

Part 1
THE GIANT RAFT

Chapter 1

A CAPTAIN OF THE WOODS

*"Phyjslyddqfdzxgasgzq qehxgkfn drxu jugl ocytdxvk
sbxhhuypohdvyrymhuhpuydkjoxphetozlsletn p m vffo
vpdpajxhyyno jyggaymeqynfuqlnmvlyfgsuzmqIztlbq
qyugsqeubvnrc redgruzblrmxyuhqhpzdr rgcrohepqxu
fIvvrplphonthvddqfhqsntzhhhnfepmqkyuuexktogzgk
yuumfvIjddqdpzjqsykrplxhxqrymvkloh hhotozvdksp ps
uvjhd."*

THE MAN who held in his hand the document of which this strange assemblage of letters formed the concluding paragraph remained for some moments lost in thought.

It contained about a hundred of these lines, with the letters at even distances, and undivided into words. It seemed to have been written many years before, and time had already laid his tawny finger on the sheet of good stout paper which was covered with the hieroglyphics.

On what principle had these letters been arranged? He who held the paper was alone able to tell. With such cipher language it is as with the locks of some of our iron safes—in either case the protection is the same. The combinations which they lead to can be counted by millions, and no calculator's life would suffice to express them. Some particular "word" has to be known before the lock of the safe will act, and some "cipher" is necessary before that cryptogram can be read.

He who had just reperused the document was but a simple "captain of the woods." Under the name of "*Capitães do Mato*" are known in Brazil those individuals who are engaged in the recapture of fugitive slaves. The institution dates from 1722. At that period anti-slavery ideas had entered the minds of a few philanthropists, and more than a century had to elapse before the mass of the people grasped and applied them. That freedom was a right, that the very first of the natural rights of man was to be free and to belong only to himself, would seem to be self-evident,

and yet thousands of years had to pass before the glorious thought was generally accepted, and the nations of the earth had the courage to proclaim it.

In 1852, the year in which our story opens, there were still slaves in Brazil, and as a natural consequence, captains of the woods to pursue them. For certain reasons of political economy the hour of general emancipation had been delayed, but the black had at this date the right to ransom himself, the children which were born to him were born free. The day was not far distant when the magnificent country, into which could be put three-quarters of the continent of Europe, would no longer count a single slave among its ten millions of inhabitants.

The occupation of the captains of the woods was doomed, and at the period we speak of the advantages obtainable from the capture of fugitives were rapidly diminishing. While, however, the calling continued sufficiently profitable, the captains of the woods formed a peculiar class of adventurers, principally composed of freedmen and deserters—of not very enviable reputation. The slave hunters in fact belonged to the dregs of society, and we shall not be far wrong in assuming that the man with the cryptogram was a fitting comrade for his fellow "*capitães do mato*." Torres—for that was his name—unlike the majority of his companions, was neither half-breed, Indian, nor negro. He was a white of Brazilian origin, and had received a better education than befitted his present condition. One of those unclassed men who are found so frequently in the distant countries of the New World, at a time when the Brazilian law still excluded mulattoes and others of mixed blood from certain employments, it was evident that if such exclusion had affected him, it had done so on account of his worthless character, and not because of his birth.

Torres at the present moment was not, however, in Brazil. He had just passed the frontier, and was wandering in the forests of Peru, from which issue the waters of the Upper Amazon.

He was a man of about thirty years of age, on whom the fatigues of a precarious existence seemed, thanks to an exceptional temperament and an iron constitution, to have had no effect. Of middle height, broad shoulders, regular features, and decided gait, his face was tanned with the scorching air of the tropics. He had a thick black beard, and eyes lost under contracting eyebrows, giving that swift but hard glance so characteristic of insolent natures. Clothed as backwoodsmen are generally clothed, not over elaborately, his garments bore witness to long and roughish wear. On his head, stuck jauntily on one side, was a leather hat with a large brim. Trousers he had of coarse wool, which were tucked

into the tops of the thick, heavy boots which formed the most substantial part of his attire, and over all, and hiding all, was a faded yellowish poncho.

But if Torres was a captain of the woods it was evident that he was not now employed in that capacity, his means of attack and defense being obviously insufficient for any one engaged in the pursuit of the blacks. No firearms—neither gun nor revolver. In his belt only one of those weapons, more sword than hunting-knife, called a "*manchetta*," and in addition he had an "*enchada*," which is a sort of hoe, specially employed in the pursuit of the tatous and agoutis which abound in the forests of the Upper Amazon, where there is generally little to fear from wild beasts.

On the 4th of May, 1852, it happened, then, that our adventurer was deeply absorbed in the reading of the document on which his eyes were fixed, and, accustomed as he was to live in the forests of South America, he was perfectly indifferent to their splendors. Nothing could distract his attention; neither the constant cry of the howling monkeys, which St. Hillaire has graphically compared to the ax of the woodman as he strikes the branches of the trees, nor the sharp jingle of the rings of the rattlesnake (not an aggressive reptile, it is true, but one of the most venomous); neither the bawling voice of the horned toad, the most hideous of its kind, nor even the solemn and sonorous croak of the bel-lowing frog, which, though it cannot equal the bull in size, can surpass him in noise.

Torres heard nothing of all these sounds, which form, as it were, the complex voice of the forests of the New World. Reclining at the foot of a magnificent tree, he did not even admire the lofty boughs of that "*pao ferro*," or iron wood, with its somber bark, hard as the metal which it replaces in the weapon and utensil of the Indian savage. No. Lost in thought, the captain of the woods turned the curious paper again and again between his fingers. With the cipher, of which he had the secret, he assigned to each letter its true value. He read, he verified the sense of those lines, unintelligible to all but him, and then he smiled—and a most unpleasant smile it was.

Then he murmured some phrases in an undertone which none in the solitude of the Peruvian forests could hear, and which no one, had he been anywhere else, would have heard.

"Yes," said he, at length, "here are a hundred lines very neatly written, which, for some one that I know, have an importance that is undoubted. That somebody is rich. It is a question of life or death for him, and

looked at in every way it will cost him something." And, scrutinizing the paper with greedy eyes, "At a conto ¹ only for each word of this last sentence it will amount to a considerable sum, and it is this sentence which fixes the price. It sums up the entire document. It gives their true names to true personages; but before trying to understand it I ought to begin by counting the number of words it contains, and even when this is done its true meaning may be missed."

In saying this Torres began to count mentally.

"There are fifty-eight words, and that makes fifty-eight contos. With nothing but that one could live in Brazil, in America, wherever one wished, and even live without doing anything! And what would it be, then, if all the words of this document were paid for at the same price? It would be necessary to count by hundreds of contos. Ah! there is quite a fortune here for me to realize if I am not the greatest of duffers!"

It seemed as though the hands of Torres felt the enormous sum, and were already closing over the rolls of gold. Suddenly his thoughts took another turn.

"At length," he cried, "I see land; and I do not regret the voyage which has led me from the coast of the Atlantic to the Upper Amazon. But this man may quit America and go beyond the seas, and then how can I touch him? But no! he is there, and if I climb to the top of this tree I can see the roof under which he lives with his family!" Then seizing the paper and shaking it with terrible meaning: "Before to-morrow I will be in his presence; before to-morrow he will know that his honor and his life are contained in these lines. And when he wishes to see the cipher which permits him to read them, he—well, he will pay for it. He will pay, if I wish it, with all his fortune, as he ought to pay with all his blood! Ah! My worthy comrade, who gave me this cipher, who told me where I could find his old colleague, and the name under which he has been hiding himself for so many years, hardly suspects that he has made my fortune!"

For the last time Torres glanced over the yellow paper, and then, after carefully folding it, put it away into a little copper box which he used for a purse. This box was about as big as a cigar case, and if what was in it was all Torres possessed he would nowhere have been considered a wealthy man. He had a few of all the coins of the neighboring States—ten double-condors in gold of the United States of Colombia, worth about a hundred francs; Brazilian reis, worth about as much;

1. One thousand reis are equal to three francs, and a conto of reis is worth three thousand francs.

golden sols of Peru, worth, say, double; some Chilian escudos, worth fifty francs or more, and some smaller coins; but the lot would not amount to more than five hundred francs, and Torres would have been somewhat embarrassed had he been asked how or where he had got them. One thing was certain, that for some months, after having suddenly abandoned the trade of the slave hunter, which he carried on in the province of Para, Torres had ascended the basin of the Amazon, crossed the Brazilian frontier, and come into Peruvian territory. To such a man the necessaries of life were but few; expenses he had none—nothing for his lodging, nothing for his clothes. The forest provided his food, which in the backwoods cost him naught. A few reis were enough for his tobacco, which he bought at the mission stations or in the villages, and for a trifle more he filled his flask with liquor. With little he could go far.

When he had pushed the paper into the metal box, of which the lid shut tightly with a snap, Torres, instead of putting it into the pocket of his under-vest, thought to be extra careful, and placed it near him in a hollow of a root of the tree beneath which he was sitting. This proceeding, as it turned out, might have cost him dear.

It was very warm; the air was oppressive. If the church of the nearest village had possessed a clock, the clock would have struck two, and, coming with the wind, Torres would have heard it, for it was not more than a couple of miles off. But he cared not as to time. Accustomed to regulate his proceedings by the height of the sun, calculated with more or less accuracy, he could scarcely be supposed to conduct himself with military precision. He breakfasted or dined when he pleased or when he could; he slept when and where sleep overtook him. If his table was not always spread, his bed was always ready at the foot of some tree in the open forest. And in other respects Torres was not difficult to please. He had traveled during most of the morning, and having already eaten a little, he began to feel the want of a snooze. Two or three hours' rest would, he thought, put him in a state to continue his road, and so he laid himself down on the grass as comfortably as he could, and waited for sleep beneath the ironwood-tree.

Torres was not one of those people who drop off to sleep without certain preliminaries. HE was in the habit of drinking a drop or two of strong liquor, and of then smoking a pipe; the spirits, he said, overexcited the brain, and the tobacco smoke agreeably mingled with the general haziness of his reverie.

Torres commenced, then, by applying to his lips a flask which he carried at his side; it contained the liquor generally known under the name of "*chica*" in Peru, and more particularly under that of "*caysuma*" in the Upper Amazon, to which fermented distillation of the root of the sweet manioc the captain had added a good dose of "*tafia*" or native rum.

When Torres had drunk a little of this mixture he shook the flask, and discovered, not without regret, that it was nearly empty.

"Must get some more," he said very quietly.

Then taking out a short wooden pipe, he filled it with the coarse and bitter tobacco of Brazil, of which the leaves belong to that old "*petun*" introduced into France by Nicot, to whom we owe the popularization of the most productive and widespread of the solanaceae.

This native tobacco had little in common with the fine qualities of our present manufacturers; but Torres was not more difficult to please in this matter than in others, and so, having filled his pipe, he struck a match and applied the flame to a piece of that stick substance which is the secretion of certain of the hymenoptera, and is known as "ants' amadou." With the amadou he lighted up, and after about a dozen whiffs his eyes closed, his pipe escaped from his fingers, and he fell asleep.

Chapter 2

ROBBER AND ROBBED

TORRES SLEPT for about half an hour, and then there was a noise among the trees—a sound of light footsteps, as though some visitor was walking with naked feet, and taking all the precaution he could lest he should be heard. To have put himself on guard against any suspicious approach would have been the first care of our adventurer had his eyes been open at the time. But he had not then awoken, and what advanced was able to arrive in his presence, at ten paces from the tree, without being perceived.

It was not a man at all, it was a "guariba."

Of all the prehensile-tailed monkeys which haunt the forests of the Upper Amazon—graceful sahuis, horned sapajous, gray-coated monos, sagouins which seem to wear a mask on their grimacing faces—the guariba is without doubt the most eccentric. Of sociable disposition, and not very savage, differing therein very greatly from the mucura, who is as ferocious as he is foul, he delights in company, and generally travels in troops. It was he whose presence had been signaled from afar by the monotonous concert of voices, so like the psalm-singing of some church choir. But if nature has not made him vicious, it is none the less necessary to attack him with caution, and under any circumstances a sleeping traveler ought not to leave himself exposed, lest a guariba should surprise him when he is not in a position to defend himself.

This monkey, which is also known in Brazil as the "barbado," was of large size. The suppleness and stoutness of his limbs proclaimed him a powerful creature, as fit to fight on the ground as to leap from branch to branch at the tops of the giants of the forest.

He advanced then cautiously, and with short steps. He glanced to the right and to the left, and rapidly swung his tail. To these representatives of the monkey tribe nature has not been content to give four hands—she has shown herself more generous, and added a fifth, for the extremity of their caudal appendage possesses a perfect power of prehension.

The guariba noiselessly approached, brandishing a sturdy cudgel, which, wielded by his muscular arm, would have proved a formidable weapon. For some minutes he had seen the man at the foot of the tree, but the sleeper did not move, and this doubtless induced him to come and look at him a little nearer. He came forward then, not without hesitation, and stopped at last about three paces off.

On his bearded face was pictured a grin, which showed his sharp-edged teeth, white as ivory, and the cudgel began to move about in a way that was not very reassuring for the captain of the woods.

Unmistakably the sight of Torres did not inspire the guariba with friendly thoughts. Had he then particular reasons for wishing evil to this defenseless specimen of the human race which chance had delivered over to him? Perhaps! We know how certain animals retain the memory of the bad treatment they have received, and it is possible that against backwoodsmen in general he bore some special grudge.

In fact Indians especially make more fuss about the monkey than any other kind of game, and, no matter to what species it belongs, follow its chase with the ardor of Nimrods, not only for the pleasure of hunting it, but for the pleasure of eating it.

Whatever it was, the guariba did not seem disinclined to change characters this time, and if he did not quite forget that nature had made him but a simple herbivore, and longed to devour the captain of the woods, he seemed at least to have made up his mind to get rid of one of his natural enemies.

After looking at him for some minutes the guariba began to move round the tree. He stepped slowly, holding his breath, and getting nearer and nearer. His attitude was threatening, his countenance ferocious. Nothing could have seemed easier to him than to have crushed this motionless man at a single blow, and assuredly at that moment the life of Torres hung by a thread.

In truth, the guariba stopped a second time close up to the tree, placed himself at the side, so as to command the head of the sleeper, and lifted his stick to give the blow.

But if Torres had been imprudent in putting near him in the crevice of the root the little case which contained his document and his fortune, it was this imprudence which saved his life.

A sunbeam shooting between the branches just glinted on the case, the polished metal of which lighted up like a looking-glass. The monkey, with the frivolity peculiar to his species, instantly had his attention distracted. His ideas, if such an animal could have ideas, took another

direction. He stopped, caught hold of the case, jumped back a pace or two, and, raising it to the level of his eyes, looked at it not without surprise as he moved it about and used it like a mirror. He was if anything still more astonished when he heard the rattle of the gold pieces it contained. The music enchanted him. It was like a rattle in the hands of a child. He carried it to his mouth, and his teeth grated against the metal, but made no impression on it.

Doubtless the guariba thought he had found some fruit of a new kind, a sort of huge almost brilliant all over, and with a kernel playing freely in its shell. But if he soon discovered his mistake he did not consider it a reason for throwing the case away; on the contrary, he grasped it more tightly in his left hand, and dropped the cudgel, which broke off a dry twig in its fall.

At this noise Torres woke, and with the quickness of those who are always on the watch, with whom there is no transition from the sleeping to the waking state, was immediately on his legs.

In an instant Torres had recognized with whom he had to deal.

"A guariba!" he cried.

And his hand seizing his manchetta, he put himself into a posture of defense.

The monkey, alarmed, jumped back at once, and not so brave before a waking man as a sleeping one, performed a rapid caper, and glided under the trees.

"It was time!" said Torres; "the rogue would have settled me without any ceremony!"

Of a sudden, between the hands of the monkey, who had stopped at about twenty paces, and was watching him with violent grimaces, as if he would like to snap his fingers at him, he caught sight of his precious case.

"The beggar!" he said. "If he has not killed me, he has done what is almost as bad. He has robbed me!"

The thought that the case held his money was not however, what then concerned him. But that which made him jump was the recollection that it contained the precious document, the loss of which was irreparable, as it carried with it that of all his hopes.

"Botheration!" said he.

And at the moment, cost what it might to recapture his case, Torres threw himself in pursuit of the guariba.

He knew that to reach such an active animal was not easy. On the ground he could get away too fast, in the branches he could get away too

far. A well-aimed gunshot could alone stop him as he ran or climbed, but Torres possessed no firearm. His sword-knife and hoe were useless unless he could get near enough to hit him.

It soon became evident that the monkey could not be reached unless by surprise. Hence Torres found it necessary to employ cunning in dealing with the mischievous animal. To stop, to hide himself behind some tree trunk, to disappear under a bush, might induce the guariba to pull up and retrace his steps, and there was nothing else for Torres to try. This was what he did, and the pursuit commenced under these conditions; but when the captain of the woods disappeared, the monkey patiently waited until he came into sight again, and at this game Torres fatigued himself without result.

"Confound the guariba!" he shouted at length. "There will be no end to this, and he will lead me back to the Brazilian frontier. If only he would let go of my case! But no! The jingling of the money amuses him. Oh, you thief! If I could only get hold of you!"

And Torres recommenced the pursuit, and the monkey scuttled off with renewed vigor.

An hour passed in this way without any result. Torres showed a persistence which was quite natural. How without this document could he get his money?

And then anger seized him. He swore, he stamped, he threatened the guariba. That annoying animal only responded by a chuckling which was enough to put him beside himself.

And then Torres gave himself up to the chase. He ran at top speed, entangling himself in the high undergrowth, among those thick brambles and interlacing creepers, across which the guariba passed like a steeple-chaser. Big roots hidden beneath the grass lay often in the way. He stumbled over them and again started in pursuit. At length, to his astonishment, he found himself shouting:

"Come here! come here! you robber!" as if he could make him understand him.

His strength gave out, breath failed him, and he was obliged to stop. "Confound it!" said he, "when I am after runaway slaves across the jungle they never give me such trouble as this! But I will have you, you wretched monkey! I will go, yes, I will go as far as my legs will carry me, and we shall see!"

The guariba had remained motionless when he saw that the adventurer had ceased to pursue him. He rested also, for he had nearly

reached that degree of exhaustion which had forbidden all movement on the part of Torres.

He remained like this during ten minutes, nibbling away at two or three roots, which he picked off the ground, and from time to time he rattled the case at his ear.

Torres, driven to distraction, picked up the stones within his reach, and threw them at him, but did no harm at such a distance.

But he hesitated to make a fresh start. On one hand, to keep on in chase of the monkey with so little chance of reaching him was madness. On the other, to accept as definite this accidental interruption to all his plans, to be not only conquered, but cheated and hoaxed by a dumb animal, was maddening. And in the meantime Torres had begun to think that when the night came the robber would disappear without trouble, and he, the robbed one, would find a difficulty in retracing his way through the dense forest. In fact, the pursuit had taken him many miles from the bank of the river, and he would even now find it difficult to return to it.

Torres hesitated; he tried to resume his thoughts with coolness, and finally, after giving vent to a last imprecation, he was about to abandon all idea of regaining possession of his case, when once more, in spite of himself, there flashed across him the thought of his document, the remembrance of all that scaffolding on which his future hopes depended, on which he had counted so much; and he resolved to make another effort.

Then he got up.

The guariba got up too.

He made several steps in advance.

The monkey made as many in the rear, but this time, instead of plunging more deeply into the forest, he stopped at the foot of an enormous ficus—the tree of which the different kinds are so numerous all over the Upper Amazon basin.

To seize the trunk with his four hands, to climb with the agility of a clown who is acting the monkey, to hook on with his prehensile tail to the first branches, which stretched away horizontally at forty feet from the ground, and to hoist himself to the top of the tree, to the point where the higher branches just bent beneath its weight, was only sport to the active guariba, and the work of but a few seconds.

Up there, installed at his ease, he resumed his interrupted repast, and gathered the fruits which were within his reach. Torres, like him, was much in want of something to eat and drink, but it was impossible! His pouch was flat, his flask was empty.

However, instead of retracing his steps he directed them toward the tree, although the position taken up by the monkey was still more unfavorable for him. He could not dream for one instant of climbing the ficus, which the thief would have quickly abandoned for another.

And all the time the miserable case rattled at his ear.

Then in his fury, in his folly, Torres apostrophized the guariba. It would be impossible for us to tell the series of invectives in which he indulged. Not only did he call him a half-breed, which is the greatest of insults in the mouth of a Brazilian of white descent, but "*curiboca*"—that is to say, half-breed negro and Indian, and of all the insults that one man can hurl at another in this equatorial latitude "*curiboca*" is the cruelest.

But the monkey, who was only a humble quadruman, was simply amused at what would have revolted a representative of humanity.

Then Torres began to throw stones at him again, and bits of roots and everything he could get hold of that would do for a missile. Had he the hope to seriously hurt the monkey? No! he no longer knew what he was about. To tell the truth, anger at his powerlessness had deprived him of his wits. Perhaps he hoped that in one of the movements which the guariba would make in passing from branch to branch the case might escape him, perhaps he thought that if he continued to worry the monkey he might throw it at his head. But no! the monkey did not part with the case, and, holding it with one hand, he had still three left with which to move.

Torres, in despair, was just about to abandon the chase for good, and to return toward the Amazon, when he heard the sound of voices. Yes! the sound of human voices.

Those were speaking at about twenty paces to the right of him.

The first care of Torres was to hide himself in a dense thicket. Like a prudent man, he did not wish to show himself without at least knowing with whom he might have to deal. Panting, puzzled, his ears on the stretch, he waited, when suddenly the sharp report of a gun rang through the woods.

A cry followed, and the monkey, mortally wounded, fell heavily on the ground, still holding Torres' case.

"By Jove!" he muttered, "that bullet came at the right time!"

And then, without fearing to be seen, he came out of the thicket, and two young gentlemen appeared from under the trees.

They were Brazilians clothed as hunters, with leather boots, light palm-leaf hats, waistcoats, or rather tunics, buckled in at the waist, and

more convenient than the national poncho. By their features and their complexion they were at once recognizable as of Portuguese descent.

Each of them was armed with one of those long guns of Spanish make which slightly remind us of the arms of the Arabs, guns of long range and considerable precision, which the dwellers in the forest of the upper Amazon handle with success.

What had just happened was a proof of this. At an angular distance of more than eighty paces the quadruman had been shot full in the head.

The two young men carried in addition, in their belts, a sort of dagger-knife, which is known in Brazil as a "*foca*," and which hunters do not hesitate to use when attacking the ounce and other wild animals which, if not very formidable, are pretty numerous in these forests.

Torres had obviously little to fear from this meeting, and so he went on running toward the monkey's corpse.

But the young men, who were taking the same direction, had less ground to cover, and coming forward a few paces, found themselves face to face with Torres.

The latter had recovered his presence of mind.

"Many thanks, gentlemen," said he gayly, as he raised the brim of his hat; "in killing this wretched animal you have just done me a great service!"

The hunters looked at him inquiringly, not knowing what value to attach to his thanks.

Torres explained matters in a few words.

"You thought you had killed a monkey," said he, "but as it happens you have killed a thief!"

"If we have been of use to you," said the youngest of the two, "it was by accident, but we are none the less pleased to find that we have done some good."

And taking several steps to the rear, he bent over the guariba, and, not without an effort, withdrew the case from his stiffened hand.

"Doubtless that, sir, is what belongs to you?"

"The very thing," said Torres briskly, catching hold of the case and failing to repress a huge sigh of relief.

"Whom ought I to thank, gentlemen," said he, "for the service you have rendered me?"

"My friend, Manoel, assistant surgeon, Brazilian army," replied the young man.

"If it was I who shot the monkey, Benito," said Manoel, "it was you that pointed him out to me."

"In that case, sirs," replied Torres, "I am under an obligation to you both, as well to you, Mr. Manoel, as to you, Mr. ——"

"Benito Garral," replied Manoel.

The captain of the woods required great command over himself to avoid giving a jump when he heard this name, and more especially when the young man obligingly continued:

"My father, Joam Garral, has his farm about three miles from here. If you would like, Mr. ——"

"Torres," replied the adventurer.

"If you would like to accompany us there, Mr. Torres, you will be hospitably received."

"I do not know that I can," said Torres, who, surprised by this unexpected meeting, hesitated to make a start. "I fear in truth that I am not able to accept your offer. The occurrence I have just related to you has caused me to lose time. It is necessary for me to return at once to the Amazon—as I purpose descending thence to Para."

"Very well, Mr. Torres," replied Benito, "it is not unlikely that we shall see you again in our travels, for before a month has passed my father and all his family will have taken the same road as you."

"Ah!" said Torres sharply, "your father is thinking of recrossing the Brazilian frontier?"

"Yes, for a voyage of some months," replied Benito. "At least we hope to make him decide so. Don't we, Manoel?"

Manoel nodded affirmatively.

"Well, gentlemen," replied Torres, "it is very probable that we shall meet again on the road. But I cannot, much to my regret, accept your offer now. I thank you, nevertheless, and I consider myself as twice your debtor."

And having said so, Torres saluted the young men, who in turn saluted him, and set out on their way to the farm.

As for Torres he looked after them as they got further and further away, and when he had lost sight of them—

"Ah! he is about to recross the frontier!" said he, with a deep voice. "Let him recross it! and he will be still more at my mercy! Pleasant journey to you, Joam Garral!"

And having uttered these words the captain of the woods, making for the south so as to regain the left bank of the river by the shortest road, disappeared into the dense forest.

Chapter 3

THE GARRAL FAMILY

THE VILLAGE of Iquitos is situated on the left bank of the Amazon, near the seventy-fourth meridian, on that portion of the great river which still bears the name of the Marânon, and of which the bed separates Peru from the republic of Ecuador. It is about fifty-five leagues to the west of the Brazilian frontier.

Iquitos, like every other collection of huts, hamlet, or village met with in the basin of the Upper Amazon, was founded by the missionaries. Up to the seventeenth year of the century the Iquito Indians, who then formed the entire population, were settled in the interior of the province at some distance from the river. But one day the springs in their territory all dried up under the influence of a volcanic eruption, and they were obliged to come and take up their abode on the left of the Marânon. The race soon altered through the alliances which were entered into with the riverine Indians, Ticunas, or Omaguas, mixed descent with a few Spaniards, and to-day Iquitos has a population of two or three families of half-breeds.

The village is most picturesquely grouped on a kind of esplanade, and runs along at about sixty feet from the river. It consists of some forty miserable huts, whose thatched roofs only just render them worthy of the name of cottages. A stairway made of crossed trunks of trees leads up to the village, which lies hidden from the traveler's eyes until the steps have been ascended. Once at the top he finds himself before an inclosure admitting of slight defense, and consisting of many different shrubs and arborescent plants, attached to each other by festoons of lianas, which here and there have made their way above the summits of the graceful palms and banana-trees.

At the time we speak of the Indians of Iquitos went about in almost a state of nudity. The Spaniards and half-breeds alone were clothed, and much as they scorned their indigenous fellow-citizens, wore only a simple shirt, light cotton trousers, and a straw hat. All lived cheerlessly

enough in the village, mixing little together, and if they did meet occasionally, it was only at such times as the bell of the mission called them to the dilapidated cottage which served them for a church.

But if existence in the village of Iquitos, as in most of the hamlets of the Upper Amazon, was almost in a rudimentary stage, it was only necessary to journey a league further down the river to find on the same bank a wealthy settlement, with all the elements of comfortable life.

This was the farm of Joam Garral, toward which our two young friends returned after their meeting with the captain of the woods.

There, on a bend of the stream, at the junction of the River Nanay, which is here about five hundred feet across, there had been established for many years this farm, homestead, or, to use the expression of the country, "*fazenda*," then in the height of its prosperity. The Nanay with its left bank bounded it to the north for about a mile, and for nearly the same distance to the east it ran along the bank of the larger river. To the west some small rivulets, tributaries of the Nanay, and some lagoons of small extent, separated it from the savannah and the fields devoted to the pasturage of the cattle.

It was here that Joam Garral, in 1826, twenty-six years before the date when our story opens, was received by the proprietor of the *fazenda*.

This Portuguese, whose name was Magalhaës, followed the trade of timber-felling, and his settlement, then recently formed, extended for about half a mile along the bank of the river.

There, hospitable as he was, like all the Portuguese of the old race, Magalhaës lived with his daughter Yaquita, who after the death of her mother had taken charge of his household. Magalhaës was an excellent worker, inured to fatigue, but lacking education. If he understood the management of the few slaves whom he owned, and the dozen Indians whom he hired, he showed himself much less apt in the various external requirements of his trade. In truth, the establishment at Iquitos was not prospering, and the affairs of the Portuguese were getting somewhat embarrassed.

It was under these circumstances that Joam Garral, then twenty-two years old, found himself one day in the presence of Magalhaës. He had arrived in the country at the limit both of his strength and his resources. Magalhaës had found him half-dead with hunger and fatigue in the neighboring forest. The Portuguese had an excellent heart; he did not ask the unknown where he came from, but what he wanted. The noble, high-spirited look which Joam Garral bore in spite of his exhaustion had

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