"But everybody is going, Señor; may not my mother take me?"

The Goya knew as well as I did that it was impossible to concede such a request. For my young bride to appear at a fandango under any other escort than that of her lord and master would have elevated the eyebrows of the world to an alarming height. Her spirits rose again, however, when I spoke of presents from Payta.

I returned on the promised morning, but much to my amazement I found the house locked up. Where could the family be? My boy descried some people down in the chacras. I told him to go and see who they were and ask them where the Goya was.

The

The boy returned. "It is her mother, Señor."

"What does she say?"

"She says the Doña Goya went to La Huaca yesterday with some friends and will not return till to-morrow. The mother is coming up to speak to you."

I could hardly believe my ears.

"What nonsense you are talking," I said indignantly; "such a thing is impossible."

"Yes, Señor," he answered, "it is strange, but a Señora in the house behind there told me to ask you to wait for a moment; she has a letter for you from the Doña Goya."

"The devil! Why didn't she say so before?"

"Who knows, Señor?"

So I waited, but no Señora with a letter appeared.

At length the Goya's mother came, and as she unlocked the door, greeted me with the customary salutations that must precede all conversation however important. I returned them impatiently.

"Where is the Goya?" I demanded.

"In La Huaca, Señor."

"What on earth possessed you to allow her to go?"

"Who knows, Señor?" she replied with exasperating meekness.

"Where is the letter she left for me?"

"She left no letter, Señor."

"What's the use of telling me that? Boy, go and call that woman who spoke to you."

"Señor," answered the youth, "she is in this very house."

"Where?" I shouted, growing more angry as I grew more perplexed at every reply.

"In that room behind, Señor. She spoke to me through the cane wall."

I turned

I turned to the mother. "What trick is this?" I cried, and brushing past her, I rushed through the passages to the rooms beyond. In one of these I discovered the Goya sitting serenely.

"What do you mean by this, Goya?" I said sternly.

"Oh, I knew you were there all the time."

"Why didn't you let me in, then?"

"I wanted to see what you would say."

"When did you return from La Huaca?"

"Of course I never went," and she mockingly held up her lips.

She had planned the whole performance just to tease me. The part played by her mother was no doubt one that pleased her. These Indians can lie to your face with more innocent composure and ingenuity than any race I ever met.

I thought, with a view to my own future comfort, that I might as well draw the Goya's attention to what might have been the consequences of her joke.

"Supposing I had grown angry and had gone away?" I asked her.

"Do you think I should have let you go far? I should have called you."

"Yes; but I might have been so angry that I would have refused to listen," I suggested as haughtily as I could.

"I wasn't afraid of that," she returned archly, and I had to give up, although I still pretended to feel hurt.

The room in which I had found her faced upon the open *patio*. She made me sit down beside her in the shadow of the wall. Opposite to us, on a high perch out of the reach of scratching fowls, in a composite *jardinière* of old boxes and broken water-jars, grew the flowers with which she was accustomed to deck her hair. A light roof of thatch over one corner of the enclosure formed the kitchen, where, squatted upon the ground before a fireplace of  
four

four stones, her mother was preparing my breakfast with an unpretentious equipment of earthen pots, wooden spoons, and her own dexterous fingers. A fastidious man might have found the sight of such preparations trying to his appetite; but I had proved the pudding too often by the eating to quarrel with the making of it. Hot *tamales*, rice stained red with powdered *achote*, and beef stewed in a *salsa picante* with *aji*, made a breakfast which I was far from despising, especially as the Goya, perhaps to atone for her cruelty, was more graceful than ever in her attentions.

After breakfast was over, I resolved to put to the proof a portion at least of old Juan's philosophy of femininity. During the weeks that had passed, we had completed and furnished the house. So in a matter-of-course way I announced to the Goya that it was finished, and that I intended to send for her shortly. She looked at me in amazement, seemingly more astounded by the way in which I spoke than by the news I related. Hitherto my manner towards her had always been beseeching. The expression of her face amused me quite as much as the altered tone I had just assumed had surprised her. I nearly spoiled everything by laughing and catching her in my arms to assure her that I had not meant the dictatorial part of it at all. Fortunately I resisted the temptation.

She ventured to demur.

"No, no; I cannot, I cannot. Who knows how soon you will go back to your own land? You must go some day. Do you think it makes it easier to tell me it will not be for years and years? The time will come, and how could I bear it?"

"Now, Goya," I said, as severely as I was able, "it is both useless and silly to talk to me in that way. I have made up my mind, and there's an end of the matter. You seem to have a very strange notion of a woman's duty."

She

She sat for some time toying nervously with her dress. Suddenly she looked up eagerly.

“Then tell me about the house.”

I didn't hesitate to describe it. As much for my own comfort as for hers, I had sent to Lima for the furniture, and I knew that to her the place would seem palatial.

I told her that it was in the quebrada, close to Juan's house, that she might have his daughters for companions, in addition to the old woman who was to cook for her and wait upon her. There were three rooms and a kitchen; a bedroom, a dining-room, and a little sitting-room for herself. There was a real bed, with a mosquito-net instead of the print curtains to which she was accustomed; moreover, there were rugs on the floors. The dining-room had everything imaginable. But her own little room was the gem of all. There were pictures on the walls, there was a stand for her sewing-machine, and I had ordered a box full of materials for dresses that it would take her for ever to make up. Then, on one side, there was a little dressing-table, with brushes and combs and everything she could wish, and over it hung a great, big mirror, in which she could see not merely her pretty face, but the whole of herself at once.

Her eyes were sparkling.

“When will you send for me?”

“As soon as I go back.”

She threw her arms around me and nestled her head on my shoulder.

“But it will be soon, soon, soon, won't it?” she implored.

I had succeeded beyond my hopes. Yet, somewhat at the expense of my vanity, for it was clearly the house, and not I, that had overcome her reluctance.

A few days ago, a small caravan of peons, marshalled by Juan,  
escorted

escorted her to her new abode. Although he had ridden all night, the devoted fellow came over early in the morning to tell me of her safe arrival, and as soon as I could I galloped away to welcome her.

I found her alone, seated at the table in her sitting-room, amusing herself by feeding a clamorous young blackbird, which one of Juan's daughters had just given her. Owing to the heat she had thrown off her bodice, and her breast was but lightly covered by the snowy white sleeveless chemise of her people. In her hair-ribbon she had tucked the familiar red flower, while around her neck she wore a little chain with a golden medallion of her patron saint which I had given her. I shall never forget the picture she made, as in a half-embarrassed way she turned her head over her shoulder to look at me, as I paused for a moment on the threshold to watch her.

She did not say very much about the house. She was quiet, perhaps a little tired; but I could see she was content. And so my new domestic life has begun.

*April.*

Perhaps it is the strangeness and half romance of this new life that most delight me. There is the gallop across the desert in the splendour of the sunset or in the moonlight to the little suppers at which she has learned to preside with so much dignity, while she tells me, with the greatest seriousness, all the trifles of the day—so diffidently, so appealingly. Then the early ride, brightened by the nameless colours of morning, while the magic kiss of the princely sun is warming and waking the sleeping beauty of the night; the still valley with its little river; the stunted feathery trees where the white herons perch as in the pictures on a fan; the blue hills, the desert, and at last the  
flashing

flashing sea. It's all well worth the trouble—will it soon begin to pall, I wonder? But why let the demon of doubt and distrust come to rob our sunshine of its sparkle?

Since she became established as sole mistress of the mansion, the Goya's whole manner has changed. A new feeling of responsibility seems to have taken hold of her, and she has abandoned her old waywardness for a quaintly subdued and matronly air. When from my silence she probably fancies my thoughts are far away, I often lie in the hammock and watch her flutter through the tiny apartments busy with endless arranging and rearranging. Nothing pleases her so much as when I praise her housekeeping. Even her utter ignorance is a pleasure; it is part of her nature. It is only the vast contrast between us that makes the illusion possible.

Sometimes on Sunday Manuel and Francisco come over as our guests. In the quebrada, near the water, the algarroba trees grow into heavy woods, with clear shaded aisles among the gnarled trunks. There we all go, accompanied by Juan's daughters—two jolly little companions who chatter incessantly, sometimes with an unconscious latitude that might startle a French novelist. All things are natural to them; they are like the birds that chirp above us, to which love has but one meaning.

In a quaint, high-pitched key the three girls sing us the love songs of their race: of hard hearts and broken vows, disdainful ladies and neglectful swains, and of kisses and longings and tears. Then they teach me the names of the animals and flowers, or, tired of lessons, try to guess the words that fit into the notes of the birds.

They tell us in awed voices of the *animas* or ghosts that make the strange noises of the night—a class of spirit that seems to be  
more

more sprite than spectre. They have many stories also of the witches who have power to trace thieves and reveal the hiding-place of things that have been stolen.

At noon our boys arrive with alforjas and hampers, and we breakfast together in a circle on the ground. It is amusing to see the deferential way in which the Goya is treated by the two girls and the boys. Although she is of their people and kin, her relations with me seem to have exalted her in their eyes. This voluntary recognition of the superiority of the white race is one of the most marked characteristics of these Indians.

The algarroba woods are full of wild pigeons. Toward evening, as they fly to the river for water, my two friends and I take our guns, and skirting along the bank enjoy an hour or two of sport.

We made a gala day of Easter. On the southern side of Cape Blanco, which is one of the most westerly points of the Continent, the sea in some past age burrowed great caves and arches in the cliff. One of these caverns, into the mouth of which the surf still dashes when the tide is high, winds in a labyrinth for many hundred feet to the very heart of the rock. The other cave, now remote from the waves, is a great circular dome almost two hundred feet in diameter. These imposing dimensions are magnified by the insignificant passage that forms the entrance. Many mysterious stories of buried treasure are told about it. Some say that after the murder of their Emperor Atahualpa by the Spaniards, the Inca priests used this huge natural vault as a secret depository for the rich and sacred ornaments of their temples. Others relate how the English pirates found it a safe place of concealment for the superabundant wealth gained from the Panama galleys; and in confirmation of this story there is a legend that on every Easter morning a great white brig sails  
bravely

bravely away from the cave's mouth, and no one ever sees her return. It was to verify, if possible, this wild tale of the phantom brig that we planned an expedition for Easter. It was arranged that Juan should take the Goya and his daughters to the Cape at daybreak, when we would ride over to meet them. Unfortunately we were not so prompt in starting, and day had well begun before we set out, so we missed the sailing of the pirate, much to our disappointment. But such a morning was a charm against all regrets. The cliffs were in heavy shadow as we rode along the sand. Although the breeze was cool, the sun kept us warm. The sky and its light clouds were of faintest tints, and the sea had that intense blue which sets off to such advantage the dazzling white of the breakers. As the tide was ebbing thousands of red crabs skirmished like cavalry troops along the beach. Solitary frigate birds hovered aloft, manœuvring lines of pelicans skimmed the surf, and dusky groups of vultures squabbled over derelict scraps. The sails of three or four little fishing-boats sparkled in the still slanting light. The very soul of freedom enfolded this sun-loved land of brown and azure.

We found them all awaiting us in their usual resigned and uncomplaining way. It is instinctive in these people to regard our pleasure as theirs. Old Juan's pride would have received a severe shock had one of his daughters, or even the Goya, ventured to reproach us for being two hours behind our tryst. Their chief wonder, which Juan more than half shared, was that they who had arrived in time had failed to see the phantom. I have some doubts myself whether the old fellow really reached the place before the sun had come to remove all uncanny suggestions.

While the old man and our boys were looking after the animals and preparing our breakfast, we lighted our candles and took the girls off to explore the twisting galleries of the seaward cave.

They

They followed us in awed silence as we went deeper and deeper into the darkness. Something besides the damp chill air made them shiver and clutch our hands convulsively. The noise of the surf came faintly to us, although we could feel the great walls pulse to its beating. More than shadows seemed to lurk in the roof and crannies. I think we all felt a sudden shudder as Manuel playfully uttered a scream that was answered to us again and again as if the old pirates were rallying to the alarm. The sand of the floor was heavy with dampness. The walls and the roof crowded closer and closer upon us ; we went on crouching almost to the ground. Finally only a low black tunnel confronted us—there our courage gave out, and we hurried back to the daylight, hearing in our own footfalls the sounds of ghostly pursuit. As we stood under the great arch of the entrance watching the surf about the rocks, the girls grew very brave again.

Old Juan laughed contemptuously when they told him of their terrors, but he didn't attempt any explorations on his own account. As it was too early for breakfast, we three men decided to take a bath in the sea. I was well in the lead, just as we were making for the third line of breakers, when a frantic shout from the shore reached me. Turning my head I saw old Juan and the rest running up and down the beach screaming and gesticulating. Some were beckoning us to return ; others were pointing seaward in evident alarm. I looked ahead, and there just beyond the great white line that was subsiding before me moved the slowly swaying fin of a monster shark. I confess that for a moment my heart stood still. We must all have caught sight of the danger at the same moment, for without a word we turned : there certainly was excitement in the breathless scurry for the shore, where the Goya quite forgot to be dignified in her joy at our safe return.

After

After breakfast we entered the cave of the great dome. Ages must have elapsed since the sea seethed round its walls, for the floor was dry and thickly covered with powdered saltpetre that had crystallised on the roof above, and fallen flake by flake. In the centre rose a great pile of rock which the waves had once tumbled together. Signs of hurried excavation in the sand at one side of the vault showed that the tradition of the treasure had gained one believer at least. On examining the hole I was surprised to find portions of human bones rapidly crumbling to dust. This reminded Juan that many years before, some men had come in search of the buried wealth, but they had only unearthed a few old skeletons and a little golden ornament in the shape of a fish. Perhaps the bones had frightened the diggers away. The cavern must have been an ancient burial place; the twilight and the silence and the far off murmur of the sea were a fitting atmosphere for a tomb.

Then the Goya remembered that all along the foot of the cliffs in the valley of her old home, many graves of the *antiguos* had been found filled with strangely formed pieces of pottery called *huacos*. To these places the natives were accustomed to repair on Good Friday to dig. From the way she spoke it was evident that these huacoings or grave opening parties were a popular form of amusement on the holiday in question.

"But why do they dig only on Good Friday, Goya?" I asked her.

"Señor, do you not know that the pottery is enchanted? During all the rest of the year it sinks deep down into the ground, and it is impossible to find it, but on Good Friday it comes near to the surface again. Besides the pottery, there are sometimes little things of gold and silver, and sometimes coral beads. A man once gave my sister a necklace of these which she wears as a charm against chill."

This

This account of the old graves excited my curiosity, and rather than wait a year till the lucky day comes again, I have resolved to risk the spells and do some unorthodox excavating. Often in riding to Amotape I have noticed along the road on the desert a long double row of mounds covered with white shells, and regularly placed as if to line a royal avenue. This avenue which has an artificial appearance is wide and straight for several miles, and may have formed a portion of the lost Inca highway along the coast. About Amotape also, the Goya says, there are many adobe ruins of aboriginal temples or forts. At the first opportunity I have, I shall visit these places, and unless the enchantments prevail against me I may soon be able to tell you of something more novel than love making.

We were all so absorbed in our antiquarian discussions that we would have forgotten the present entirely had not Juan brought us back to realities by telling us that the tide was rising fast, and we would not have time to pass the rocks of one of the cliffs unless we set off at once. As their road lay inland while ours was along the beach, we hurriedly bade our little friends good-bye, and so the holiday ended.

*May.*

The Goya has suddenly conceived a great fondness for all her relatives, in the hacienda and beyond it, and she is constantly begging to be allowed to make them brief visits under the guardianship of her old Dueña. I very much fear, however, that her vanity is deeper than her affection in most cases, for she dearly loves the wonder and envy that her little fineries evoke. Dressed in the riding habit she has so quickly learned to wear, she is becoming a very superior young person with her guide and her attendant. Her joy is complete whenever I find time to ride out to accompany her home.

These

These relationships of hers extend far beyond the common confines of blood. She has sisters and cousins and aunts in abundance, but in addition to these, almost every tenant on the estate is in some way or other related to her spiritually. This is the result of the ceremonies with which her religion has surrounded her life. She has of course a godfather and a godmother. On two occasions she herself has stood sponsor and thereby gained a pair of *comadres* and *compadres* with whom she is spiritually co-parent of the children. Among the Indians this relationship is in many cases accounted superior to the ties of kindred; moreover there are her *compañeros*, the men who were godfathers when she was godmother, and so on through infinite shadings. Occasionally my journeys in search of her ladyship bring me into strange adventures. The dark lonely night rides! What glories are in the depths of that star-sown sky, what sounds rush on the breeze! What heart-spurring shadows lurk among the sand heaps as I gallop along the treacherous line of the trail. Even I whose brain has little room for spectral fears can recognise the fatherland of ghosts and goblins. Darkness, solitude, and silence, the playground of fancies; it was amid such scenes that man first learned to shudder. Even in the moonlight when drowsiness comes on, a weirdness fills the world. I've sat up in the saddle with a start to see a herd of cattle rushing before me as noiselessly as shadows—only some desert shrubs. Then a great fantastic mottled monster has writhed across the path in desperate fashion—a patch of sand tufted with waving grass. The night birds sing a fiendish song that rattles down the wind like spirit laughter. Often and often I've put my hand on my revolver to find that I had jumped at a thorn bush.

Not long since, the Goya's whims took her to a remote part of the estate. I had promised to bring her back. As I had never  
been

been to the place where she was visiting I asked old Juan to go with me. Poor fellow, he isn't much of a guide on unfamiliar roads at night as his eyesight is failing. In the quebrada where the trail we should have taken separates from the main road, we missed the way and were obliged to ride up the ravine to the house of a tenant in search of a guide. While the man was getting ready I chatted with his wife.

"Where are you going?" she asked me. In this country no honest traveller should resent such a question. I felt in a mood for romancing.

"We are going to a witch's dance at the salt marshes."

"What!" she exclaimed.

"Yes. One night Juan and I were returning from Amotape; suddenly near the marshes we heard strange music; in the distance were fantastic lights; on reaching the place what did we find? a fandango of the Brujas."

"Ave Maria!" I could almost see the woman's flesh creep.

"Yes, the Brujas. We joined them. They gave us strange liquors. At dawn they all vanished, but before they left they told us that on every dark Saturday night they held a rout. So now we are going again. The women were very beautiful."

Luckily the guide appeared at this moment, or the poor woman would have fainted. She must have said many a prayer that night to save her husband from the witches' spell. I suppose the joke was heartless, but then most jokes are.

Rocky stretches and sandy hollows, gallop, gallop, gallop. We arrived about ten o'clock.

There was a long building with a great veranda that opened upon a corral. The veranda was lighted up, and as we approached I heard those sounds of revelry by night that betoken a fandango. A large crowd filled the benches and listened to a wheezy strident concertina.

concertina. The Goya ran out to meet us, as I got off my horse and looked about. Something unusual was going on certainly. Upon a table draped with cloth at the far end of the veranda, a small open coffin with the body of a baby stood set on end, against a background of flaring red and white calico; the lid painted black with a double white cross rested at one side. In front flickered two candles stuck in old beer bottles. The Goya told me that I was at the funeral of her hostess's child. As we entered, the bereaved mother came forward and greeted me with a smile. She received my expressions of sympathy as if they were something foreign to the occasion. Some of the women, led by the Dueña, gathered round the Goya and whispered to her, giggling; but they hastened away as soon as the music called for a dance. I sat apart with the Goya to watch.

And what a scene! There amid its gaudy trappings, glancing back the flame of the sputtering candles, stood an enshrouded mystery. In a little box of blackened wood was all life knows of life; a ghastly nothingness; a thing of terror yet of fascination, a question and an answer both in one! And around it, shouting in a drunken dance, with laughter and ribald song, moved creatures whom it was almost flattery to call savages. The living seemed to be carousing over the dead like cannibals about a boiling cauldron. The Goya's chatter was unheeded as I sat there looking on, indifferent. Did not disgust sicken me, horror choke me, loathing overpower me? No; just one feeling stirred me, the feeblest our soul can know, the indolent supercilious curiosity of a woman's uplifted lorgnettes. I seemed dead to every civilised prejudice I had ever possessed.

But when the dance ended a vague sense of annoyance took possession of me. Hurriedly telling the Goya to prepare at once for her return, I ordered Juan to get the animals ready. While I  
waited

waited by the gate on horseback some women and men passed in. Suddenly the music grew weird and mournful. I heard the sound of lamentation, and looked toward the veranda. In front of the little coffin were collected all the women who had just arrived, and all those who had been present before. They were rocking their bodies to and fro, and wailing and mourning, while the men sat calmly talking and drinking on the benches.

"What are they doing, Juan?" I asked.

"Weeping for the dead, Señor."

"Is it the custom of your people?"

The old man seemed to feel, from something in my manner, that I was not entirely in sympathy with the scene.

"Only among the people of the Campo, patron, when their children die," he answered.

"And the dancing and the drinking?"

"Yes, that too; they weep a while, then dance and drink again."

"All night?"

"Oh, yes; sometimes for two or three days."

I laughed. The girl returned. What was this thing called death? Bah! Who cared? And under its very eyes I carried her away. It was life that I had come for.

Without a word we hurried through the night.

*June.*

I have been riding all the afternoon along the edge of the Tablaza, where a maze of fantastic quebradas runs riot to the shore. A desert of greys and browns and dying greens below, a silvery film over a golden bowl above. Sometimes, on crossing a ridge, we caught sight of the busy sea, where the waves rushed along like a hunting pack; on its far horizon low clouds lay in

shadowless mountain ranges—the unreachable land of our dreams, the dwelling-place of happiness, the vague valleys where grows that sweetest of flowers, content. A typical Peruvian day framed in a sky of golden blue, whose threads of cloud are like the wires in a cloisonné vase.

But in Peru we never think of talking about the weather, for it is always the same.

You may remember that, during our Easter picnic to the caves, the Goya's story of the ancient graves near her old home made me anxious to explore in that neighbourhood. Recently I made a little expedition which yielded me rare booty.

There are vast aboriginal burial grounds all along the coast, but of course I can speak only of the small tract on the north bank of the Chira River, between Amotape and the sea. Here great walls of cliff, wrinkled deep by centuries of rain, ward off the desert from the valley's fertility. Every slope along the base of these cliffs is the grave of thousands, perhaps millions, of a race whose very name is forgotten. I say of a race, but there are many indications that not one, but many races are buried there. Almost all these slopes are artificially sprinkled with small white shells; shreds of pottery litter the ground, ruins of old adobe temples and pyramids rise from the plain; remains of ancient walls and buildings crown every elevation. Was ever the home of the dead more fitly placed? In front, the rich rank greens of the river, like the teeming years of life; behind, the trackless waste like the meaningless stretch of eternity. They rest where they fell, those nameless dead, on the dividing line of that grim antithesis. Or, in a simpler human sense, what pathos there is in the solicitude that laid them, composed for their long sleep, in those little silent valleys, which the bend of a quebrada has encircled with guardian hills, and where loneliness and desolation and immutability warn  
off

off the noisy restless world. There is a tragedy in a faith like theirs that checks a cynic's sneers. But our love of novelty, our cruel curiosity, knows no reverence. Let's go a-huacoing.

Though all the slopes undoubtedly contain graves, all are not equally rich. In many places the rains have soaked the soil, consumed the bones, and packed the earth until it has crushed and broken the pottery. But suppose we have lighted upon a favourable site. On top, the sand is mingled with little white shells. About two feet from the surface we are sure to come upon a child's grave. If the drainage of the slope kept out the water, we will find the little skeleton complete, wrapped in clothes as good as if they had been made yesterday. Seemingly the children counted for little in that old time: a sleeveless shirt, a string of coral beads, and a coarse shroud, were enough to fit the poor wee body for its cradle in the sands. It needed no pottery, but sometimes a small stick was placed beside it, perhaps as a charm, perhaps as a plaything. So unimportant was its burial, that its grave was always made in some part of the field already used for its elders; for if we dig several feet below these small bundles of bones—we meet with the carefully built tombs of adults. These are cavities hollowed in the tough sand or clay, and topped with great flat stones and adobes to support the earth above. Within these holes the body, swathed in many shrouds, was placed upon its back, instead of being trussed up in sitting posture, as is usual in other parts of Peru. Arranged about the feet of the mummy are several coarse cooking pots, still full of the provisions of corn and beans and meat that were to nourish the departed on his long, mysterious journey. Near the hands, in the case of men, lie bundles of copper and stone tools, wooden weapons, shovels and walking staves—with handles skilfully carved into human or animal shapes. Beside the women, are all their weaving and spinning

spinning utensils and gourd work-boxes filled with shuttles, spindles, and balls of thread. Sometimes there are also water-bottles, with graceful curves, and netted travelling bags containing extra clothing. It is always at the head of the body that we find the fanciful pieces of pottery known as *huacos*. They are of infinite variety: I have never seen two exactly alike. Some are round, long-necked vases, surmounted by very natural figures of birds and animals. Every vegetable is imitated; there are gourds, melons, bananas, and other fruits; there are clusters of eggs; there are jars shaped like fish and alligators, and there are conventional forms, with double handles and double spouts, all of the finest burnt clay, some black, some red. The old potters evidently believed that shrill noises were efficacious in warning off evil spirits, for they often made these *huacos* with two bodies connected by a tube; one body held the spout while an opening in the other, concealed by a grotesque monkey or bird, was so contrived as to emit a sharp whistle when the jar was being filled.

As the mummy within the shroud is usually well preserved, except that the eyes and nose are sunken, it is clear that some process of embalming was employed. Unfortunately the preparations used for this purpose have destroyed the fabrics that came in contact with them; still enough of the inner wrappings and of the clothing remains to enable us to form some idea of the general attire. Evidently great pains were taken in arraying the dead one in the richest garments possible. A turban of finely-woven cotton or gaily-coloured tapestry was wound around the head. The men wore white tunics embroidered with flowers and figures; the women had a more ample flowing dress of brown or blue or white, usually without ornamentation of needle work, and bound at the waist with a long fine scarf or sash. The quality of the  
garments

garments varies greatly, probably with the wealth and station of the deceased. Men and women alike were adorned with necklaces and bracelets of coral beads and rings of gold—sometimes the women have wooden earrings inlaid with coral and mother-of-pearl; often the arms have traces of tattooing.

I can't tell you how many of these graves I opened; we dug for several days from the first light until sunset. It was hard work for the men in the hot, dusty sand under the fierce sun.

The Goya had begged hard to be allowed to join the expedition and, as she had relatives in the village where I made my headquarters, I had taken her with me. Every day about noon she and some of the women came to seek us with *alforjas* full of provisions for our lunch. They took a great interest in the antique wonders I was unearthing.

Most of the women know how to weave and spin, but their skill is inferior to that of the ancients; for to-day they cannot produce anything equal in fineness and beauty to the fabrics and tapestries I found in the graves. The bundles of weaving tools, therefore, which are identical in form with those used to-day, though far superior in finish, aroused their envy, and I had to resist many a prayer for presents. They clamoured especially for the *orquetas*, used to hold the "copo," or roll of carded cotton, while spinning. The *orqueta* is a long crotched stick, sharpened at one end that it may be stuck into the ground. To-day a natural fork is taken from a tree for this purpose, but the *orquetas* of the graves were cut out of solid wood, and beautifully carved and polished.

All the Indian women are in the habit of plaiting thick skeins of brown spun cotton into the braids of their hair to prevent the ends from splitting, and it astonished the Goya and her friends greatly to learn from the skeins we found packed in little gourd toilet

toilet boxes, that the custom had come down to them from so remote a time.

There is a certain vein of sentiment in these women that is entirely human, and once they burst into a chorus of sympathetic ejaculations, when, on opening a mummy, I picked from among the wrappings a tress of hair carefully tied with a coloured string. Some lover, they were sure, had placed it there as a pledge of undying remembrance. For half an hour they discussed the incident pityingly, and during the whole evening I heard them relate it to each acquaintance who came. Trifles make up their lives.

One custom which the graves revealed, however, puzzled them as much as it did me. Protruding through the lower lip of almost every one of the female mummies we discovered a conical cylinder of silver about an inch long. As a rule, these were badly corroded, but by good fortune we found a perfect one stowed away in one of the little boxes with the skeins of cotton. It is in the shape of a thimble, though slightly larger in size, and closed at both ends. In the crown is set a blood-stone, surrounded by small balls of red coral. It is an excellent piece of work, and would do credit to a modern jeweller. It may be that these ornaments were used as a badge of marriage.

I had naturally supposed that there was but one series of graves; one day, however, one of my men noticed that the soil that formed the floor of a tomb we had just opened was softer than usual; so he continued to dig, and a few feet below his shovel struck the stone capping of another sepulchre. This led us to continue work in some of the holes we had abandoned, and we soon discovered that there were in some instances three or four layers of graves. While the arrangement of these graves is similar to that of the upper ones, the pottery is of inferior artistic quality and appears to be of much greater antiquity. It may even be that of  
a different

a different race ; for ages may have elapsed before the sands could cover the graves so deeply that they were forgotten and new ones made above them.

You can have no idea how absorbedly interested I became in my excavations among these poor old bones ; only it saddened me to find in their trinket-filled graves another confirmation of that awful truth—futility ! If their cast into the darkness flew so wide the mark, what hope have we ? Their faith was as strong as ours. Was its betrayal any greater than ours will be ? And even to a sceptic there is something crushing in being brought face to face with the ghastly inevitability of the future. No matter how hateful life may be, it is beautiful compared with the crumbling darkness of that chill, lonely cell, where even the sunlight is dead. The thought came to me like an agony once, as I rested on a mound, watching my men dig : “Some day I must lie thus for ever. No more of love and life and longing ! Only that !” and I kicked aside a skull and nearly drained my whisky-flask. But in that moment I almost felt the worms crawl through my brain ! And the sunlight—how I loved it ! If we could ever for a second realise the truth, we would never know another hour of sanity.

*July.*

Not long ago, I passed through a terrible illness, which, but for the luck that has always smiled from my natal star, might easily have ended fatally. Fortunately, I was not informed of the deadly nature of the attack until the danger was over, or I might pardonably have died of fright.

I had been riding all day in the hot sun, and was both heated and tired when I reached the Goya. I found her as usual playing with the little blackbird, which has been her dearest friend ever since the day she came to her new home. I carelessly threw off  
my

my coat, and must have put myself in a draught, for I was suddenly seized with a violent cramp—the common result of a chill under such circumstances. I took a few drops of chlorodyne, and lay down on the bed until relief should come.

The matter seemed simple enough to me, but the Goya was panic-stricken. She clasped her hands together and looked at me in an agony of fear.

“Oh, Señor, Señor, it may be *chucaque*, it may be *chucaque*. What shall I do? What shall I do? Where can I find a *curadora*? Oh you will die; you will die! What shall I do; what shall I do?”

She was nearly hysterical; then an idea came to her.

“Perhaps the peddlers will know,” she cried, and she flew out of the house.

Soon she returned with a wizened old woman who carried several small gourds in her arms. The Goya ran to a cupboard and brought out a large cloth and a bowl, which she filled with water. In spite of the pain, I was curious to see what would happen. The old woman hurriedly threw into the bowl a portion of the contents of each of the gourds. Among these I recognised powdered mustard and tobacco flakes. When the mixture was ready, she spread it upon the cloth; and unceremoniously tearing open my clothing she placed the plaster across my stomach. Upon this, starting from the centre she began to inscribe a widening spiral with her forefinger; all the while muttering a sort of incantation of which I could distinguish only the words “Ave Maria” reiterated from time to time. The Goya stood anxiously near me with her hands raised as if in prayer. After making the sign of the cross over my body, the woman again traced the spiral and repeated the mystic formula. Gradually the pain subsided and before long I was able to say truthfully

truthfully that I was better ; after a final sign of the cross, the plaster was removed and I was allowed to stand up.

Naturally I was eager to know what had happened to me. Then I learned of a disease that would sadly puzzle a Jenner. If any one, even in jest, causes you to feel shame or humiliation or as we would say "to feel cheap," you are at once exposed to the most insidious of maladies—*chucaque* ; you will be seized with a severe internal cramp, and unless you take the proper precautions you will forthwith die. And these precautions, what are they ? You must find a *curadora*, an old woman who understands the secret of the cure, and she must treat you at once just as I had been treated. The worst of it is, you need not be present while your neighbour is holding you up to ridicule in order to experience this dire complaint. It will attack you unawares if some ungentlemanly friend is taking advantage of your absence. Think of the awful suspicions a plain old touch of colic may arouse in the Indian mind. Of course, in my case, the chlorodyne was science thrown away.

I offered the woman some money for her professional services, but she seemed hurt to think that I suspected her of mercenary motives, and she declined to accept it. I learned that she was one of a party of peddlers who had arrived at Juan's house most opportunely that very afternoon. As I saw a means of rewarding the old woman's kindness without offence I took the Goya over to inspect her wares. These peddlers are an interesting feature of the native life. In companies of twos and threes and fours, with donkeys laden with stores, they penetrate to all parts of the wilderness in search of trade. They have a marvellous assortment of things for sale from pins and needles and cheap jewellery to the finest cashmere *mantas* and the richest Guadalupe scarfs—which are often very costly. Their patience is inexhaustible.

They

They will sit down in the most unpromising abode and unpack every bag and basket in their equipment, display to the longing eyes of the women the ribbons and laces and stuffs and fineries one after another, and be content if they succeed in selling even ten centavos' worth. If money is lacking they resort to barter and wheedle away goat skins and other products in exchange for the much coveted finery. Time has no place in their calculations. They will sit all day chatting if they think there is a chance of a bargain in the end. They are learned in all the gossip of the region and their advent is a delight to the lonely country people. They might be called the newspapers of the desert, for it is through them that the dwellers in the waste keep in touch with the outside world.

While the Goya tossed and tumbled everything about, sneering at this necessity, going into raptures over that luxury, and threatening me with financial ruin, I engaged my preserver in conversation. Her mother and her grandmother had been *curadoras* before her. Where they had learned the art she could not say. Did she know any other cures, I asked.

"O yes, Señor, I can cure *ojo*."

"And what is *ojo*, Señora?" I inquired; my ignorance would not have surprised her more, had I asked her what the sun was.

"*Ojo*" means the "eye" and from the rambling account she gave me, I gathered that the superstition is analogous to the evil eye of southern Europe. You are the happy father of a new born heir or the equally elated owner of a superior horse. A friend comes along and begins to praise either one or other of your valued possessions, your treasure is at once "*ojeado*" and unless you seek a *curadora* skilled in the lore of crosses and Ave Marias to avert the spell, your child, or horse, or whatever it may be,  
must

must die. What was the formula before they ever heard of Mary and the cross, I wonder?

On the day following a fandango, when the fumes of the anizado are filling their brains with torments, it is common to see half the village wandering dully about, with a circular disc or paper stuck on each temple. This they regard as a sure remedy or cure for headache, but why it should be so nobody can tell.

A lingering belief in witchcraft still flavours many of their ideas. One day a woman amazed me by asking for one of my mummy skulls. As the people usually look upon these ghastly tokens with awe, I was curious to know why she wanted it.

“I want to put it in my clothes-box, Señor,” she said.

“In your clothes-box? What good will it do there?” I asked her.

“Señor, I will place it on the top of my clothes, and if thieves break open the box, the sight of the skull will enchant them, and they will not be able to move until I come and catch them.”

Such superstition is part of the people's life and blood, and must have existed since the race began.

Why, just this evening I was reading Garselasso de la Vega. I know he is rather sneered at as an authority, but I can say with confidence that, so far as my observation goes, his accounts of the manners and customs of the Indians are singularly appreciative and unexaggerated. I myself have seen not only one but many of the ceremonies and observances he describes. In the chapter I was reading he was speaking of the balsas, or great sea-going sailing rafts of the old Peruvians, which you must have seen mentioned in Prescott. I suppose it must have occurred to de la Vega that his European readers would be apt to conclude that the Conquest had wrought great changes in these nautical contrivances and that  
there

there was therefore an element of ancient history in his narrative, for at the end of the chapter he adds :

“These things were in use when I left, and are no doubt in use to-day ; for the common people, as they are a poor, miserable lot, do not aspire to things higher than those to which they have been accustomed.”

He wrote about fifty years after the Spanish occupation. To-day three centuries have elapsed, and although the world has grown to battle-ships, the Cholo is still content with his balsa.

In de la Vega I have also found the explanation of an extraordinary custom which the people observe. When a child is about two years of age its hair is cut for the first time. A fandango is held at the house of the parents, and during the dancing the child is passed about among the guests, each one of whom pays ten or twenty centavos, according to his means, for the privilege of nipping off a small lock of the hair, which is preserved for luck. This ceremony has come to the modern Indians directly from the Incas. According to the account in de la Vega, the Inca children were not weaned until they had attained the age of two years ; then, with feasting and rejoicing, the hair was cut for the first time. He gives no reason for the custom, and to-day it seems to be followed without reference to the time of weaning. So you see these people are essentially the same as when the Spaniards found them. Under the gloss of Christianity and Manchester prints they are as barbaric as the oldest of my mummies.

*August.*

Not long ago I witnessed a ceremony in the little village of Vichayal which proved that among these Indians the outward form long survives the inward spirit. Ever since I undertook my excavations, which were carried on near this spot, the people have  
sent

sent me notice of all their fiestas. The place is a scattering of cane huts, on the edge of an algarroba wood ; the most beautiful scene the moonlight ever shone upon. A tangle of feathered leaves overhead make lace-like shadows on a silver floor of sand ; while the night birds fill the air with a cry that is like the wail of one who seeks eternally and vainly. It is a virgin picture no pencil has ever violated. Those piles of darkness are the desert cliffs ; those firefly flashes are the lights of homes. There is no order of streets and squares ; a clearing serves for a plaza. That break among the trees is avenue enough for a simple world like this. The tinkling notes of a guitar mean human happiness, content with what the moment brings. I have delved in the philosophies of three thousand years of thought, and they have brought me no deeper wisdom.

There cannot be more than fifty huts in the village. As the people are too poor to maintain a chapel, they decided to erect a great cross in the centre of an open space, magnificently denominated the plaza. It was to the consecration, which gave these poor creatures an excuse for a two days' fiesta, that the Goya and I had been invited. I sent her on ahead one afternoon with Juan, the Dueña, and the blackbird. I followed early the next morning.

A heavy, thatched roof and three sides of a square of cane had been built like a niche about the cross, which was made of plastered adobes. At one end of the plaza stood a triumphal arch, constructed of three poles, covered and tricked out with puffed white paper and flowers. A grand avenue of approach, improvised of tree branches set in the ground, reached from the arch to the cross ; while several temporary booths, called altars, lent their colours to adorn the sides and corners of the square.

On Saturday night the plaza was a veritable blaze of glory. All  
the

the ingenuity of the people had been expended in decorating the tabernacle; bed-quilts of gaudy hues formed tapestries for the interior; from the cross itself depended hundreds of coloured pictures of the most heterogeneous subjects, tiny mirrors, toys, dolls, and flowers. Above the open side or entrance of the shelter hung festoons of fruit and branches, pictures, mirrors, dolls, and lanterns, and most marvellous of all, a series of ginger-bread men, an offering from the children to the village schoolmaster. Everywhere candles fluttered in bright profusion, while the scented clouds of incense blended the whole picture into a unity. At each of the little altars, as if they formed a necklace for the glorious jewel in the centre—in truth, they were only drinking-stalls in disguise—the image of some saint was illuminated with equal splendour. A perpetual fusilade of squibs gave an accent to the pious and pervading joy.

Amid all this spiritual enthusiasm, however, the fleshly man was not forgotten. Summoned by an impatient bell, excited groups were clustered about a gambling game, in which miniature horses, set in motion by a spring, ran races around a circular board. Just behind the shrine of the cross, an enterprising catch-penny had spread his wares, and was driving a great trade in little nothings. Small peddlers, and coffee and cake vendors, strove emulously, but with the best good humour, for what spoil there was to gain. In half-a-dozen houses there were dances, *picantes* and *chicharias*—the shops for the native beer.

The moon was full and glaringly, electrically bright. It tempted one into the mood of the hour. With the Goya and a troop of her little, laughing friends, I visited all the sights, and stood treats to everything. My luck at a wheel of fortune filled their pockets with ribbons and necklaces, earrings and bottles of scent. We really enjoyed ourselves, although they did seem to feel

feel uneasy now and then, when I passed the cross and neglected to bow.

These wheels of fortune are their delight. A *peseta* a chance, and an arrow is spun upon a numbered dial. There are about a hundred numbers, each one of which, according as the arrow stops, calls for some article, usually a worthless trifle. Four or five of the numbers, however, had prizes that seemed most valuable in the girls' eyes; and it was most of these I succeeded in winning after a breath-taking outlay. Whether this excitement wore me out, or I wore out the excitement, I cannot say; perhaps the fifty-mile ride and the two hours' sleep of the night before, had something to do with it; at any rate, by ten o'clock I was longing for bed. Juan had considerably borrowed a house, and prepared me a couch as remote as possible from the noise; and I withdrew; but don't for a moment fancy that any of my neighbours followed my example. Whenever I woke during the night, the harp, and the song, and the hand-clapping were as blithe and vigorous as ever, and when I jumped up at the first peep of the sun, there they were at it still, though certain prostrate forms under the trees showed that the pace was beginning to tell.

There had been a hope that the *cura* of the next town would come on Sunday morning to bless the cross. Word arrived early, however, that he could not make the journey. This chance had been foreseen, and a small cross arranged on a stand, in such a way that it could be carried with poles, had been provided to act as proxy for the permanent structure. Under the hottest of noons, about a dozen men mounted this emblem upon their shoulders and cheerfully started on their six miles walk through the scorching sand to receive the benediction.

During the morning the *anditas* began to circulate. In English  
they

they might be called reliquaries. They are boxes, or cases of wood, about twenty inches long, a little less in width, and a few inches deep, with a glass front. They are variously ornamented, often with incrustations of heavy, but crude, silver work. Under the glass is the picture or image of a saint, belaced and bespangled; below the image is a small drawer. These *anditas* are received from the churches (in reality they are probably hired as a speculation), and carried all over the country in pursuit of alms. On this occasion they served also as images for the altars in the square. Of course they have been duly blessed and endowed with powers of absolution and indulgence. Wherever one of them goes it is received with great perfunctory veneration. Everybody bends the knee, with head uncovered, and kisses a spot on the glass. To gain the full benefit, however, it is necessary to give largess to the person who carries it. These offerings are not fixed in amount, but vary, I presume, with the eagerness of the giver to secure a favourable answer to his prayer. Still, as a tangible return for his charity, he receives from the little drawer a scapulary—a tiny ball of raw cotton on a bit of coloured string. All Cholodom wears one of these charms about its neck. This itinerant box of benisons takes one back to some of the scenes old Chaucer laughed at, doesn't it?

I began to find the day a little hard to kill. A languor seemed to have fallen over the place, as if the gaieties of the night before had left a headache or two behind. I sought a quiet shady corner, and stretched myself to read. The afternoon was very warm and the world was very still. I fear I fell a-nodding.

The sun was not far from the tree tops when a great commotion roused me. All the village was hastening toward the plaza, whence the sound of a drum and fife told that the cross-bearers were returning. They were just nearing the arch when I arrived.

A concourse

A concourse of women lined the avenue of boughs ; behind the bearers came a crowd of cheering, chattering men ; leading the procession was the most fantastic group I ever beheld. Five men, dressed in tight-fitting clothes of flaming red, with little aprons hanging in front, and wearing grotesque masks that entirely covered their heads, were dancing madly before the advancing symbol of their faith, to the barbaric and tuneless music of a small drum and pipe, both played by one man, who walked beside the cross. Round and round they whirled and leaped and pranced ; the dance evidently had a meaning. The mask of one of the men was in the shape of a bull's head. He was the principal person in the figure ; the rest jumped about and teased him by waving little flags in his face, or by trying to lasso him with a small rope. From time to time he lowered his head and rushed at them wildly, while they scattered or fell down before him in ssembled fright ; but through it all they never ceased to move to the cadence of the music. Of course it is easy to see that in its present form the dance aims at representing a bull fight ; it is even called *el toro*, or the bull, but I am convinced that it had a very different purpose in the forgotten period from which it is unquestionably derived.

The now sanctified cross was safely deposited in the tabernacle beside the one for which it had laboured thus vicariously ; so, after a few hurried adorations, the crowds scurried off to the ring that had been erected for the cock-fighting. With patron and peon alike this is the favourite sport of Peru. Here pandemonium reigned until dusk, while the publicans (and presumably sinners) reaped a harvest. The mains over, all turned homeward.

An hour or so later, with the Goya, I was sitting smoking in the corner of a *picante*, watching the hubbub around us, and struggling in vain to throw off the after-dinner laziness that pre-

vented me from calling for my horse to take me over the miles that lay between me and my morning duties, when I again heard the summons of the drum and beheld a general exodus for the plaza.

“What on earth is up now, Goya?” I enquired.

“The procession, Señor, the procession.”

The excitement was catching, and we followed the throng.

The moon was just clearing the desert hills; not a breath stirred. In two long lines, on either side of the avenue of branches, stood the bare-headed villagers, each carrying a lighted candle. Borne on men's shoulders, as before, in a blazing haze of incense, the cross was very slowly passing between these lines, while near the tabernacle heavy rocket bombs were exploding, and squibs snapped everywhere. Away in advance walked the major-domos, or marshals of the procession, with bags full of candles, which they distributed to all comers. Immediately in front, with their faces to the cross, two of the men in red now unmasked, danced reverentially to and fro. The musician with his drum and pipe, puffing and pounding, strode patiently beside them. Lines and all moved forward at a snail's pace. At the arch the lines bent toward one of the altars. This reached, a halt was made, and the cross set down. Many, undoubtedly, feeling that they had fulfilled their devotional obligations, returned their candles to the major-domos and sought refreshment at the booth. Still the lines were well maintained, for others came to join them. When the march was resumed, a dozen or more women and girls, dressed in white and decked with flowers, took the places of the men as carriers. The two tireless dancers continued their solemn antics: they were like the women of Israel dancing before the ark. At the next altar the two lines knelt down in silence for a long time; the drum and fife, and the squibs and bombs, never ceased.

When

When I left about eleven, after consigning the Goya to old Juan, they had not made half the circuit of the square. Heaven knows how it ended.

This is certain, eliminating the element of the cross from these scenes, I was, during those two days, looking on at customs and ceremonies as truly relics of the Prehistoric Peruvians as the pottery I dig out of their graves. If I could only fathom the meaning it all had for them! It is useless to seek explanations from the living; they do not understand half of it themselves. They can only shrug their shoulders, and assure you, "It is the custom, Señor." Yes, but how much is custom and how much is modern interpolation?

I rode home in six hours that night; not bad time when you remember the sand. I was up again before eight. One thing you will be able to appreciate, whatever injury my life in Peru may have done me, it has not been in the direction of my constitution.

*October.*

I hardly know how to tell you what must be told; it sounds so sudden, so coarse, so abrupt, but life from beginning to end is brutality. The Goya is dead. It seems a confirmation of our sneers to say so. Why should we worry through the years; why should we dally with love or struggle with ambition—when the end of all is a hideous silence? Beauty and youth with their irresponsibility—fortune and fame with their envied power, have but one conclusion. Is it fear that makes us continue the folly?

After the fiesta of the cross, she and I were very happy—she had forgotten her old restlessness, even her old vanity. She wanted to be with me always. We lived an ideal month. With  
her

her I had always to be the lover ; she never allowed life to become a reality. Yet it was instinct not calculation that guided her ; she was one of those women who appeal to our strength ; who must always be protected and caressed ; whom we love for their weakness and their womanhood. One day she told me she would like to go home for a few days, she had not been feeling well, and I concluded that the request came from nervousness ; still as months had passed since she had seen her parents I had to yield. She set out in the old way, with her guide and her Dueña. I remember how I lifted her into the saddle and how she leaned down to kiss me before they started off in the cool soft air of the morning.

I missed her greatly during the week that followed. With old Juan I rode away to see her. She met me with a loving gentleness, that now in the after-light, must have been significant. She begged me to let her remain at home a week or two more. How could I refuse ?

Then a messenger came to tell me she was very ill. I laughed at the serious note, it could only be a woman's whim ; still, as I was busy, I sent old Juan to her with orders to engage all the doctors he could secure if he considered the case urgent. One morning he came back and told me she was dead. Somehow I didn't care. I felt annoyance, not sorrow. Yes, she was very ill when he arrived, but the *curadoras* were treating her and he had had no fear. I upbraided him as I might have done had he neglected to do a piece of work I had set for him among the cotton fields. He understood me better than I understood myself and was silent. All I could learn was that she had been very weak, when a hæmorrhage of some sort seized her. They had given her the usual *remedios* without result ; she never recovered.

I knew she must be buried, but I could not face the duty. I  
hate

hate death almost as much as I hate life. What a ghastly thing is that final resolution into our natal clay. I could not see them put her into the merciless grave. The thought of my mummies came to me ; would it ever happen that she would make a vandal's holiday ? After the long years would someone touch her hair in idle curiosity ? I could not endure the suggestion. It was better to remember her as a dream that had vanished with the dawn. I sent old Juan to do what I should have done myself perhaps.

They buried her in the village pantheon on the hill that overlooks the valley. I ordered them to set a cross to mark the spot, a cross that was inscribed with her name and nothing more. What did the years matter ? She had lived and she had died as the world had done and must do for ever. The episode had ended for her and for me.

Some days later her father and her little sister came to see me. They brought me a *buaco* tied with a blue ribbon, and in a gourd cage the little blackbird which, they said, she asked them, just before she died, to take to me. In the doleful tones of ostentatious grief, the old man told me of her illness. After several days of great weakness a hæmorrhage came—it was from the throat or lungs, he did not know exactly which. It is this feature of her illness that puzzles me. I know she was more delicately fashioned than these women usually are, still she seemed quite as robust and as full of health. I remember now that there was a little cough occasionally, but who could have dreamed that it was serious.

Then he spoke about the funeral, of the crowds, and of the Mass. He thanked me effusively for my generosity in the matter of the candles. The people had been greatly impressed ; I had the sympathy of all who had attended. He dwelt especially upon the magnificence of the coffin ; nothing so fine had ever been

seen

seen in the village before. It was a great pity that I myself had not been able to go.

I tried to be patient, but his voice irritated me. One grows so tired of seeing these people fingering their hats and patroning and señoring every three words. As kindly, but as hurriedly, as I could I sent them away.

And now the *buaco*, with its incongruous blue ribbon, adorns my desk, while outside in its cage the blackbird is singing the folly of regret.

*December.*

More than a year has passed since she died. Sometimes I have to cross the river ; there are the same little scenes at the ferry, the same early clouds hang over the valley, and there is the little house half way up the hill towards which I used to look so anxiously to see the light in her room. Why do such visits make me feel sad and restless, I wonder ? Did I really love her, or did she only stir my imagination ? Who can say ?

On my desk is the *buaco* with its wilted ribbon still untouched. Now and then, as I rummage among drawers and pigeon-holes, I find one of her old letters. Always, even in the days of our deepest intimacy, they began with the same stiff, copy-book formula : " Esteemed Señor,—I take my pen in my hand to write you these four words," although there were sure to be as many pages. Some of them coax me to come and bring her back from one of her innumerable visits ; some of them tell me of approaching fandangos in such terms that I might almost fancy that my happiness alone was being considered ; some of them beg irresistibly for something without which existence might become impossible ; others thank me rapturously for a present that has made her joy complete. Poor little Goya, how she gloried in the externals !

A new

A new dress, a pair of earrings, a glittering ring, and she couldn't have loved me more.

I don't know why the world changed after she had gone. Manuel and Francisco dragged me into all the festivities. There were baptisms and haircuttings and carnivals to divert me; but they all palled. It seemed as if it had been the Goya who gave the enthusiasm and the happiness to those old scenes of revelry. I dropped back into my former indifference, yet it was not the same, for resentment lay behind it, a resentment that never found expression; perhaps it never knew its own meaning.

As the months vanished old Juan spoke enticingly of new beauties that were worth a Gringo's wooing, but they never roused a moment's interest. The Goya's eyes laughed mockingly behind the fairest face. How awkward the women seemed when I remembered her coquetries. Juan could not understand; women were women—what made me so capricious? All the beauty in the world had not vanished with the Goya. It was madness to allow the past to shadow the present. Why, many a woman had died when he was young. He had been sorry—yes, but it was better to forget. When feasts were approaching which we had celebrated together, he has come to remind me of the pleasures of the year before.

“Come, Patron, do you not remember how much you enjoyed it? Let us go again. Who knows who will be there—you will find another much better than the Goya, never fear. Had we not urged you, you would never have gone to the fandango at which you met her. If she were chance, may not chance bring something more delightful still? She was only a Cholita, Patron; there are many more.”

But if I went or if I stayed, it made no difference. There  
was

was no excitement in the noise, no spontaneity in the gladness. I could see only creatures unworthy—uninteresting.

I grew very restless. I devoted myself to antiquities. I worked among the ruins and the graves. I read the old authorities. I even travelled all over Peru to visit the relics of the ancient time ; but contentment has never come to me.

I listen while my two companions tell me how light loves make light hearts. Often in the early dawn, they awaken me with their jingling spurs and sit on the edge of my bed to recount the delights of the fiesta from which they have just returned. It all seems gay enough, but somehow it never arouses me. Better indifference than disappointment. Those long rides had a meaning once, but now they only bring fatigue and discontent. The desert is not so beautiful as I once imagined.

Even the physical world seems to be betraying me. I thought that at least I was secure of the sunlight, but it too is dimmed. It has glittered through the seven years allotted to it, and now the time of the great torrents is approaching. We rarely see the sun until ten o'clock ; a chilling hurricane blows all day long. At evening great misty hosts come out of the sea, storm the headlands, and swarm over the plains like an invasion ; the night shuts black and cold, often with a drizzling cheerless rain. The brightness has gone out of the air just as comfort and peace of mind seem to have gone out of my life.

Do you remember the little blackbird? It became a great pet. It woke us in the morning with its melody, came to the table with us, ate from our plates, sat on our shoulders and sang in our ears. It was happy and busy always. It seemed to have lost all sense of the need of any companionship save ours. A few weeks ago, Francisco, who had taken a great fancy to the little fellow, bought a pair of the same breed to send to some woman in

Lima.

Lima. We had them here in a cage for a week. One of them was very young and chirped all day for food. Ours, which proved to be a female, spent hours in feeding it. She seemed beside herself with pleasure in the new labour. One night a boat came and the new birds were sent away. Next day our pet was disconsolate. She sought high and low for her nursling, and came to us as if asking help. The morning after, she was missing, and she has never come back again. The instinct of home had been awakened, and she had started off across the desert to rejoin her long forgotten kin. Somehow her departure seemed to me to be an omen. My homing instincts, too, have begun to stir, and I am going back to you across the desert of the sea.