McReynolds Robert

Where Strongest Tide Winds Blew

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I. UNDER THE SWORD OF DAMOCLES

We built our cabin high on the slopes of the Sangre de Christo range, overlooking the broad, level San Luis Valley, in Colorado. At the rear of the cabin rose a towering cliff or rather a huge slab of rock standing edgewise more than two hundred feet high, apparently the upheaval of some mighty convulsion of nature in ages gone. Near the base of this cliff flowed a clear crystal spring.

Some hundred yards west of the cabin was the mouth of a tunnel into which we had drifted with pick, shovel and giant powder, a distance of 300 feet in five months of hard toil. A trail led from the tunnel to the cabin along the mountain side, which was thickly studded with tall pines. Another trail led down the mountain slopes in a winding way to the valley, almost a mile below. Above, reaching far into the blue dome of the sky, rose the peaks of the snow-capped Sangre de Christo, glistening in

the morning sunlight, which threw gaunt, fantastic shadows in cañon and deep ravine.

It was a wild, weird scene, where man, in strength and vigor, seems to imbibe a portion of the divine essence that lives, and moves, and has its being in the vast solitudes.

We struck pay rock at the first thirty feet of tunneling, so Amos' assay showed, and the rock had gradually increased in value, week by week. Buchan would take samples of the ore every week or ten days and walk a distance of twenty-five miles to Saguache, where old man Amos, expert geologist and assayer, would for two dollars and fifty cents make out a clean printed slip with figures in red ink, showing so many ounces of lead, copper, silver and gold to the ton.

The ore had not yet reached a value which would pay to ship it, but the increase of values was so steady, and Amos was so extravagantly encouraging, that we were always in buoyant expectation of rich ore. He would say, "You boys have a wonderful prospect. Keep right on with your work; it is getting richer with every stroke of your pick and you are likely to uncover a million dollar drift any day."

Buchan would bring the assay certificate back to the cabin, where we would sit late by the light of the pine knots in the fire place and talk of the golden millions which capitalists would yet gladly pay for a half interest in the "Aberdeen."

That was the name Buchan had given the mine, after his home town in Scotland, of which he always spoke with a fond

tenderness.

Winter had come and we, John Buchan, Will Carson, and myself, had chipped in almost our last dollar and brought a wagon load of flour, bacon and canned goods from Saguache to the foot of the mountains, then carried them on our backs to the cabin. We quit work on the mine for ten days and chopped firewood, which we corded at the rear of our house. All hands felt that we were as snugly housed for the winter as the big grizzly bears in their lairs among the rocks.

Snow had been falling for several days and it lay deep on the mountain slopes and in the wide expanse of the valley below. We had not had an assay for two weeks and all were anxious for another report from Amos. Buchan wanted his mail also, and he took a small bag of the rock and tramped the twenty-five miles to Saguache. It was a three days' trip wading through the unbroken snow drifts, and it was night when he returned, weary, footsore and angry.

I can see him yet, tears trickling down his honest face, as he tried to tell something about Amos. He spoke of "the scamp, the villain, and robber," and then choked with rage. Like all Scotchmen, the more he thought of the wrong done him, the angrier he became; he would be more angry tomorrow and it would be the day after that his anger would reach the climax, and begin to subside. This was not a peculiarity of Buchan. It is a characteristic of the Scotch.

We made him a cup of coffee and seated him comfortably

before the fire. When he calmed down somewhat, he explained.

"The first thing I did the next morning after reaching Saguache, was to eat breakfast, and then I took the samples of ore to Amos' assay office. He was garrulous as usual, and said to come in two hours and he would have the certificate of the assay ready for me. When I again called he handed me the certificate and I paid him the usual two dollars and fifty cents. It showed nine dollars and ninety cents to the ton. The usual increase of ten per cent. over the last assay.

"I crossed over to the postoffice, and while waiting for my mail, I noticed the snow standing ten inches high on the cap of the flue of Amos' assay furnace. I thought, how in the deuce did he assay our ore without melting the snow on the cap of the flue? The more I thought about it the more I was mystified. I went across to his office and said, 'Amos, I suppose you gave us the usual fire test on this ore?' 'Yep,' he answered. 'Then tell me,' I cried, 'how in the devil did you make the fire test without melting the snow off the cap of your furnace flue?' 'Too cold to melt,' he replied.

"Then I rushed past him into the back room. The furnace was cold and the frost had gathered on the iron door. I don't suppose there had been a fire in it for a week. I took Amos by the whiskers and told him to own up that he had not made a fire test of our ore. Then he acknowledged that he had been guessing at it all along."

"You don't mean there is a doubt about us having pay rock?" we yelled in a chorus.

"All kinds of doubt," said Buchan. "I am told there is a suspicion that Amos gives everybody an assay showing values, where there are no values–this for the purpose of keeping up work in the district–and to those who have found values, he gives them an assay showing nothing. At the same time he gives Rayder, the Denver capitalist, a tip and he buys up the property for a song, giving Amos a fat commission for his part in the deal. The chances are that we have no more gold in our rock than there is in that jug handle."

The news was astounding. We sat for a while by the fire like men stricken dumb. There was no doubting Buchan's statement. Deception was no part of his nature. He was nearly twenty-six years of age, athletic, strong and quick of perception. He had seen much of the world and knew men. No, there could be no doubt; he was not mistaken.

We were heartsick. Almost our last dollar had gone to pay for the bogus assay. Our golden dream of months was vanishing. Carson broke the silence.

"I will go to Saguache tomorrow. I shall pulverize that jug handle and take it to Amos; he does not know me; I shall have him assay it, and if he gives me gold values there will be trouble!"

I was awakened the next morning by the sound of a hammer. Carson was pulverizing the jug handle. After a hasty breakfast, he buckled on his cartridge belt with a Colt 44-six shooter in his holster, and was soon wading through the snow-drifts down the trail towards Saguache. I watched him through the window until

he was lost to view.

The sun rose in a clear sky; the glistening peaks of the Sangre de Christo shone white against a turquoise blue; clumps of snow melted from the branches of the pines and made hollows in the smooth banks of white where they fell.

I turned to Buchan. He was tossing restlessly in his bunk.

“I would hate to be Amos if he gives Carson an assay of values from that jug handle.

“Yes, yes,” he muttered incoherently. “The day of reckoning comes to all. I have seen it. I have seen the sky turn black, the waves rise mountain-high out of the sea, the earth rock and reel, the dead roll out of their coffins in the cerements of their graves, the living fall upon their faces to hide from the wrath of Almighty God! I have seen it just as Paul tells about it. I have heard the roar of the winds, seen palaces crumble and fall–like John of Patmos, I lift up my voice–I, John.”

I was at his side in a moment, and saw that he was delirious. The exertion through the snow the day before, the loss of sleep and intense anger, had made him ill. I knew of a few simple remedies at hand, and in a little while I had him sleeping soundly.

The sun became warmer as the day advanced. The snow melted on the cabin roof and froze in drooping icicles at the eaves. All day I went noiselessly about the cabin, letting Buchan sleep. A premonition of impending danger crept over me. I tried to throw off the dread feeling by reading, but I could not concentrate my thoughts on the pages of the book. Strange

thoughts came like they did to the man who was being taken to the guillotine and begged time of his captors to put his thoughts on paper. I thought I would write mine that day, or remember them at least, but I cannot recall them. I only know they were strange and fascinating, as if I was living another life, on another planet.

I brought in wood and water for the night. The sound of the door slamming awoke Buchan. He arose and sat by the fire, which blazed up brightly from its fresh supply of pine logs.

"Better, I see," I observed, "but heavens you were locoed this morning! talking about the resurrection, the quaking earth, and the dead rolling out from their graves!"

"All true," he said, quietly. "I have seen those things, and what has happened once may happen again."

I was standing by the window, looking out over the snow covered San Luis valley, when even as he spoke I felt the ground tremble. There was a rush of air and the cabin became filled with a fine snow that was stifling, then a thunderous roar, and all was utter darkness.

I was choking with the snow particles. I groped to the door and opened it and felt a solid bank of snow.

I realized then that we were buried beneath a snow slide.

We worked for hours, in silence and darkness, digging our way through the snow and shoveling it back into the cabin as we tunneled toward the cliff. It was early morning when we saw the light of day.

Once in the open where we could breathe the pure air we beheld a sight that would appall the strongest heart. The great flat rock, that had stood on edge at the back of the cabin, was now slanting at a sharp angle above our heads. The avalanche from near the summit of the Sangre de Christo had struck the cliff and with its incalculable tons tilted it, piling itself hundreds of feet in the depth about us. The cliff might fall at any moment and blot us out of existence.

Reaching a point of sight near the open space at the edge of the base of the cliff we could see something of the awful havoc wrought by the avalanche. Huge rocks had been loosened from their foundations and with the speed of a meteor dashed to the valley below. Great pines one hundred feet in height had been torn up by their roots and hurled down the mountain side by the tremendous weight of the avalanche.

The cliff had sheltered our cabin and saved our lives.

We cleared the snow away from the chimney and out of the cabin. Our wood was dry and we soon had a cheerful fire blazing and the tea kettle boiling. But living under that slanting cliff, from which we could not escape, we felt, indeed that the sword of Damocles hung by a spider web above our heads.

When we had rested some and refreshed ourselves with coffee, we tunneled from the open space under the cliff to near the entrance of the mine, intending to live in the tunnel until the melting snows of the spring released us from our prison. But when we had tunneled through the snow to near the entrance of

the mine, we found our way blocked by a debris of rock and trees which would require weeks of labor to remove. Tunnels in other directions gave us no better results, and we became resigned to our fate, returning to the cabin to while away the dreary hours until the hanging cliff above should become our grave stone.

Days of gloom and monotony came and went. We dug the snow away from our windows and tunneled a hole to the top which gave us a glare of reflected light.

Buchan had hitherto been silent as to his past life. By a few stray remarks we had caught glimpses of his romantic career, but now he began relating in detail incidents of his early life in Scotland, or on the high seas, and later in Peru. His stories were so full of human interest and replete with love and romance, that I became more than ever interested in him. But my hearing was bad, and it had been getting worse since the day of the avalanche, so I prevailed upon him to write. I could read better than listen, besides he would write his better thoughts and nobler sentiments when he would not speak them.

It was writing these memoirs of his eventful life that furnished him pastime and I was employed in reading them, during the two months of our imprisonment in our snow bound cabin.

By the dim light of the window by day and the blaze of a pine log at night, he wrote upon the scraps of paper found about the cabin. As I now review the pile I find it made up of paper bags, margins of newspapers, fly leaves from a few old books, and much of it on strips of a yellow window shade, also on the

backs of fancy calendars with which Carson had adorned our cabin, and almost a whole chapter I find penciled finely on a pair of lady's cuffs that were strangely out of place in a miner's hut.

Buchan does not know that I am going to give his story to the public and I shall have to take chances and risk his displeasure. In that event I have the defence of pleading that no man has the right to withhold so good a tale from the world.

II.
IN DAYS OF INNOCENCE

As I peer into the dim past that haunts the scenes of my childhood in Aberdeen, Scotland, a thousand memories troop by like the scenes of a panorama with the footlights turned low; and when I contemplate them in a meditative hour it leaves me with as lonesome a feeling as if I had listened to the old time song, "Home Sweet Home," which I have heard a thousand times in distant climes, sometimes sung to crowded audiences at the opera, and again by the pioneer as he rattled his prairie schooner over the plains.

It is a song that never grows old and never will so long as men leave the home of their childhood, around whose hearthstones still play ghost-like, the recollections of bye-gone years, tenderly touching their sympathies as they pause for a moment in their monied pursuits in other lands.

The old red school house on Princeton street, with the tall lank figure of Ellwood for its presiding master and who believed in and practiced the command of the Holy Writ: "Spare the rod and spoil the child," was to me in those years of tenderness, a dismal contemplation. But Sundays had a brighter hue when Mother would dress me in full Highland suit of tartan, and adorn my cap with an eagle feather, surmounted with a brooch of the design of

an arm with a dagger, bearing the motto, “We fear nae fae.” With my small claymore and buckled shoes and plaid, how proudly I would walk up to the barracks at Castle Gate, where the sentry would salute me, and give me permission to enter.

But those days had their troubles as well as pleasures. The West North street boys had a grievance against those of the East North street and one Saturday both sides met in battle array, armed with wooden swords, near the North church at Queen street. After a determined resistance West North street was victorious, when someone presented us with a flag. It was a common piece of bunting, but to our young heroes it was something to be looked up to and defended with our lives before the honor of West North street should be sullied.

That banner cost us many a headache, and many a soiled suit of clothes after the usual Saturday battle. On one occasion we sallied forth as usual to the battlefield, carrying our banner, and shouting derisively at our foe. The enemy had been reinforced and after a hard struggle, they captured our flag and carried it off in triumph to East North street.

Our fellows were a crest-fallen lot, as we sat on the steps of the church looking the picture of dejection. However, a few days later, I summoned the boys to meet in an old building in Ferrier’s Lane. There were fifteen of us and we came armed with our wooden swords. After much debate over the loss of our flag, a committee was appointed to notify the East North street fellows, that we were ready to offer battle, and dared them to meet us the

following Saturday and bring the captured flag. They accepted the challenge. When we met again in the old building by the hazy and flickering light of a tallow candle, with upraised swords we swore to re-capture our flag, uphold the honor of our street or die in the attempt. I was chosen captain on this occasion, and never did a general rack his brain more for a plan of success than I did to win this battle. Finally I hit upon a stratagem and after school submitted it to all. It was to proceed to the usual place of battle, but at the corner of Queen street five boys were to be stationed out of sight, and when both armies met they were to rush in on their standard bearer and capture the flag. We met, and even to this day I shudder at the ferocity of that battle. Twice I was knocked down; several times our street was on the retreat when someone shouted–"Remember our oath!" and then another desperate rush, and along with the charge of the five secreted ones which so surprised the East North street boys that they finally yielded, and we carried off our flag in triumph. John Taylor's head was cut, John Ingerham's eyes were black, my right knee cap was out of place and six or eight others were more or less wounded. The boys of East North street fared about the same. Good old Doctor Ellis living in King street witnessed the fight, but he kept my secret, for I told Mother that I was hurt in running a race.

And so those delightful days of early boyhood passed like one long summer day. But a change came. My father died and in a few months more, my loving Mother, after a lingering illness,

passed away. I then left the home of my childhood to live with my older brother, James.

Although every possible kindness was shown me, there was lacking a mother's love, a mother's sympathy and cheering words, things that touch the tender chords of a boy's heart. At that time I was sent to the Ledingham Academy, but it was useless. The golden veil through which I had looked out on the world was lifted, the chain of love and affection broken. I saw the great ships come with their strange men from other ports of the world. I saw them unfurl their snowy sails and speed over the blue waters bound for the shores of other climes. I watched them until they were but a speck of white down on the blue horizon, and I longed to be on board–to feel the ship roll upon the billows and hear the wind whistling through the rigging, to climb aloft and view the limitless expanse of ocean and feel that I was a part of these white specters of the sea.

One day I saw in the windows of Knox & Co., a sign which read:

"Two apprentices wanted for the sea."

I went in and told them I wanted to become a sailor. About this time another lad about one year older than myself came in on the same errand. An old gentleman, after surveying us both for some moments, remarked that in his opinion we were too young, but told us to wait a few minutes as Captain McKenzie would be in soon.

When Captain McKenzie came in he asked us if it was with

the consent of our parents that we made application. Being answered in the affirmative by James Mitchell, the other boy, I answered that my father and mother were dead, but my brother would sign the necessary papers.

III.
THROUGH MISTS OF THE SEA

Captain McKenzie sprang from his berth in the wildest excitement. A moment before a low voice called "Captain," at his state room door. "Who is there?" he asked. "Donovan," came the guarded reply. "Captain, the mate has conspired with the crew to mutiny and your throat will be cut in an hour."

James Mitchell and I were apprentices on board the bark "Aven of Aberdeen." My brother James having reluctantly consented that I should follow the fortunes of the sea, signed the indenture papers.

The brig was bound for Archangel, Russia, and we had on board a large amount of specie and plate, the private fortunes of a Russian Jew returning to his native land after many years of success as a merchant in Alexandria. Our berth was near the captain's, and Mitchell had heard the warning given by Donovan. He was out of his berth in an instant and gave me to understand there was mutiny aboard. Together we entered the captain's cabin.

The Jew was apprised of the situation. It was the intention of the mate and crew to murder him and the Captain and put the vessel about for a piratical cruise in the Indian Ocean. They were a motley gang of foreigners, low bred and capable of any

crime when led by a man like the mate, fresh from a career of lawlessness on the China coast.

The Jew was the most abject picture of terror I ever saw. His hands trembled and he shook like a man in a chill. He wanted to hide, but that was useless. Captain McKenzie armed himself with a belaying pin. He placed one in the hands of each of us boys and bade us follow him in silence. We cautiously went on deck and we found the helm deserted, and the mate and the entire crew sitting together and drinking in the fore part of the ship.

Captain McKenzie sprang into their midst and with one blow from the pin killed the mate. This subdued the others and they slunk away to their duties. The captain then called the men in front of him and after ordering Donovan to the helm, told them he was done with them and that their future conduct would determine their fate. At the same time he threatened to kill the first man that manifested a mutinous disposition, or dared to cross a given line on the deck without his permission. He then ordered the mate's body overboard and told the men to return to their duties.

The Captain and Donovan took turns at the helm, while Mitchell or I was stationed as a lookout to give instant warning of any suspicious movements on the part of the crew. For more than a week we stood to our posts of duty, when one morning we sailed into the smooth waters of the port of Archangel, weary and exhausted from the intense nervous strain and loss of sleep.

The Captain notified the British consul and a file of soldiers

came on board and arrested the crew. Six of them were afterwards sent to prison for life.

The home voyage of the Aven was fraught with all the dangers of the sea. We had secured another crew in Archangel but their seamanship was bad. When a sudden storm would strike us it required herculean efforts on the part of the captain and Donovan to prevent the ship from being driven ashore on the rocks.

Snow was falling and a wintry wind dashed the waves over our decks and coated the bulwarks with a mail of ice. Sleet and snow clung to the rigging, making every effort to handle the ship a hazardous one. For three days we battled against the elements and then we came in contact with ice floes. Once our position was so perilous that the Captain ordered the boats provisioned and ready to be lowered when the vessel should be crushed in the ice. By skillful maneuvering we escaped from the ice floes and had a pleasant day or two in smoother seas.

It was night and I was standing by the taffrail, when suddenly a giant specter seemed to come up from out of the sea, bearing directly down upon us. Her great lantern swung in a glow in a fog, by which I discerned moving objects.

"Collision! Collision!" I shouted at the top of my voice. The cry was taken up by the sailors, and ere it had died away there was the crashing of timbers, falling spars and the shouts of men.

We had been struck a glancing blow abaft midships but the damage was not serious enough to sink us. The other vessel, which proved to be the brig "Rapid," belonging to the same

company at Aberdeen, stood off until its crew ascertained the extent of our damage, then sailed away in the darkness.

A month's delay on the docks at Aberdeen repairing damages, and we were again on the high seas bound for the ports of South America.

When off the West Indies the sky suddenly became overcast, and we were soon overtaken by a hurricane. The captain saw it coming and prepared for it, yet when it took the ship it roared and laid her down so that I thought she would never get up again. All that day and night we had heavy squalls, and by morning the gale was still increasing. Birds of sea and land came on board. Driven by the winds, they dashed themselves down upon the deck without offering to stir until picked up, and when let go they would not leave the ship, but endeavored to hide from the wind. By ten o'clock at night the storm had spent its fury, and when I went to my bunk I found it full of water. With the straining of the ship, the seams had begun to leak. I was surprised to note among the ship's crew that the most swaggering, swearing bullies in fine weather were now the most meek and mild-mannered of men when death was staring them in the face.

Then followed days when the sea was smooth as glass. Our white sails hung idly beneath the scorching skies. Sea weed floated on the oily surface, as, day by day, we lay seemingly motionless on the bosom of the deep. The moon rose out of a phosphorescent sea and cast its long golden gleams on the azure blue, while the stars shone like isles of light in the sky. There was

a dread in the infinite spaces about. Again, there was scurrying, fleecy clouds and our ship was scudding before the breeze.

When I awoke one morning, we were lying at anchor in the harbor of Buenos Ayres. While unloading cargo, the Captain desiring to go ashore, I was taken in the boat along with two of the seamen. After getting to the wharf, the Captain said: "I expect you fellows to employ your time cleaning that boat; it will be five o'clock before I return." After he had gone, one of the sailors said to his mate, "We will leave Spriggings (meaning me) to clean the boat, and we will go to shore." After they were gone, I concluded that I had been imposed upon and I left the boat and went into the city, having no intention of deserting the vessel at that time. In my wanderings in the strange city, and not knowing a word of Spanish, I lost my way. Finally, when I returned to the wharf, the boat was gone. It was late when I was picked up by a policeman and turned over to an Englishman, who kindly took me to his home for the night. The next morning I returned to the Aven and received a reprimand.

A few days later we weighed anchor for Valparaiso. The sky was overcast and the sea was rolling high off the Patagonian coast, when we heard signal guns of distress. Captain McKenzie changed the course of the ship and we soon came in view of the Spanish sloop Seville going to pieces on the rocks. Her bow was lifted high, while the waves were breaking over her stern. Her sails were in shreds, and a dozen sailors clung to the rigging. We lowered the life-boat, and after hours of battle with wind and

wave, rescued the crew. They were in an exhausted and famished condition, having been for almost three days without food or water. They were given every kindly attention by our officers and crew.

We saw the dark, jagged, rugged bluffs and steeps of Staten and Terra del Fuego. We rounded Cape St. John, amid tempestuous gales and giant seas of the polar regions. We lost sight of the land, reefed the sails close down and then bid defiance to the storm. Strange sea birds shrieked their dismal cries, while dull leaden skies added to the gloom. We cleared Cape Horn in safety and were soon sailing over the smooth seas of the south Pacific Ocean beneath the Southern Cross.

"Sail ho!" cried the lookout. All eyes were turned to the leeward. A stately ship, under full sail, had suddenly appeared, bearing down upon us. She came silently, the water splitting in foam at her bows. We could see the crew working about her decks, but no sound came from the spectre. All at once we noticed her hull and sails were transparent. We could see through them to the ocean beyond.

It was only a mirage of the sea, but to our crew it was the spectre of the Flying Dutchman–a phantom ship had crossed our bow.

Once in port, no more would we walk the deck of the Aven of Aberdeen. She had seen a ghost.

IV.
GRAVES GAVE UP THEIR DEAD

I was in the streets of Arica, Peru, when the earth began to rock and reel. Buildings surged and fell, with a crashing noise. The dust rose dense, and darkened the sky. The earth gaped and swallowed up many of the people fleeing to the hills back of the town. I followed to an elevation where an awful sight met the terror-stricken populace. The hills of Arica had for centuries been the burying grounds of the ancient Agmaras, a race of Indians who ages ago it seems were fishermen. The convulsions of the earth threw to the surface hundreds of the dried bodies of the Indians, still wrapped in their coarse garments, the nature of the soil had prevented decay. When the people beheld this they believed the world had come to an end, and they threw themselves on their faces praying for mercy.

There was a thunderous roar from the sea, growing louder and louder as each moment of terror sped on, and then, with one mighty crash, a tidal wave fifty feet high,–the aftermath of the earthquake–struck the shore, bearing upon its crest the U. S. Battleship Wateree, one German and two British vessels, leaving them stranded far inland. A sailor from the Wateree was in a boat, and as he was swept past his vessel he waved the Stars and Stripes in farewell to his comrades on board.

The shocks had ceased and the storm that followed had spent its fury, when the pall of night came over the stricken city. Human wolves crept from their hiding places and began their work of prowling amid the ruins and robbing the dead. All night long they held high carnival amid the scenes of terror and desolation.

Through it all I had been a silent, bewildered spectator. I had fled to the hills only because others did, for I could speak but little of the language of the country. I was among the graves when morning dawned and I heard a voice in my own language. Going to the spot I found a man with a sprained ankle fighting away a thief. I seized a rock and he ran. I aided the injured man to a place of safety, where we remained for several days until a conveyance took us back to town.

The man whom I had helped was John L. Thorndike, an American, well known in Peru and all over South America, as having built the highest standard-gauge railway in the world, and a man who at once became my warmest friend.

But to return to my ship. When the Aven of Aberdeen reached Valparaiso, the mate and a number of sailors immediately deserted the vessel in a boat. The Captain saw them leaving but was powerless to stop them. That night John Mitchell and I stood watch alone. There being no boat it did not occur to them that we would attempt to escape, but about midnight Mitchell said to me, “Spriggings, I dare you to run away.”

“I’ll take the dare,” I said, “but how will we get ashore?”

“We’ll launch one of the hatches,” he replied.

It was no sooner said than we tied a rope around one of the heavy hatches, and bearing it to the side of the ship, we lowered it noiselessly into the water, then let ourselves down the rope and by holding to the hatch, one on either side, we safely swam ashore.

We avoided the business streets of Valparaiso and made our way to the country, where we hid in a grove until night. We were without money, our clothes were such as we wore at sea, night was coming on, we were hungry and with no place to sleep. Our only thought had been to escape from the Aven, for we had imbibed the superstition of sailors, and nothing could induce us to remain aboard that vessel since the phantom ship had crossed our bow.

I saw a light in a farmhouse in the distance and on our approach the inmates were aroused by the barking of their dog. The man was a typical Chilean, short and stout. He looked curiously at us and by signs Mitchell made him understand that we were hungry. He entered the house and returned with his wife and two children. Mitchell repeated his signs and the woman went inside and returned with a cup of milk, which we drank greedily. The man then beckoned us inside where we had a supper of meat, bread and coffee. They collected a number of sheep skins, gave us two mats for covering, and we slept soundly.

The next morning we helped the man in his garden, drew water for the cattle and made ourselves useful in other ways. I went almost every day for two weeks to the summit of the hill where I

had seen a splendid view of the bay, to see if the Aven was still in port. One day I saw her spread her sails and I watched her until she was but a speck on the horizon.

Our host by this time, I think, knew we had run away, for on one occasion he followed me when I making my observation, but if he suspected anything he never took any steps to have us arrested, and in fact treated us with great kindness. When we left he gave us a large package of food and some clean stockings and shirts which his wife had made for us.

It was nightfall when we entered Valparaiso. Near the plaza Victoria we paused before an English boarding house sign. As we stood looking, a middle-aged man came out and asked us our business. Before we could reply he said: “I bet you are the two boys from the Aven.” Our frightened looks told him we were. He invited us in and gave us supper.

We soon learned to our dismay that this man was the notorious Cockney Spider, keeper of a runaway sailor’s boarding house. At night Cockney would start out to some vessel in the bay of Valparaiso, everything having been pre-arranged, take off those sailors desiring to runaway, secrete them in the house and when opportunity offered, ship them again. The amount of bounty paid by ships short of men was often large, and as Cockney always arranged to have poor runaways deep in debt for board and lodging, the sailor on being re-shipped was worse off, and Cockney the gainer. He often took desperate chances in stealing sailors, as the coast guard and other officials were sharp. Many

in that traffic were captured, but Cockney always escaped.

After we spent the night in his home he asked me if I could write. Replying in the affirmative, I was installed as chief book-keeper of the notorious runaway sailor boarding house. My duties were to register the sailors brought to the house, keep a record of their meals, charge so much a night for lodging, and present their bill when they were ready to leave. I held the position for two weeks, when one night Cockney came home intoxicated and told me that he had shipped Mitchell that night on a French bark. A sailor gave me a sly wink and whispered, "Your turn will come next, he intends to ship you on a whaler." My experience with the ice on the Aven had given me a horror of frozen seas, and that night I stole away from the boarding house.

I was in dread of Cockney Spider, and, in my determination to escape, I became a stowaway on a coast steamer and landed at Arica, with a few dollars in my pocket, paid to me by Spider.

When I arrived at Mollendo in company with Mr. John L. Thorndike, he introduced me to Mr. Hill, his general manager, as his "boy protector" and told him to give me employment and see that I was well provided for.

In a short while I was in the railway shops, learning the trade of machinist, and later I was engineer on the railroad running from the sea port of Mollendo to Arequipa, more than one hundred miles in the interior. The city is situated in a beautiful and fertile valley in the heart of the Andes. The majestic volcanic mountain Misti some miles away rises nearly four miles above the sea and

smoke still issues from its crater.

I had lately been transferred from the shops in Mollendo to Arequipa, when, hearing fabulous stories of rich gold finds in the Andes, and being imbued with an adventurous spirit, I resolved to try my fortune in the new El Dorado.

V.
FAIREST FLOWER OF THE CORDILLERAS

I was in the heart of the Cordilleras, weary, footsore and alone. I was descending a rocky cliff a few hundred feet from a plateau, while the thunders roared with terrific crash. The rain fell in sheets, plunging in wild fury in cataracts down the mountain side. There was desolation and terror unutterable. I leaned close to a shelving rock, and as I thought of once happy days in Aberdeen, of the love bestowed upon me by my dear mother–gone forever from this world–my own condition, now a homeless wanderer in a foreign land, perhaps to soon meet death and my body be devoured by condors, I laid my head on my arms and wept bitterly.

I am not superstitious, neither do I believe that my condition at that time caused my mind to wander; a peaceful calm came over me; it seemed as if some loving one was near, fear vanished, and I looked up but beheld nothing. The storm raged with even greater fury. I walked and even began to sing the "Garb of Old Gaul." I ignored the elements in their war and had almost reached the plateau when the storm ceased and the sun suddenly appeared. Calm and warmth came from what a few minutes before had seemed death and destruction.

A sudden turn in the trail and I beheld a child seated beneath the thick, spreading branches of a tree, her white apron filled with alpine flowers. "How came she here," I wondered. Her dark bright eyes gazed questioningly into mine, eyes through which one could see the childish spirit and feel the witchery of her magic look; her raven locks fell in clusters over her fair temples and ended in ringlets about her shoulders; on her cheeks were the glowing tints of youth and health. As I spoke she rose and handed me a flower of delicate tint. I gallantly pinned it on the lapel of my coat, which won from her a pleasing look and smile. I could speak a little Spanish and she seemed to understand that I was going her way. Together we walked along the trail. Her childish grace appealed to me. A spirit of infinite goodness seemed to radiate from within and stirred my noblest impulses. A feeling of content settled upon me.

Near by, I saw some Indian huts and the tambo or tavern where Frank Dunn and I had stopped on our way to Puno. The child ran ahead, leaving me to follow.

The first sight of Puno had satisfied me that we had come to the most desolate spot in the world, Nature's remains seemed to have been brought there and left without burial. The ground was thickly covered with a short, wild grass and appeared to be the natural dwelling place of the alpacas and wild vicunas.

I had been in Puno but a few days when I was offered work on board one of the steamers, but I longed again for Arequipa and friends. Dunn had secured work on one of the steamers and

refused to return. I thought this was hard, as it was my money that had helped him from the time he left Arequipa until he secured employment. My money was almost gone, but I had gone to the Amaras market and bought what edibles I needed, and without hesitation had started alone to return to Arequipa, over those fearful heights and dread solitudes of the Cordilleras, when I found her.

When we were entering the tambo an elderly gentleman and the Indian host were speaking in Spanish, and even from my limited knowledge of the language I knew they were talking about me.

No doubt but my appearance in the heart of the Cordilleras wet, forlorn looking and alone aroused his sympathy. After a difficult attempt at opening a conversation, the beautiful child I had met looking on all the time, I was given to understand that he desired me to eat with them. Of course I consented, but I did not do justice to the meal as the dark eyes of the young girl were constantly upon me.

The gentleman gave me his name, Julian Maldonado, and that of his daughter, Felicita Maldonado. He was a well-to-do merchant of elderly years. I learned that his wife was dead and that their home was in Lima. The servants made me a bed in the room adjacent to my host. The next morning I was aroused by one of them who said his master wanted to see me. I went to him and after telling him I was on my way to Arequipa, and when there I would be among my friends, he offered to purchase a mule

for me, but the only one to be had was lame. However, I told him I was young and would soon reach my destination. Felicita then came in and announced breakfast, after which the mules were packed and, everything being in readiness, we bade each other good-bye. Felicita came toward me, and as she extended her hand in her childish fashion, she placed in my own a Peruvian twenty-dollar gold piece, saying: “Adios mi amigo.”

I was almost speechless. I started forward to return the money, but I had to retain it, as they quickly mounted and were gone before I could master my feelings.

Roll on, relentless Time. Felicita, fairest flower of the Cordilleras, we shall meet again, when love’s young dream shall awaken amid the clash of arms and tragedies!

Nine days later I arrived in Arequipa, sick, footsore and weary. My friends had sent out searching parties believing that I had been murdered. Their astonishment was great when they found where I had been and that I had spent many nights alone amid the dangers of the mountains. Many were the admonitions I received from older heads.

I laughed at their words, and when I thought of the beautiful Felicita, I dreamed of love and felt an indescribable content with my surroundings and all the world.

VI.
A HUMILIATING INCIDENT

There was a night riot in the streets of Ilo, knives gleamed in ruffian hands, curses and blasphemy fell from sodden lips. Shots were fired in the thick of the struggling mass, as the mob crowded in frenzy about some central figure. The crowd from behind pressed forward and Thompson and I were carried along by the crush of humanity, until of necessity we began to fight our way out. We had partially succeeded, when we were surrounded by soldiers. At sight of the soldiers the crowd began to disperse, but unfortunately for us it was too late, besides we had nothing to do with the riot, and thought we had nothing to fear.

The officer stepped up and placed Thompson and I under arrest. We were searched, but no arms were found on us. However, we were marched away to jail and our feet placed in iron bars, fastened with a heavy lock, which compelled us to lie on our backs.

The next morning an officer appeared and I notified him that I was a British subject, and resented such treatment. He told me that I was held for attempted murder. Thompson was also under the same charge. An Italian had been shot and would probably die. I demanded an immediate trial. Several officers of the railway came and endeavored to set us free, but their

efforts were of no avail. There was no British consul nearer than Arica, about two days travel by steamer, and no means for communicating with him until the steamer arrived from the north.

Our prison was an old wooden structure, and only one guard was over us. The officer and his men had quarters some distance away. It was our intention to ask the soldier on guard for a drink of water about midnight, when Thompson would overpower him and take his keys. A small boat was to be in readiness at a certain place. Our plan was, after obtaining the keys, to put the soldier in the stocks and walk out, all of which could easily have been accomplished, as the soldier was but a small ignorant half-breed Indian. It was Sunday night and we had decided to put our plan in operation, when–imagine our surprise–an officer informed us to get ready to take the train for Moquequa.

We were accompanied by an officer and six men. I asked the officer what the removal was for, and he said our trial was to be held and it was necessary for us to be present. I asked permission to speak with the engineer, which was given. I told him I dreaded being taken into the interior, as we would be away from our friends, and begged him when we came to a certain grade along the line to increase the speed and I would jump off. I was familiar with that part of the country, knew I could secure a horse and go to Mollendo or Arequipa. I knew also that the officer and his men had never been on a train, and it would be impossible for them to give chase.

But we were again doomed to disappointment. The engineer feared to carry out the plan and instead of increasing speed, went slower than usual.

On our arrival at Moquequa we were marched through the streets, to my great humiliation, as I knew many people in the town. Numbers of them came and offered their sympathy. To our great indignation we were thrown into a cell with six other prisoners convicted of murder, and a more ugly, villainous and desperate-looking lot of characters would have been hard to find anywhere. No attention had been paid to my remonstrance, when an hour later a gentleman, whom I had favored, presented himself. After I told him the circumstances of our detention he said he would send a lawyer to defend us. In the meantime he arranged with a hotel keeper to send us regular meals, also mattresses and blankets.

The day following I had many visitors, some drawn by curiosity and others by sympathy and good will. The latter were profuse in their attentions. When a lawyer appeared, I related to him the details of our arrest. I did the talking, as Thompson could not speak the language, while I was becoming quite proficient in it. Upon leaving, the lawyer promised to have us free in eight days at most.

I passed away the dreary time pacing that prison cell. It was about twenty feet long and twelve feet wide, and contained nothing but stone walls and floor, with a heavy iron-grated window which looked out on the plaza. A bottle of wine came

with each meal, instead of coffee, and I shared it with the criminals in our cell. In this way I soon won their good will, and as they had all been convicted of murder, they did not hesitate to tell me of their horrible crimes.

There is no capital punishment in Peru. Sentence for life, in that country, means about fifteen years, and seldom do they serve that length of time. Usually a revolution releases them. At such times insurgents invariably break open the prisons and liberate the convicts, which happened to these prisoners a few months later. We were visited daily by my lawyer and finally were told that four hundred dollars would be required for our liberation.

"Liberate us and I will give you the money," was my answer.

Next day I bid adieu to my undesirable residence and companions; Thompson had no money and I paid all. After purchasing new clothes and receiving the congratulations of friends, we boarded the train for Ilo. Mr. Hill returned from Lima that day and after learning of the indignities inflicted upon me, told his officials that they should have notified the British consul and compelled the Peruvian authorities to pay, instead of taking my money.

I returned to work in the shops, and three weeks afterward one of the office clerks came in breathless and told me I was to be arrested again along with Thompson. The papers would be down from Moquequa that night and tomorrow morning they would come for us.

I was furious when I realized that we were again facing

punishment for a crime of which we were innocent and I determined to resist arrest, and leave Ilo.

I went to the office of the secretary of the railroad, and after a long consultation, it was agreed to have three of Mr. Hill's best horses in readiness at midnight. One of the hostlers was to accompany us and when we reached Tambo, Thompson and I would take the train for Arequipa.

I went to my room, packed my clothes, carefully loaded two revolvers and placed my trunk and other articles of value in the hands of my friends, with orders to send them to Arequipa after the sensation of my escape was over. After supper, to allay any suspicion the authorities might have, I strolled along the wharf, went into a billiard hall and actually played a game of billiards with the captain of the guard, who I have no doubt had the order to arrest me in his pocket. Thompson had gone to his room. I followed thirty minutes later, and at precisely twelve o'clock, I sallied out of the house by the rear, and met Thompson at the agreed place on the beach.

The night was dark, and everything being in readiness, we mounted and rode through the town dressed like natives. We soon gained the highway leading to Tambo and after being well clear of Ilo, we put our horses to their best. We rode the fifty-five miles to Tambo, over a rugged and mountainous country and caught the train for Arequipa, arriving that night after an absence for me of two years.

VII.
IN THE THROES OF REVOLUTION

The railroad had now been extended from Arequipa to Puno. A revolution had broken out and insurgents were cutting the telegraph wires.

I was engineer on a combination locomotive and coach and as this locomotive will be in the scene of more than one tragedy, I will describe it. It was specially designed for the president and officers of the road, weighing only eight tons. On the same frame with the engine, in fact, a part of it, was built a beautiful black walnut coach, with a seating capacity of from twelve to eighteen persons. It had two side doors and one in front, which, when opened, communicated with the engineer. There were windows hung with beautiful damask curtains, the carpets were of rich velvet, and a center table and several cupboards under the seats completed the furnishings. It was in reality a palace on wheels, named The Arequipena, meaning a native of Arequipa. I mention the design of the combination engine-car for the reason that, on a duplicate of The Arequipena, later occurred one of the most perilous and tragic events of my life.

The stretch of road from Julica to Cabanillas was level and straight, except about two miles from Cabanillas station, where a heavy side cut and sharp curve was the only obstruction to the

view for miles. I was going at the rate of forty miles an hour, when, on nearing this curve, I beheld a large Rogers locomotive with a train of coaches coming toward me. I cannot describe the thoughts that went through my brain–there was a terrific crash–flying debris–a hissing of steam–mingled with the groans of the wounded and dying.

I was thrown out of the way of the wreck and near the edge of a river, and when I regained my senses a priest was bending over me, bathing my forehead. I gradually realized what had happened and went to my engine. There was scarcely a vestige left of The Little Arequipena, only a piece of the boiler and two pairs of driving wheels. The shock was so great that the little coach was hurled over the other engine, which was not damaged much.

I saw several persons bending over some one, and, on going closer, found William Cuthbert, our traveling engineer, stretched on the ground dying. Five soldiers were dead beneath the ruins. One officer, with his legs broken in two places, begged that others be cared for first. The road-master was in agony, his lower limbs frightfully burned by escaping steam; all the others were more or less seriously injured, except myself. When relief came our dead and wounded were taken to Arequipa.

We had been sent out to repair the wires, and orders had come to me that we should be given the right of way. The engineer who collided with me told me that the commander of the government forces had ordered our superintendent to furnish transportation for his troops to Puno at once, and when informed that it would

be impossible to send a train until we were heard from, he threatened to place the superintendent in jail unless his orders were complied with. No one on the other train was hurt. They had six coaches full of soldiers, the priest who assisted me being among them.

The day after our arrival at Arequipa the funeral of William Cuthbert took place. The procession was the largest that I had ever witnessed at any funeral in Arequipa, natives as well as foreigners taking part.

It was a long time before I recovered from the shock, not alone of the collision, but the death of William Cuthbert who always had been ready to befriend me and who had given me much valuable information. He lies buried in the cemetery at Arequipa, in a vault. A marble slab was erected to his memory.

The general manager sent for me one day to come to his office in Arequipa, and after talking over the cause of the collision, I told him that I considered him to blame for allowing any engine and train to go out without knowing first where we were, and that it would have been better to have gone to prison, that if he had been sent there the American government would have demanded his freedom, and he would have been honored. As it stood, he was to a certain extent responsible for that dreadful affair. After some more words I left the office, realizing that I had incurred the displeasure of the head officer. I concluded to leave, which I was sorry to do, as I looked upon Arequipa as my only home.

I visited Valparaiso and again met Cockney Spider. He was

still at his old business, conducting a runaway sailors' boarding house. A few weeks later found me in Panama, an engineer on the Panama and Aspinwall railroad. The climate, I believe, is the most wretched in the world, and tropical vegetation grows the rankest. In a few months I was stricken with the yellow fever, but thanks to my robust constitution I soon recovered. About this time I met an official of the government railway at Ilo, who desired me to return and accept a position as engineer on the road. I told him of my troubles in that town with the officials. He met me soon afterwards, with a contract duly drawn up for eighteen months' service and a guarantee that I should not be molested by any petty official.

When I arrived at Ilo, imagine my surprise to find that the man who rowed me ashore was the Italian who caused my arrest. He offered to shake hands but I refused. When I went to the hotel many of my old native friends came to see me, and informed me that after I had left they discovered the person who did the shooting. It was done by one of their own number, who managed to get away.

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