

PROSE WRITINGS

OF

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EDITED BY

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*Volume First.*

*ESSAYS, TALES, AND ORATIONS.*

NEW YORK

RUSSELL & RUSSELL · INC

1964

## A STORY OF THE ISLAND OF CUBA.\*

NUMEROUS as are the strangers who resort to the island of Cuba from the continent of Europe and the States of North America, few, if any, visit it from mere curiosity. The greater part are drawn thither by commerce, a few are in pursuit of health, and fugitives from the severity of our northern winters; but all have almost invariably made their abode in the city of Havana, a place full of strangers and adventurers like themselves, and copying, so far as the climate will permit, the manners of the large European towns. Multitudes of these occasional residents never learn the language with sufficient perfection to speak it, or understand it when spoken, and thus are cut off from the best opportunity of becoming acquainted with the character of the native inhabitants. Thus it is that, notwithstanding the principal city of Cuba is the great mart for the trade of Spanish America, and enjoys so large a portion of the commerce of the world, so little is yet known of the largest, finest, and most fertile of the West India Islands. All the knowledge of it exists in the minds of men too busy to write books, or incompetent to literary pursuits. Geographers are at fault in searching for materials from which to compile a tolerable account of the island; and the celebrated

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\* From the "Talisman," 1830. When he first came to New York, Mr. Bryant resided with a Spanish family, which entertained many ladies and gentlemen from Cuba, and he probably derived the incidents of this narrative from one of them.—ED.

Malte Brun, of whose work his countrymen are so proud, could do nothing better for Cuba than to give a naked translation of what was penned long ago by the old Spanish geographer Alcedo.

I also have visited Cuba, and, like others, visited it in the capacity of a man of business. I went there some fifteen years since to recover a debt due to the estate of a relation of mine, a West Indian merchant, whose executor I had been appointed. Law has its delays in Cuba as well as in other countries; and, being obliged to resort to legal proceedings against the debtor, I was detained longer in the island than is usual with my countrymen. I arrived there in January, and passed the remainder of the winter—if so severe a name can be given to so delightful a season—pleasantly enough among its inhabitants. The acquaintances I formed in the transaction of my business introduced me into society. I found it indeed "a web of mingled yarn," full of strong contrasts: the gentle and timid; the bold, enterprising, and unprincipled; the kind and the churlish; the acutely sensitive and shamelessly callous; disinterested honor and unblushing fraud, side by side. It was just such a state of society as our own might be were public opinion deprived of more than half its force, and the opportunities of evading the laws and corrupting those who administer them a hundred-fold what they are now. Let me, however, do the Habanero's justice. Of all the citizens of Spanish America, I believe them to possess the best character. They come of a good stock—the virtuous, industrious, and poor inhabitants of Teneriffe and other Canaries, whom the occasional famines which afflict the islands named the Fortunate, after having driven them from Fuerteventura to the Grand Canary, from the Grand Canary to Teneriffe, and from Teneriffe to Palma, oblige to leave their native isles altogether, and would cause to emigrate in still greater numbers but for the severe laws which restrain their departure. In the city of Havana the rude and primitive virtues of this race are somewhat tempered by the softer and more voluptuous

genius of Andalusia; but it is owing, I believe, to their extraction that so much unaffected goodness and simplicity of heart is to be found among the women. I saw them at their balls and *tertulias*, in their splendid Parisian dresses; I saw them in their domestic circles, in the plain but rich costume of Spain. And everywhere I found them kind, affectionate, and simple-hearted; charming in spite of the duskiness of their complexions, with the brightest and blackest eyes in the world, and forms that seemed the more graceful and bewitching from their Asiatic fulness. I talked to them in bad Spanish, and to their tuition I believe is owing the fondness I bear to their language. The people of Havana have taken some liberties with the Castilian tongue and dialect of the stately Dons. Transplanted to the delicious climate of Cuba, it has acquired an Ionic softness and volume to which it is a stranger in its original country. They have mellowed the general pronunciation, depriving it of all its harshness; and, by employing on all occasions its polysyllabic superlatives, and the numerous musical diminutives with which it abounds, have added to its grace what they have taken from its energy.

The warm season was advancing, and I grew uneasy at the idea of remaining in Havana, notwithstanding the hospitality with which I was treated. The odors arising from the stables in the lower stories of all the dwellings of this closely built city overpowered me, and I was wasted and debilitated by the continual heat and perspiration. I grew weary of being obliged to change my linen four or five times a day; and, what was worse, I became afraid of the yellow fever, the black vomit, and the liver complaint. I was haunted by a continual fear that I should *coger un aire*, by which phrase the people mean the contracting of half a dozen strange disorders peculiar to the hotter parts of the West Indies. I therefore resolved to take advantage of the more salubrious situations which the island offered me, and accepted the invitation of a friend to pass the summer months at his coffee plantations. The island of Cuba possesses almost every variety of tem-

perature. Havana, on the sea-shore, lies beneath a burning sun; but you may choose your climate on the sides of that long ridge of mountains which, running the whole length of the island, lifts you at every step into a purer and cooler atmosphere. My friend had his coffee plantation in an elevated part of the island, but still within a genial though not a torrid climate. It were a vain task for me to attempt to describe these beautiful plantations in Cuba to one who has seen nothing like them. The shrubs that produce the aromatic kernel which supplies a refreshing beverage to the whole civilized world are not trusted to the fierce sun and rude dalliance of the air. Vast groves of the most majestic trees of the island are planted to shade them from the heat and shelter them from the winds. The shrubs are disposed in squares, and the avenues between are lined with palm-trees, with mangoes, with the plantain, the banana, and the bamboo. Amid them rises here and there the gigantic cotton-tree, its vast trunk swelling out in the midst like an Egyptian column, and its huge arms stretched forth in the air high above the tops of its brethren—so high that the song of the mock-bird among them is scarcely heard on the ground below. Every kind of foliage, from the slenderest and lightest to the heaviest and most massive, from the palest to that of the most intense verdure, is mingled in these delightful bowers, which murmur with the continual agitation of the soft winds, blowing by day from the sea and by night from the mountains. The orange here hangs out its fragrant blossoms and no less fragrant fruit together; roses of Jericho, that blossom all the year, and ranks of pineapples border the intersecting alleys. The cooing of doves is blended almost continually with the soft rustling of the innumerable branches, and over all is heard at intervals the wild shriek of the catona or the guacamaya. In the midst of this beautiful garden—for such it truly is—often several miles in extent, is the residence of the proprietor and that of his slaves, surrounded by a circle of lime-trees closely planted, intermingled along its edge with flowers of the scarlet cor-

dium and the oleander, and divided by broad openings looking along the principal avenues.

My friend's plantation was situated several miles from Havana, on a tract of ground which inclined with an easy declivity toward the north shore, and was varied with gentle undulations. In the midst wound a little brook, that fell into the *Rio de Puentes Grandes*, and which was further increased by one or two springs breaking out at the foot of the hillocks. As you stood in the great northern avenue in front, you looked down upon the calm ocean which bathes the walls of Havana, the city itself unseen; and, turning to the south, your sight was met among the very tree-tops by the blue summits of San Salvador, a part of that mighty ridge which divides the island longitudinally, clothed to its loftiest peaks with forest of eternal verdure. How often, while I was swallowing the coffee which a domestic brought me at six in the morning, have I gazed through the windows of my bedchamber at those woody heights, red with the early sun, and thought of the majestic highlands of my native river! Let me not, however, forget to do justice to my friend's coffee, which was of the finest, raised on his own plantation, and of the quality of which he was justly proud. The seed from which the shrub was raised he had procured from the little Danish island of St. John's, where the best coffee in the world is produced—a fact known to epicures, and to which I can testify from my own experience, having often drank it at the house of a very knowing, agreeable man, with whom I became acquainted in his official capacity, Counsellor Benzon, Governor of the Island of Santa Cruz.

I passed many agreeable days with my friend in this pleasant retreat, idly enough, but not without learning many things worthy of remembrance. My host was a native of Teneriffe; a dark-complexioned, stern-countenanced, deep-voiced man, with the tall stature and powerful frame of his countrymen. His negroes held him in great awe, for he was one of those men who are obeyed by inferior minds, not from compulsion

nor from affection, but from a sort of instinct and the mere force of a determined manner. A look, a motion of his hand, an indirect intimation of his will, was with them equivalent to a command, and was interpreted with a quickness and obeyed with an alacrity that surprised me. Yet he was substantially kind to them, and, I believe, not a single instance of corporal punishment occurred on the plantation while I remained there.

I had frequent conversations with him on the subject of the colored population of the island of Cuba. "Are you not afraid," said I to him one day, "that they will rise up in a body against their masters and make a bloody attempt to shake off the burden of servitude?"

"I have no such fears," replied he. "The blacks have no arms, and there is nobody to put arms into their hands. Our shores are lined with strong military posts all along our narrow island, which would quickly put down an unarmed and undisciplined insurrection. Besides, the different classes of our colored population hate each other too cordially ever to concert together a plan of rebellion. The negro of Africa, the bravest and most spirited of them all, born a free man, detests the submissive Creole, the native of the country, and the Creole negro abhors the dogged, surly, and unchristianized African. The mulatto looks with scorn upon the negro as his inferior, and the negro regards the mulatto as a degenerate mongrel; while the quadroon, who in his own estimation is almost a white man, regards both the negro and mulatto with equal disdain. Not many years since, three Indians, from the coast of Florida, did what all the blacks of the island never did, and I believe and trust never will do—they filled the whole country for nearly three years with robbery, bloodshed, burnings, and consternation.

"The Spanish government, by virtue of some treaty or other with the Indians of Florida, of which I can tell you nothing else, send them an annual present of European merchandise. A vessel is usually despatched from Havana for this

purpose, and some dignitary of the Church or zealous missionary accompanies the expedition. In the last year of the last century the bishop of Havana, the venerable Tres Palacios—may God rest his soul!—made the voyage to Florida. The good priest celebrated the imposing ceremonies of our religion with so much pomp, explained its mysteries with so much clearness and eloquence, and read the Latin prayers in his missal with so much unction, that the hearts of the poor savages were touched; many consented to receive baptism on the spot, and the bishop returned, bringing with him as the trophies of his peaceful victory three Indian boys, who had been delivered to him to be instructed in the learning of the white man and the doctrines of the true faith. The young savages were at first delighted with the change in their situation. They were highly gratified with the elegant European dresses in which they were clothed by their patron, and to which they added a multitude of trinkets received as presents, and fantastically disposed on their persons. In spite of the habit of apparent indifference to everything extraordinary in which they had been educated, they could not help expressing the feeling of natural astonishment which rose in their minds as they walked the streets of Havana and beheld the various labors and devices of civilization. In a short time, however, they became familiar with the wonders around them, and with their astonishment vanished the piety which the good ecclesiastic supposed he had kindled in their hearts. He discovered that his juvenile neophytes were lazy, proud, intractable; that they loved rum and tobacco, and were fond of sleeping when their stomachs were full. Sometimes they would perform their wild dances, with loud and heathenish cries, in the court-yard of the churchman's palace, disturbing his religious meditations. On one of these occasions, when the old bishop sallied forth in his night-cap, cane in hand, and with a most determined demeanor, to quiet the uproar, they actually had the insolence to trip up his heels, and to continue their dance around the body of the sprawling dignitary, shouting and

yelling with greater glee than ever. They had no objections to figuring in religious processions; they carried the blazing torches with an air, and bore the standards with profound gravity and solemnity, but they resolutely refused to learn their prayers, and could by no means be taught the alphabet. They would often absent themselves for several days together, to wander on the woody sides of the mountains, shaping bows and arrows after the fashion of their native country, making a rude sort of lance out of a hard kind of wood, the ends of which they rendered yet harder by fire, and they would return, with their clothes fairly torn from their backs, bringing home a wild pig or a huge bunch of paroquets. In short, they were so wholly insubordinate, and so decidedly savage and pagan in their habits and tastes, that the bishop was forced to give up the idea of making them into good Catholics, who should return to spread the light of the Gospel and the power of the Church in their native land.

“At length they committed some offence against the laws. What it was I either never heard or have forgotten; but an offence they committed for which they were apprehended, found guilty, and sentenced to imprisonment at the Arsenal, in Havana. The bishop, I believe, was glad to get rid of them, for he saw that the seed he had sown had fallen upon a rock, and he was now sure that his intractable pupils would be well looked to, and kept out of mischief at least. The Arsenal, you know, I suppose, is situated a little without the city, but connected with it by a gate called *Punta de la Tenaza*, and surrounded by high and strong walls of its own. But, if you have never visited it, you can scarcely form an idea of the activity that prevails there. It is a little town within itself. The vast magazines and storehouses, the dwellings of the officers and superintendents, the barracks of the soldiers, the dormitories of the prisoners, the shops in which various mechanical occupations are exercised, occupy the circuit of the walls with numerous buildings. Wharves extend along the edge of the water; vessels are coming and departing, taking in or discharging

their cargoes; men are hurrying to and fro with packages; and a cluster of mills in the midst, turned by a canal from the river, and continually employed in sawing huge trunks of the native trees of the island, fill the place with the continual noise of the machinery. Were it not that you saw here and there an officer in military uniform, sentinels pacing about, and chains fastened to the arms or legs of many of the laborers, you might fancy yourself in a common seaport. Thither the young delinquents were sent, and, each being fitted with a couple of iron rings about his ankles, they were set to work in assisting to load and unload the government vessels. The employment was not much to their liking, and, after remaining there a few months, they took advantage of an opportunity to make their escape, and sought refuge in *Las Vegas de Falaco*.

“The tract of country called by this name begins about twenty leagues or more to the west of Havana, on the northern shore of the island, and stretches toward Cape San Antonio as far as the settlement of Mantua and Guanés, which lie on its remotest boundary. It is fertile as the garden of Eden, and its wide extent is watered by numerous wandering rivers, whose banks are encumbered with the luxuriance of their wild vegetation. A few miserable habitations are scattered here and there along the streams, or grouped into hamlets and dirty villages. In these live the herdsmen entrusted with the care of the immense droves of cattle, horses, and swine pastured in the country back of the settlements, and here also dwell the tobacco planters, who cultivate patches of the rich, deep soil on the margin of the rivers. No part of Cuba is naturally finer than this, and none is peopled with a worse race. I hate the rascals, for they once stole from me the finest horse in the world, an English hunter, which cost me sixty doubloons, and I was obliged to pursue my journey on a stunted, hard-trotting jade, which I purchased of a dingy mulatto, who called himself a white man, and who had the conscience to ask me a hundred dollars for her. I dare say he stole the animal. Hither the wreckers, who haunt the keys on the coast, gangs of run-

away sailors, who live by the plunder of the merchant ships that come into their power, resort to spend their ill-gotten wealth in gaming and debauchery. These desperadoes keep their boats moored under the thick boughs and foliage of the mangroves, whose trunks rise in the shallows out of the very brine. You might look round on the neighboring shores and sand-banks without meeting the least indication of anything in which a human being could put to sea, but let a disaster happen to a merchant vessel off the coast, and two hundred boats, perhaps, will at once make their appearance, as if they rose from the bosom of the waters. These fellows lead a merry life on shore, where they find no lack of boon companions. The dice-box rattles all day in the taverns, and the guitar begins to tinkle as the sun goes down. Brawls are kindled among them over their wine, blood is shed, and the murderer takes refuge in the keys. Sometimes one of these fellows who ventures on shore with too much money lies stark and stiff by the roadside the next morning.

“The three young savages chose the village of Guanés, situated on the river of that name, as the place of their retreat. It lies, as I have already I think mentioned, near the farther extremity of Las Vegas. Here they contrived to exchange their prison dresses for checked shirts and pantaloons, with broad-brimmed straw hats, the usual garb of the country people. They subsisted easily, and lived in a manner quite to their taste among the lazy settlers. They fished a little in the streams, knocked down game in the uncultivated lands, loitered about the taverns, slept in the shade, and, when pressed by the harder necessity than usual, lent a hand in gathering and curing tobacco. I never heard that they did any harm while they remained in this part of the country; at all events, I believe they behaved themselves quite as unexceptionably, to say the least, as the rest of the inhabitants.

“Our government occasionally sends commissioners to make the circuit of the island, and to clear it of runaway criminals, and of vagabonds who can give no account of themselves.

The idea is a good one, in my opinion, for by this means a rogue is kept in the place where he was born and where his character is known, and, when convicts who have escaped from justice repeat their crimes, they are carried back to punishment. After the three Indians had been for several months in the neighborhood of Guanés, certain of these magistrates arrived at that village. The Indians were informed against by a herdsman with whom they had some dispute. They were seized and brought before the commissioners. It appeared that they were not ancient inhabitants of the place, and they could show no passport from any other; it was, therefore, concluded that they could not be there for any good purpose. They were accordingly sent, with a guard, to Havana, where they were immediately recognized as the fugitives. They were remanded to prison, loaded with heavier chains, and condemned to severer tasks. Their old patron, the good Bishop Tres Palacios, was dead; there was nobody to intercede in their behalf. The prisoners bore their fate with a kind of sullen resignation, but their keepers knew little of what was passing in their minds. They had been brought back from what they most loved—idleness and liberty—to what they most hated—labor and imprisonment. The indignities with which they had been treated roused in their bosoms all the spirit of their race, and filled them with an intense thirst for revenge. Their confinement was short, and it was soon rumored in Havana that they had again escaped from the Arsenal. On the second morning after their escape, a traveller, passing between Mantua and Guanés, a little after sunrise, was stopped by a scene of horror and desolation. A crowd of people of all colors had gathered around the smoking ruins of a cluster of cottages which had been fired in the night. The trees by which they were once overshadowed had been scorched and seared in the fierce flame, and their half-burned leaves were dropping in the faces of those who stood below. The earth around was stained with blood, and the prints of knees and feet strongly pressed into it showed that a mortal

struggle had been there. Several bodies of men, women, and children, marked with deep gashes, lay near. They had evidently been slain in the endeavor to escape by flight, for the expression of horror and fear yet stood on the faces of the dead. One or two among the group, who seemed to have been more successful in their attempts to escape, and whose features were yet convulsed by fright, were telling, in an agitated, incoherent manner, the story of several men of hideous appearances and supernatural strength and swiftness, who had put the firebrand to their houses just at daybreak, and slaughtered the inmates without pity.

“While the multitude were thus intently listening, they were startled by shrill cries from a distance, growing louder every moment; all eyes were instantly turned to the quarter from which they proceeded. A dark cloud of smoke was seen rolling up from among some trees at the distance of half a league, where the spectators knew that there was a dwelling, and the next moment it was surmounted by a dozen arrowy tongues of flame shooting up in the midst. A man and a woman, each carrying a child, made their appearance, running with all their might, and shrieking in an agony of terror for protection. They were pursued at some distance by three dark, strange-looking men, armed with lances, who were gaining rapidly upon them. As soon, however, as they saw the crowd, they stopped, looked at them for a moment, and, turning, went off swiftly in a direction toward the mountains in the interior of the island. In the mean time, the fugitives had reached their friends and fell prostrate on the ground in a state of exhaustion. They were immediately recognized as the family belonging to the house which was seen in flames. Fortunately, none of them were within when the ruffians came. They had observed them, however, from a little distance, and, terrified by the strange fierceness and wildness of their demeanor, had concealed themselves behind some bushes until they saw them setting fire to the house, when they immediately took to flight. In their flight they had been seen and

pursued, and apparently only saved by the accidental circumstance that their pursuers beheld around the ashes of the cottage a larger number of persons than they wished to encounter.

"Who were the perpetrators of these deeds of violence and bloodshed? This was a matter of intense curiosity and anxious conjecture; almost every man had his own answer to the question. Some thought that they might be a party of wreckers from the keys, who had taken this method to revenge the death of a comrade slain in the village of Guanes. Some suggested that an invading force had landed on the island, and was sending out small detachments to ravage the country. The greater number were of opinion that they were the three Indians who had a second time escaped from imprisonment, and who had perpetrated these barbarities in revenge for the inhospitality which had delivered them up. This opinion was confirmed by the description given of their persons by the inmates of the destroyed cottages. But they added that, whoever they might be, it was their most solemn belief that they were in league with the powers of darkness. Nothing else could endue them with such an irresistible strength, or render them so completely proof against all attempts to wound them, or give such a demoniac expression to their features. The idea took strong hold of the superstitious people of Las Vegas, and the voices of the group sank into a low murmur as they conferred together on this fearful subject.

"Nothing could equal the panic which prevailed in the settlements of Mantua and Guanes all that day. The families who lived in the solitary houses came into the villages, and the villagers crowded into the stronger and more defensible buildings. Every weapon that could be found was put in order: disused blunderbusses were fitted with new flints, rusty broadswords were sharpened, and an old swivel, that had lain for years half buried in the earth before the *cabile*, or town-hall, of Guanes, was dug out, loaded, and set upon two wooden

wheels in front of the dwelling of the Alcalde. The rest of that day passed without any further alarm, but, on the next, news was brought of other massacres and burnings in the neighborhood. On the third morning, a party of twenty men, all armed, left the village of Guanes to visit the herds in the back country. They entered several houses, the inhabitants of which lay murdered within them or before the doors. They found the herds scattered, and saw many carcasses of cattle and horses lying where they had been pastured.

"In the mean time, the devastation committed by these strange beings increased the terror with which they were everywhere regarded. Wild stories were told of their exploits; of their gigantic strength and prodigious swiftness; of their swimming and fording rapid rivers, which would have swept away the most powerful man on the island; of their scaling perpendicular mountains and leaping tremendous chasms; of the supernatural suddenness with which they came upon the defenceless, and the astonishing swiftness with which they disappeared when the odds were against them. All the inhabitants of the district of Las Vegas followed the example of those in the neighborhood of Mantua and Guanes, and removed into the villages for safety, or collected in the larger and less exposed habitations. No man would venture into the fields alone, but, when the necessity of their affairs called them forth, they went in parties of a dozen or twenty men, well armed, and on the watch against the enemy. I remember a singular instance of the extreme fear inspired by these marauders. One day a young negro slave, living at an estate called El Rosario, in the jurisdiction of Consolacion del Norte, came running home to tell that the Indians were in sight, and were making toward the house. The family consisted of the master of the house, his wife and three children, his wife's brother, and a female slave with her two boys. The husband was for seeking safety by flight, his wife and her brother were for barricading the doors, and neither would follow the advice of the other. No time was to be lost. The husband left



his house with a loaded musket on his shoulder, and climbed a tree hard by, of the kind we called the *guacia*, screening himself from sight among its thick boughs and tufts of pale-green leaves, while his wife and her brother bolted the door with all possible expedition. The ruffians were soon at the dwelling; the affrighted owner of the house saw them from his hiding-place, armed with bows and arrows slung upon their shoulders, and carrying enormous lances made of the trunks of sapling trees, with an iron blade fixed in the smaller end. They were men of short stature, but broad-chested and wonderfully strong-limbed, with straight, jetty hair, and round, wild eyes beneath arched and coal-black eyebrows. They first tried to open the door, and, finding it fastened, without uttering a word to each other, they raised their lances to a level with their heads and drove the butt-end violently against it to beat it in. Every loud stroke went to the heart of the poor wretch in his concealment. He lay quaking with fear, just able to support himself among the branches, and to keep the musket he held from dropping to the ground, but without the courage or the strength to discharge it. The door at length gave way; the brother presented himself with a musket, but was struck to the floor before he could fire, and the murderers passed into the house over his dead body. Shrieks and howls of agony and supplication burst from the building, and through the open door the wife and her children were seen clinging to the knees of the savages, and butchered in the midst of their cries for mercy. The bodies of the two negro boys, bleeding with deep wounds, were then tossed out, and the mother, rushing forth to make her escape, was overtaken and pinned with one of their huge lances to the ground. When the work of death was finished, and the house again silent, one of the murderers came out with a smoking brand in his hand, which he laid to the windward side of the building, covered it with a handful of dry sticks and twigs, and blew them into a flame. The three then departed, leaving the pusillanimous spectator of their bloody deeds half dead with horror

and fear. He did not venture to come down until the house was nearly consumed, when he slipped to the ground and crawled trembling to the next village.

“I should lengthen out my story until another day were I to give you a catalogue of the murders committed by these men. All the country between the city of Havana and Cape San Antonio, called among us by the name of *Vuelta Abajo*, on both sides of the island, was the scene of their crimes, and was kept in a state of continual alarm. Their ravages were generally committed in the daytime, from the early dawn to nightfall, when they retired, as they also did when pursued, to the woods—the ancient woods of the interior, thick, dark, and tangled with shrubs and immense vines, and full of impassable thickets. On one day their ravages would be committed on the northern shore; on the next they would have passed the mountains, and dwellings would smoke and their inmates be slaughtered on the opposite coast. The officers of justice, seeking them where their enormities had just been committed, would be apprised by messengers of still more recent crimes at the distance of twenty leagues. What occasioned no small wonder was that all the work of bloodshed and destruction was performed by them in silence. Not a word was heard to issue from their lips by any one who had been near them, and yet had the good fortune to escape with his life. They gave no answer to entreaties for mercy, nor were they ever seen to confer together, though they always moved in concert. They passed from place to place as mutely and rapidly as ghosts of the dead.

“A few leagues this side of Cape San Antonio, where the island begins to grow narrow, is a remarkable cave. It passes through a continuation of the great midland ridge of the mountains, and reaches from one shore to the other. At the northern entrance are several chambers that seem chiselled from the solid rock, and which, I have little doubt, are the work of the ancient inhabitants of the country. They are furnished with benches of stone, alcoves, doors passing from one

to another, and roofs regularly vaulted, from which the trickling of water is constantly heard in the silence and darkness. Farther on the cave is a mere cleft between rocky walls; I once visited it with some friends. We penetrated to the distance of nearly a league, till we came to where a subterraneous brook crossed the passage and a chasm above let in the light of day; but, being sickened by the strong odor of the vampires and birds of night that clung to the roof, and having come to the end of the clew which we had fastened at the mouth of the cave, we were obliged to return. In the recesses of this cave the superstitious and ignorant people of Las Vegas believed that the three Indians propitiated the devil by sacrifices of the animals they had stolen, and received the gift of irresistible strength and the power of transporting themselves in a moment to whatever place they pleased. I believe, however, that it is a mistake to suppose that they made this spot their frequent haunt, though it is certain they were often seen in the neighborhood. They were too wary to trust themselves where their retreat could be cut off, or where the fierce dogs of the island could be let loose upon them. They encamped for sleep only on the steep sides of the mountains, and never but once in the same place. Yet the idea of their subterraneous worship of the powers of darkness added greatly to the terror with which they were regarded.

"The many and horrible murders committed by these men, and the destruction of the herds, the abandonment of so many fine estates for want of tenants who would venture to occupy them, threatened the depopulation of Vuelta Abajo, and drew the attention of government. Large rewards were offered, which were at length increased to five thousand dollars, for the head of each of the offenders. This measure had the effect intended. Large parties of men were collected, well armed with muskets, pistols, and broadswords, and including in their numbers a good proportion of *comisionados*, *Alcaldes*, *juezes*, *pedianos*, members of the Holy Brotherhood, and all the different officers empowered to pursue and arrest the violators of

the laws. They were accompanied by the strong and fierce dogs trained in Cuba to hunt runaway negroes, one breed of which is merely employed to track the fugitive, and the other to seize and drag him down. These expeditions were wholly unsuccessful. Often did they return without having discovered the object of their search. In some instances they followed the track of the savages for whole days together, encamping, when night overtook them, in some cleft of the mountains in the wilderness of the interior, where they kept up huge fires till morning, and stationed an armed watch to guard against their mysterious enemies. At length, however, their dogs led them to the hiding-place of the outlaws. After a weary march along the sides of the mountains, they found themselves at the foot of a lofty and precipitous pile of rocks, which the animals, barking at the foot, in vain essayed to scale. Above, on the summit of the crags, was a thick growth of trees and mountain shrubs. The men took the dogs on their shoulders and began to climb the precipice.

"They had scarcely begun to ascend when the whole party was startled by a loud yelping, and, on looking, they saw that two of the dogs had fallen from the shoulders of their bearers, struck through with arrows, and dropped to the foot of the precipice, quivering in the agonies of death. One of their number was also severely wounded by an arrow from the thickets on the summit, and, as he was preparing to descend, was transfixed by a second, and fell headlong from the rock on which he stood. The men at the bottom of the precipice and on the crags answered with a discharge of musketry, aimed at the trees which they supposed to be the hiding-place of the enemy, but without effect. Arrows still came from above, and *chusos*,\* or javelins, thrown with fatal and unerring certainty sometimes from one quarter, sometimes from

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\* The *chuso* is a weapon of about four feet in length and an inch in diameter. It is made of a very solid and heavy wood, hardened at one end in the fire and brought to a sharp point. The African negroes of Cuba throw it with great force and certainty of aim.

another, as the savages shifted their ground to avoid the aim of their assailants. At length the whole party, discouraged by the disadvantage at which they were contending, and by the slaughter of their companions, withdrew, carrying off three of their number dead and five severely wounded, and leaving nearly half their dogs at the foot of the precipice.

“More than one attempt of the same kind was afterward made, with no better success. Nearly two years and a half had elapsed since the Indians began to devastate the island, and still their ravages continued unchecked. Impunity had not made them forget their usual caution, nor did the multitude of their murders seem to have satiated their thirst for blood. I question if ever there were three men in the world, short of the degree of monarch, who made so much havoc among their fellow-creatures in the same space of time. At length, however, a bolder and more determined band was collected than had ever before undertaken the expedition. I may justly say this, for I well knew several of the persons who joined it, and greater dare-devils were not in all the dominions of my master, the King of Spain—men who feared nothing, either in this world or in the next. They were accompanied by several relatives of persons who had been killed by the Indians, and who were resolved to lose their own lives rather than fail in the attempt to execute justice upon the assassins. Their number amounted to about a hundred and fifty, and they were accompanied by sixty of the best-trained and fiercest dogs on the island. After tracking the bandits for more than half a day, they approached the place of their retreat, on the steep side of a mountain covered with broken rocks, from the clefts of which sprung shrubs and small trees, dwarfed by the dryness of the soil. At the foot of the place where they lay was a *quebrada*, the dry bed of a torrent, forming a ravine, with precipitous sides running obliquely along the breast of the mountain. Into this ravine the party were descending, carrying their dogs down the steep banks, when they were assailed by arrows from the opposite side, by

which several of the animals were killed. In all their combats with the people of the island, the outlaws aimed particularly at the dogs, whom they dreaded more than even the men, not only because they brought their pursuers to their place of retreat, but because they were so formidable and so difficult to wound in a close encounter. Arrived at the bottom of the ravine, the party paused for a moment, to take a view of the precipice above them, and to select the best places for making the ascent. It appeared that the Indians had intrenched themselves behind a kind of natural parapet of rock, through the clefts of which grew a few bushes and trees, but so thinly as not to prevent their assailants below from occasionally catching glimpses of their persons while in the act of aiming their weapons. In the mean time, their pursuers were not inactive. Every stirring of the boughs above, every appearance of a hand or face, was answered by a discharge of musketry. But the arrows and javelins still continued to come from the rocks, many of their dogs and several of their companions were already killed, and it was evident that no time was to be wasted in so disadvantageous a position. A part of the men were therefore assigned to carry the dogs, and the rest to watch the movements of the enemy; and, these being arranged so as to follow each other alternately, the whole party began to ascend by two different ways. The slaughter made by the Indians was now greater than ever, as they were enabled, from the near approach of the assailants, to aim their weapons with greater certainty and more deadly effect. Six of the men had already fallen dead, many were severely wounded, and more than thirty of the dogs were killed. It was horrible to hear the yells of these animals, mingled strangely with the groans of dying men, and to see their struggles when wounded, springing furiously from the shoulders of their bearers, and sometimes the animal and his bearer precipitated down the rocks together.

“But the combat was now near an end. One of the party, a *comisionado* whom I knew, a man of great strength of body,

firm nerves, and keen sight, had observed, through some boughs on the top of the rocks, the face of one of the outlaws looking down. He kept his eye steadily fixed on the spot as he went, and shortly afterward the savage stepped forth from behind his intrenchment with an arrow fitted to his bow-string, and raised it to his eye. Just as he came to the spot the wind parted the branches before him and gave the *comisionado* a full view of his person. In an instant he levelled his piece and fired—but the arrow had already left the bow of the Indian, and both the combatants dropped dead at the same moment. A shout of triumph was raised by the whole party as they saw the body of the Indian beginning to fall heavily over the rock through the shrubs on its edge. The next moment they saw a dark, brawny arm extended after it, seizing it by the hair of the head, as if to draw it back. Twenty muskets were instantly discharged in that direction; the brawny arm suddenly let go its hold, and tossed convulsively upward, and the lifeless bodies of two savages fell together down the precipice through the crashing boughs, in sight of their pursuers. Encouraged by this success, they sprang with all expedition to the top of the rock, but the third Indian was nowhere to be seen.

“They now turned to examine the bodies of the outlaws who lay dead near where they had fallen. They evidently belonged to the Indian race, from the peculiarities which I have already mentioned, and which the party had now an opportunity of examining at leisure. They had on no other clothing than a pair of loose trousers, and a kind of belt passing over one shoulder, to which was fastened a bundle of arrows. Their forms were exceedingly muscular, bearing the signs of prodigious vigor and activity, and of that period of life when men most rejoice in their own strength. The elder, it was judged, could not be more than twenty-five years of age, and the other perhaps three years younger. The sun was already sinking when they arrived on the heights which the Indians had occupied, and, weary and wounded, they encamped for a few hours of repose on the very spot without

attempting any pursuit of him who had fled. At daybreak they set out on their return to the villages, carrying their dead and wounded, and the bodies of the slain banditti. As they entered the inhabited country, the people came flocking about them to gaze on the lifeless features and powerless limbs of those who had been so long objects of awe and affright: the swift, powerful, invulnerable beings whose crime had hitherto seemed as if destined never to meet with either check or retribution. The country people assisted in bearing the dead and wounded to the town of Consolacion del Norte, where the bodies of the *comisionado* and his companions were buried with great ceremony and every mark of respect and sorrow. The heads of the Indians were cut off, and sent from the district where they were slain to the Captain-General at Havana; their quarters were suspended by the highways; and their enormous lances, their bows, arrows, and javelins, picked up where they fell, were preserved, for a memorial of the exploit, in the houses of those who led the expedition against them.

“The third Indian was never again seen in Vuelta Abajo. He passed along the midland range of mountains, and shortly afterward appeared in Vuelta Arriba, which means, you know, that part of the island lying eastward of Havana. Here he renewed the work of burning and massacre among the unguarded and defenceless inhabitants, and became as terrible to them as he had been to the people of the western part of the island. Warned by the fate of his companions, he never stood on the defence, but fled when threatened by a superior force. He abandoned the use of the bow and javelin, which had proved impotent to protect his comrades in their rocky fortress, and carried only his huge lance, the weapon of attack and slaughter. Hitherto, neither he nor the other two had ever been seen on horseback; now he was nearly always so. He would leap on the back of one of the horses of the country, wild and unbroken as ever ran in the forest, and ride him furiously without bridle or rein, guiding him with his lance alone; and, when the animal dropped down from fatigue, he

was instantly mounted on another. Woe to the man whom he saw alone and on foot in the open country; he was sure to overtake him, and, aiming a stroke at him in passing, to leave him dead on the spot. Cattle and horses without number were killed by him in the same manner—pierced between the shoulders with all the dexterity of a practiced bull-fighter. So true was his aim that, of all the animals he destroyed, not one was known to be despatched by more than a single wound. Sometimes he would dismount, and, cutting out the tongues of the cattle he had killed, would hang them to his belt for future repast. Throughout the *Vuelta Arriba*, the inhabitants of the country bordering upon the forest or the mountains no longer thought themselves safe in the solitary houses, and, like the people of the western districts, resorted to the villages for safety.

“I am sensible that the history I am giving you is an extraordinary one, and I see in your countenance the marks of incredulity. I have no answer to make to your doubts but the simple one that I am relating facts yet fresh in the memory of thousands among the people of this island. No man acquainted with Cuba and its inhabitants will pronounce it impossible that they should take place; and, if they have no other fault than that of appearing a little wonderful and surprising, I hope you will not think them the less authentic.

“I am now going to relate one of the most remarkable incidents connected with the story of this man-killer. At a little distance from the town of *San Juan de los Remedios* resided an honest but not over-rich man, an emigrant from old Spain, named *José de Pereira*. He had married a native of the island, and became the father of a very pretty daughter, of whom he was extremely fond, and whom he had instructed in accomplishments somewhat above her fortune. Her beauty, her graceful manners and amiable temper, won the heart of the elder son of the wealthy proprietor of a cane-plantation in the neighborhood. He paid her his addresses, which were not rejected; a match was concluded between them, and the wed-

ding-day was already fixed. She was as happy as a young and modest woman can be who is about to marry the man of whose love she is proud; and he was as happy as a young man deeply in love always is when on the point of marriage. The father and mother were scarcely less so at seeing their daughter well settled in life, and it was thought that the good couple would stretch their means a little to celebrate the nuptial ceremonies with becoming splendor and merriment. As yet, the Indian had never appeared in the immediate neighborhood of *San Juan de los Remedios*, nor had the inhabitants thought of resorting to any unusual precautions for protecting themselves against his violence. One morning the father had gone out to look at his little plantation of bananas and maize, and the mother to talk over the approaching nuptials with a neighbor, while *Anita de Pereira*, the daughter, was busy in an inner apartment of the house, working with her own fair hands some article of dress to be worn at the ceremony. There was no one else in the house but a negro woman in the next room. Suddenly *Anita* heard a violent shriek, and the sound of footsteps passing swiftly over the floor. She rushed to the door, opened it, and saw before her a short, brawny, savage-looking man, his stiff, black hair standing upright all over his head, half naked, and carrying a long, heavy lance in his hand. She looked round instinctively for help, and, beholding no one else in sight—for the negro woman who had alarmed her with the shriek had fled through a postern door—she sank to the ground in a swoon.

“In the mean time, the domestic had alarmed the neighborhood, and several men came running to the spot with arms in their hands. As they came up they saw the outlaw at some distance, on horseback, carrying the lifeless form of the young woman before him, and galloping off swiftly toward the mountains. The distracted father and mother, informed of what had happened, arrived at the cottage just in time to see him disappearing with his prize over a distant eminence. The news was not slow in spreading to all the neighboring plantations,

and to the town of San Juan de los Remedios, and a considerable multitude, prompted by various motives of curiosity, sympathy, and the desire of making themselves of importance, soon gathered about the old man's door. Among the rest appeared a young man of manly figure and bold and frank demeanor, but with a deep air of distress and anxiety on his countenance. The crowd that stood about the distressed father, talking loudly and earnestly to him and to each other, and offering a thousand discordant counsels, divided voluntarily to let him pass. It was Ramon de Aguarda, the intended husband of Anita. He approached and offered his hand to Pereira, who grasped it convulsively. 'We have lost Anita,' said he, in a half-choked voice.

"'I shall find her,' answered the young man, 'and that before the sea-breeze springs up again. I will pursue the robber and bring her back, or never return.'

"The garrulous crowd were silent as they heard the strong, determined tone of Aguarda's voice, and when he finished, a low murmur ran through it as the bystanders spoke to each other, commending the fearless and resolute spirit of the young man.

"'Who is there among you,' said he again, 'that will go with me to the rescue of Anita de Pereira?'

"'I will go,' was the answer of many voices at once, and there arose a great struggle in the crowd among those who were pressing forward to offer their services. Every one loved Anita, and respected Aguarda for his warm-hearted and generous temper.

"'I thank you, my neighbors,' resumed the young man. 'I could not have expected less of you. Since you are so ready to accompany me, I must request such of you as have not brought your arms to send for them immediately, and that you will provide yourselves, as soon as possible, with horses, and with dogs to track the ruffian; we will set out from this place in a quarter of an hour.'

"Great was the haste and bustle in arming and preparing

for the expedition. The planters willingly supplied the adventurers with dogs and horses. Several young gentlemen of the town of San Juan de los Remedios came to join the party, ambitious of distinguishing themselves in the rescue of the rustic beauty. At the appointed time a company of fifty men were assembled, armed, and on horseback, with negroes on foot, holding the dogs in long leashes. One of the animals was let loose to track the Indian, and the party, following the direction in which he had disappeared, set off, under the conduct of Aguarda. They traversed the open country, and arrived where the skirts of the great interior forest, stretching down the sides of the mountains toward the shore, enclose glades of pasture-ground. Here they added to their number several *monteros*, or foresters, to serve for guides in the expedition. The *monteros*, as you may perhaps know, are the keepers of the large herds which graze in this island on estates four or five leagues in circumference, and for the most part overshadowed with trees. They are as much at home in the woods of Cuba as your own Indians in those of North America. They know all the thousand intricacies and crossing paths of the forest, the ravines, precipices, and streams, as well as I know the regular avenues and alleys of my own plantation. They will travel in the woods from city to city, and from end to end of the island, guiding their way by the sun, the stars, the course of the rivers, and the direction of the wind, which you know blows regularly seaward during the night, and landward during the day.

"One of the *monteros* had seen the Indian pass with his prize, and pointed out the prints of his horse's feet. The party now rode into those lofty woods, along a gradual ascent toward the mountains, by a broad path among old trees that had stood there ever since the conquest of the island—groves of palmetto royal, the wild cotton-tree, the pawpaw, and others of equally gigantic stature, whose smooth trunks, rising to a prodigious height, uplift a close roof of thick-woven bough and massive foliage. So lofty a roof there is not in the proud-

est temples of Europe, nor one which more effectually excludes the sun, whose beams for ages have played upon the summit of those trees without penetrating to the ground. As they went forward, the forest, after several hours' travelling, became thicker and more choked with underwood, and the path narrower, until it could hardly be distinguished from others, made by cattle, intersecting in all directions. They were now obliged to ride one behind another, and as they ascended a little declivity—they found it difficult to urge their horses between the close trunks and encroaching branches. At length one of the *monteros* made a sign for the party to stop.

“‘Here, gentlemen,’ said he, ‘you must dismount; the forest beyond this place will not admit of the passing of a horse and rider. And here lies a poor beast that has been ridden hard to-day, and who, if he could speak, would thank the woods for being so thick; his master could get him no farther.’ As he spoke, he broke off a twig from one of the shrubs, and, stripping it of the leaves, turned to the side of the path, and with a smart stroke started up from a kind of a recess a horse covered with sweat and half-dried foam. ‘This, perhaps,’ continued he, ‘is the horse that carried the fellow you are looking for. He has neither saddle nor bridle, and yet his back shows that he has been sat upon by a heavy rider.’

“The party pressed round to get a sight of the animal, a shaggy, wild-looking creature, with a heavy, tangled mane on both sides of his neck, a long forelock hanging between the eyes, and a sweeping tail. He stretched himself for a moment, then snorted, broke through the bushes, and was out of sight.

“‘That is the Indian's horse,’ said another *montero*, the same who had seen him carrying off the young woman and had showed his traces to the pursuers; ‘the very beast on whose back I saw him this morning. I would swear to him before the *Alcalde*. I fancy the rider cannot be far off.’ All the party were of the same opinion. A short consultation was held, in which it was agreed that an attempt should be made

to recover the young woman without letting loose their dogs until the rescue was effected, for fear that they might attack the captive also. They then dismounted, left the horses in the care of some negroes, and began to thread the more intricate mazes of the forest. They soon heard at a distance the baying of the hound whom they had let off at setting out, and, proceeding for two or three miles in that direction, they came to a lofty precipice, not far from the bottom of which grew a cluster of branching trees of great height. At the foot of these trees the dog was whimpering and barking, and occasionally springing against the trunks. The party were perplexed at this circumstance; they looked up into the boughs for a solution of the mystery, but could discover nothing. They called off the animal and attempted to make him recover the track which they supposed he had lost, but in vain; he immediately returned to the spot. The face of the precipice was smooth, perpendicular, nearly thirty feet in height, and quite as impossible to scale without the assistance of a ladder as the wall of a house. It stood at several paces from the trees in front, so that it seemed nobody could pass from them to its summit. Along the steeps to the right and left of it rose a thick undergrowth of young trees, filled up with thorny and interwoven vines, of that species which we call *unas de Gato*, or cat's-claws, and which formed an impenetrable barrier, stretching to a great distance on either hand, and without any opening through which the outlaw could have passed with his captive. Somebody suggested that, as one of the trees was easily climbed, he might have concealed himself among the leaves and boughs of its top. A *montero* immediately sprang into it, ascended out of sight among the foliage, and called out to those below that there was no living thing in the tree but himself. They now became convinced that the hound had been misled by a false scent, and some proposed to go back to the place where the Indian's horse was found lying, and let slip another dog upon his track. As for *Aguarda*, it is scarcely possible to describe his chagrin at being thus cruelly disap-

pointed when he thought himself just upon the point of rescuing from a dreadful fate the being he most loved. 'The cur shall never deceive anybody else in this manner,' said he, and levelled his musket to blow out the creature's brains, when one of his companions held his arm, and pointed to where the *montero*, who had descended half-way down the tree, began to walk along one of its branches that bent with his weight to a horizontal position, until, coming to the summit of the perpendicular rock, at the foot of which the whole party stood, he leaped upon the top of it. The mystery was now cleared up. It was evident to all that the savage had climbed the tree with his prize and passed along the branches to the precipice before them. Aguarda caught the poor animal whose life he was just about to take and caressed it in a transport of joy.

"The *monteros* drew their *machetes*, the sharp broadswords which they usually carry about with them, and proceeded to cut a passage through the thorny and tangled fence of creeping vines on the side where it seemed thinnest and most pervious. This they did with great dexterity and quickness, and in a few minutes had formed a kind of arched passage, through which the company passed by a short circuit to the summit of the precipice. A negro carried thither the hound, and the animal was no sooner put to the ground than he recovered the track of the outlaw, darted off like lightning, and was out of sight. In a few minutes they heard him uttering a sharp and frequent bark, a sure signal that he had found the object of his pursuit. The party rushed forward and soon issued into an open glade in the forest, where the sun came in from above, and a spring welled out from a stony basin and lost itself in thick grass. At the farther end of the glade rose the rocky side of a mountain, seamed obliquely with a *quebrada*, or deep ravine. The savage was seen retreating to a huge rock of stone at the foot of the mountain, while the dog was running round him in swift circles, and barking incessantly. You know, perhaps, that it is impossible for the runaways of our island to kill one of those nimble and quick-sighted animals

without the advantage of a rock at their back. The savage, as soon as he saw his pursuers, took to flight. He sprang up the side of the mountain and disappeared over the ravine amid a shower of balls. The fierce dogs, heretofore kept in leashes, were let slip after him, but they were soon stopped by precipices which they did not venture to descend.

"The first thought of Aguarda was to look for Anita de Pereira. She was found gagged with one of her own handkerchiefs, her delicate arms pinioned, and one of them tied fast to a tree in the edge of the glade, where the savage had secured her until he could kill the dog that was giving his enemies notice of his retreat. Her lover cut the cords by which she was bound, and received her thanks and tears in his bosom. That night was a happy one at the house of old Pereira, and the event of that day hastened, by a fortnight at least, the ceremony that crowned the wishes of Aguarda. This escape of the bandit seemed to embolden him in the commission of his atrocities. I have heard many people express the opinion that all the murders, burnings, and destruction of herds committed by him and his companions during the whole time they remained in the *Vuelta Abajo* did not equal those committed by this man alone in the *Vuelta Arriba*. In addition to the price set by government upon his head, the proprietors of different *haciendas* in the island, abandoned through fear of him, offered large rewards for his death or apprehension.

"Yet this man, in the midst of his hatred of the people of the island, and the bloody deeds with which he gratified his thirst for revenge, seems to have still felt some of those natural sympathies which attach us to our race, and to have yearned after the pleasure of seeing a human face, and hearing a human voice, in peace and kindness. A short time after the adventure of Anita de Pereira he stole a little child, a daughter of a *balmer* who lived in a small hamlet between San Lorenzo and La Calidad. He kept her with him several months, treating her with great kindness, feeding her



with the abundant wild fruits of the country, and with the flesh of cattle which he slew on the *haciendas*. After several attempts she was at length taken from him, but not until she had contracted a strong attachment for Taito Perico, as he had taught her to call him.

"In the rescue of the little girl the savage was wounded in the thigh, a circumstance which, though it increased his shyness, did not diminish his ferocity. A little more than seven months after his first appearance in the *Vuelta Arriba*, a company of about thirty children, from the inland city of Puerto Principe, went out to gather the wild fruit we call *marañones*, in the fields a little more than two miles distant from the town. It was then the month of June, and the fruit hung in its golden and ruddy ripeness on the low shrubs, which, mingled with others of different species, overspread a considerable tract of land. Among the children was a fine boy, about eight years of age, named José Maria de Rodriguez. They were all busily engaged in plucking the fruit, in discovering the places where it grew in the greatest abundance, and in jostling each other away from it when discovered, and the air rung with their cheerful voices and innocent laughter. All at once one of them screamed out, 'El Indio! el Indio!' and the troop scattered off like a flock of paroquets at the discharge of a gun. José Maria stood near a clump of bushes, and, thinking they afforded him sufficient concealment, crouched under them close to the ground. The savage, as ill luck would have it, rode to the spot where the boy lay trembling and powerless with fear, and, observing him, checked his horse, stooped toward him, took him up by one arm, and, placing him on the animal before him, rode off to the woods.

"The mother of José Maria was a widow lady of distinction in Puerto Principe; he was her only son, and she was frantic at his loss. Her brother, Don Agostin Arias—who, I remember, was at that time an officer of the militia of Cuba, a gentleman of the true stamp, and of that courage which shows itself not in words but in deeds—came to her

house opposite the church of La Soledad, comforted her by representing that the Indian had not hitherto shown any disposition to destroy his captive, and pledged himself to restore her child. On the first day all endeavors to discover the track of the robber was fruitless. On the third, however, news was brought that he had been several times seen on the sides of the mountain which then went by the name of Loma de Cubitas, whose conical summit, clothed with lofty woods to its highest peak, is seen at a distance of eight leagues from Puerto Principe. Arias immediately gave notice to an acquaintance of the name of Cespedes, a *valenton*, as we call those men who plume themselves upon the possession of extraordinary valor, and who had offered to accompany him in his undertaking to rescue the child. They set off on horseback, armed with guns and pistols, taking with them a negro who carried a weapon of the kind we call a *desjarretadera*, a steel blade in the form of a crescent, fixed in a long handle like that of a lance, and used to hamstring the wild and furious animals of the herds. They arrived at the mountain of Cubitas, and, after penetrating a little way into the old woods on its breast, dismounted, gave their horses in charge to the negro, and separated in search of the child-stealer, with an agreement that he who first heard the report of the other's gun should immediately come to his assistance. Arias had not proceeded far when he heard Cespedes discharge his piece, whether by accident, as he afterward alleged, in springing over the channel of the brook, or whether it was that his valorous soul was assailed by the ignoble passion of fear, I can not say, but the people of Puerto Principe were uncharitable enough to believe the latter. Arias turned immediately, when, as if by a miracle, he saw his nephew near him, almost at his side, sitting against the trunk of a tree, his feet bare, torn with thorns, and covered with blood.

"Arias checked the half-uttered exclamation that rose to the lips of the boy, and ordered him to show him where the Indian was. He pointed up the mountain, and Arias

proceeded as cautiously and as softly as possible in that direction. He soon beheld him, apparently just risen from his seat on the ground. Alarmed, doubtlessly, by the report of the gun, and still more by the noise made by the steps of Arias, he turned his face in that direction. He saw his enemy with his musket levelled—but he saw no more, for Arias fired at that instant, and the savage fell to the ground. He did not, however, let go his weapon, and, in the agony and weakness of dissolution, still seemed striving to collect his strength that he might not die passively and unavenged, and, lying as he did on the slope of the mountain, with his feet toward its base, he grasped his lance in both his hands and held it before him, pointed toward his slayer. Cespedes and the negro came up to him almost at the same moment with Arias. The former valiantly sent another ball through him with one of his pistols, and the latter gave him a stroke on the face with his houghing-knife—but he had already received his death-wound. It was now the hour of five in the afternoon. They laid the dead body on the back of the horse which the negro had ridden, left the mountain, which has ever since borne the name of Loma del Indio, in memory of the exploits of Arias, and returned to Puerto Principe, whither they arrived at ten in the evening. The body was exposed in the principal square of the city. Multitudes, of all ages, sexes, and ranks, carrying lanterns, torches, and candles, crowded to look at it, and the day broke before all the spectators had dispersed. I was then in Puerto Principe, and was drawn by the general curiosity to witness the spectacle. I shall never forget St. Anthony's day—the day on which the Indian was killed—the thirteenth of June, I believe, in the year 1807; and the impression that sight made upon me still remains as vivid as on that night. The slain was a youth, it might be, of nineteen years, of low stature, but of the marks of great strength. Shoulders of uncommon breadth, a large head, covered with coal-black hair closely shredded, round, prominent, and glaring eyes, high-arched

eyebrows, a hooked nose, a brawny neck, large, muscular arms and legs, feet and hands as delicately formed as those of the ladies of our own nation—such is the picture of his person. He had on a pair of short, loose trousers, and wore a cord passing through the wound in his thigh as a kind of seton, an expedient suggested, probably, by the rude surgery of his native country. As the mingled crowd stooped over the body to examine it, I remember well the expression of awe that stole over their features, and the subdued tones in which they spoke to each other, and the fuller or fainter light thrown upon the dark face and glassy eyes of the dead, as they approached and retired. Before I withdrew I saw the body nearly covered with drops of wax and tallow from the multitude of lights that had been held over it.

“The next day the boy José Maria and the little girl I have before mentioned were examined before a judicial tribunal to identify the person of the slain, and to justify Arias in putting him to death. The examination was satisfactory, and the body was ordered to be hung in the public square, and to be drawn and quartered. A gibbet was erected, but, while the ceremony of suspension was performing, the pulley by which the body was raised gave way suddenly, and it fell to the ground. The multitudes, who were not yet cured of the superstitious belief of the connection of the Indian with the powers of darkness, recoiled with shrieks and groans, and fell in heaps upon each other.

“A second attempt was made, with better success. The body was afterward dragged at the heels of a horse to a field without the city, where it was dismembered. The trunk was buried in the earth, the hands and legs set up in the public ways, and the head enclosed in an iron cage and fixed upon a pole in the neighboring village of Tanima, and the country delivered forever from the fear of one who had made such waste of human life.

“José Maria de Rodriguez is now an ecclesiastic of note in

Puerto Principe, and curate of the church of La Soledad. I ought not to conceal from you that many suppose that the Indians who for three years committed such frightful ravages were of the tribe of Guachmangos, a fierce, untamable nation of Mexico, and that by some unknown means they had found their way to the island. I know not that there is any other reason for this belief than their fierceness, but I know that there is no other way of accounting for what became of those three savages from Florida than by supposing them to have been the ravagers in question."

Here ends the story of my host of the coffee plantation. It is strange enough in some of its particulars—almost to a degree of incredibility—but it rests not on the credit of my host alone. It was confirmed to me by many other inhabitants of the island, and in its substantial particulars is matter of history.

## III.

## COMMEMORATIVE DISCOURSES.