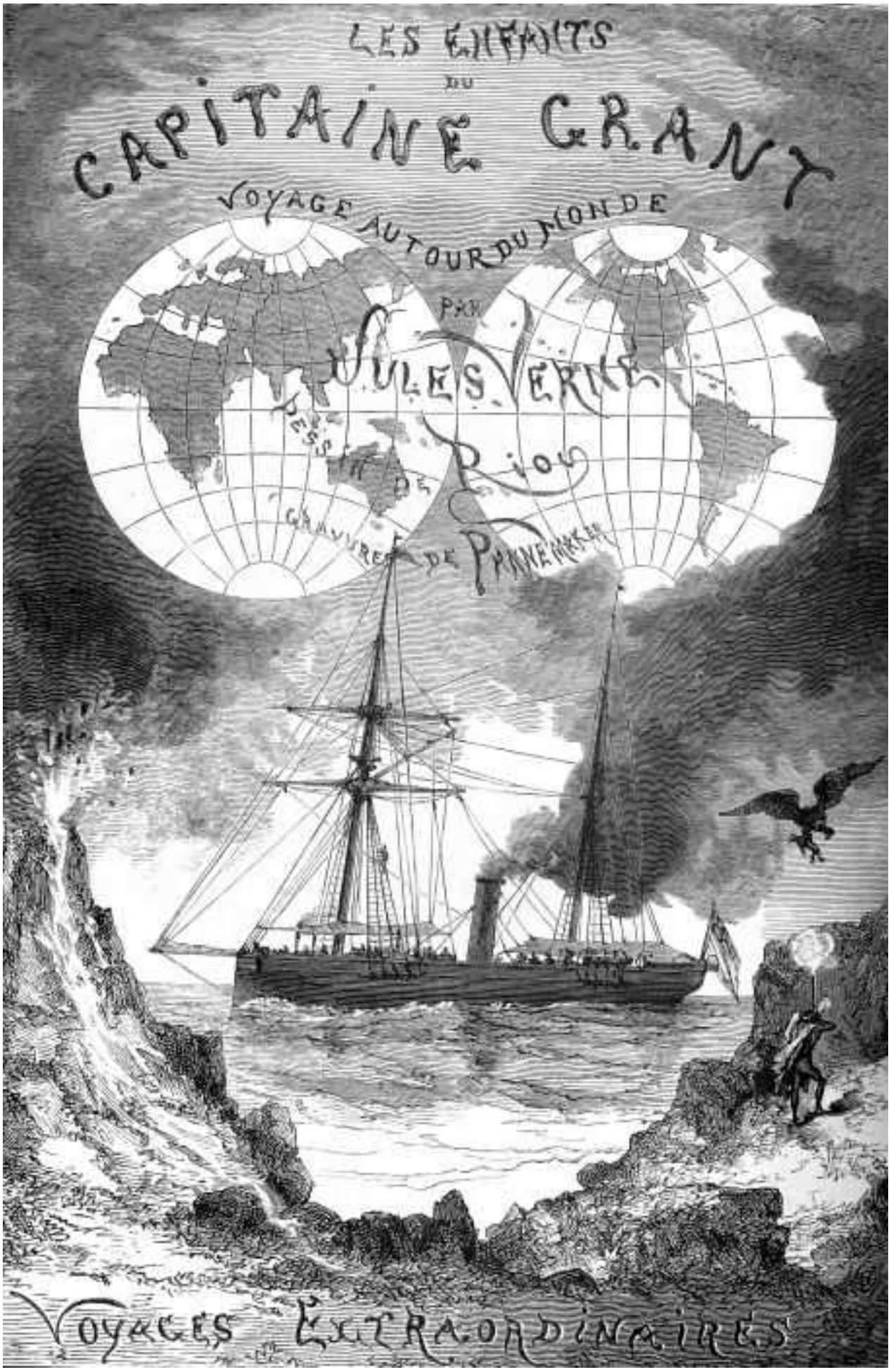
Jules Verne's
The Children of Captain Grant

A Journey Around the World

In Search of the Castaways

Book 1: South America


LES ENFANTS
DU
CAPITAINE GRANT
VOYAGE AUTOUR DU MONDE
PAR
JULES VERNE
DESSINS DE
RIOU
GRAVURES DE
PHILIPPOTEAUX
VOYAGES EXTRAORDINAIRES

The Children of Captain Grant

A Journey Around the World
In Search of the Castaways

An Extraordinary Voyage

by

Jules Verne

Illustrations by

Riou

Maps by

D. A. Sample

Book 1: South America

An Unabridged English Translation © D.A. Sample
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Version History

1.0

March, 2019: Initial public release

1.1

April, 2022: Minor copy editing. Fixed some typos, rephrased some awkward passages, and fixed a few translation issues.

1.1.1

July, 2023: Fixed a few more typos pointed out to me by Ken Stephenson.

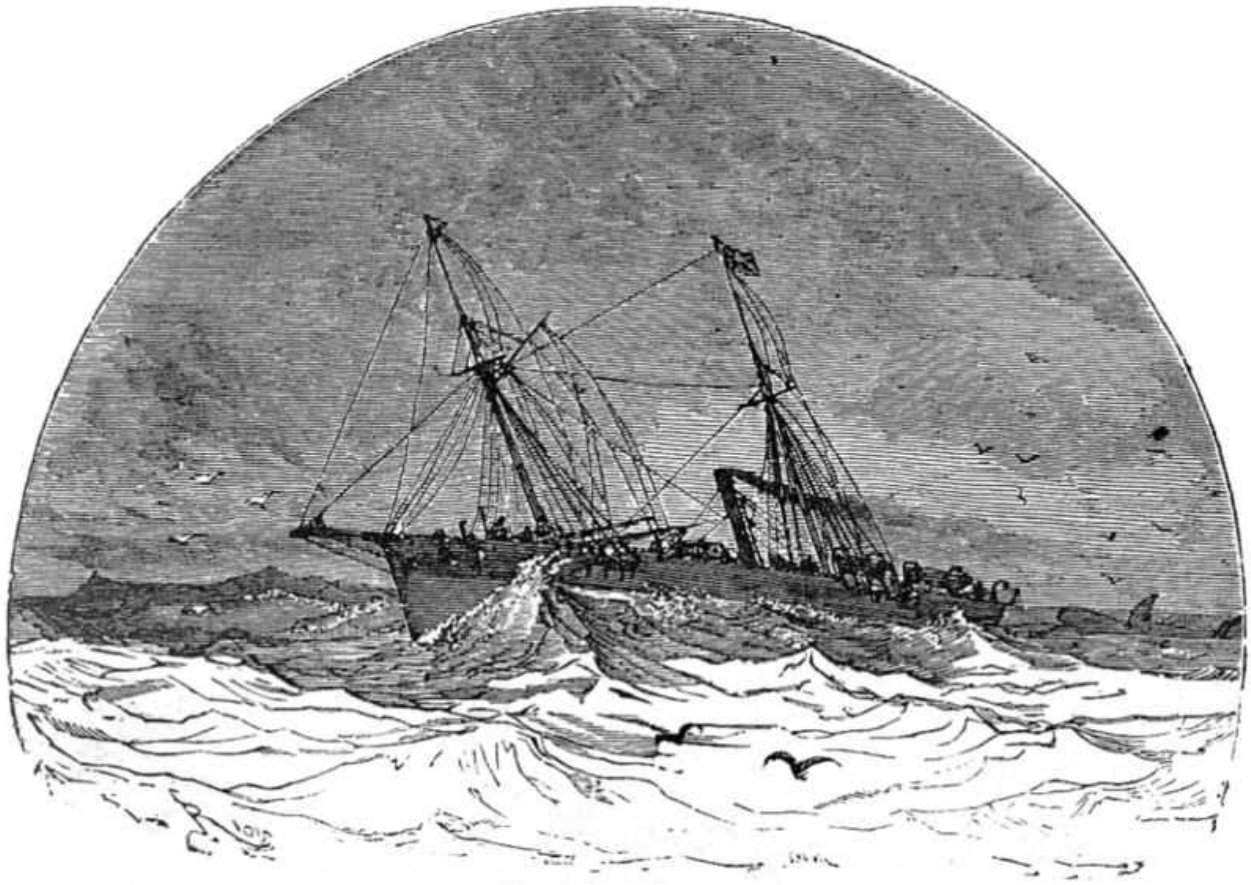
1.1.2

January, 2025: Formatting changes for HC book version, and fixed a few more typos.

1.1.3

September, 2026: Cleaned up some date discrepancies, and fixed a few more typos.

Translator's Notes



I RECENTLY HAD OCCASION TO COMPARE THE USUAL ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS AVAILABLE FOR Jules Verne's *Les enfants du capitaine Grant*, commonly given the English title *In Search of the Castaways*, with its French original. I had heard that the public domain English editions of this book were highly abridged, but I hadn't realized just how bad some of them were.

Entire swathes of text are missing. Much of Verne's description of the wildlife, geography, and history of the places his searchers pass through is completely omitted, and the prose of the text is often stilted and awkwardly phrased. Google Translate often does a better job of producing nicely flowing English prose from the French source.

In Search of the Castaways is generally considered to be the first volume in Jules Verne's *Sea Trilogy*, along with *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Seas*, and *The Mysterious Island*. Those volumes have already had unabridged English translations done for them by F. P. Walter, and Sidney Kravitz. I believe that *In Search of the Castaways* deserved a similar treatment.

I have used multiple sources for this translation, all obtainable from Project Gutenberg, the Internet Archive, or Google Books.

The first, and most important, is the original French text.

The next is the 1877 three volume Routledge edition, scans of which are available in the Internet Archive, and Google Books. The electronic text of these has been

OCRed from the scans, but the first and third volumes don't appear to have had any manual cleanup done on them, and the second volume still has a lot of OCR errors in it.

The volumes are:

1. South America
2. Australia
3. New Zealand

This appears to have been the most complete English translation available, and doesn't suffer from the wholesale cuts that the other translations do. At least it has all the chapters. It's primary failings tend to be in areas describing seamanship, and storms.

The next is the version published in 1874 by J.B.Lippincott & Co. This version has many wholesale cuts, but in the sections that haven't been cut describing sailing, and storms at sea, it tends to be better than the Routledge.

Another English translation is the 1911 version by Charles Francis Horne. This seems to be the most common English version out there (as is evident from its low Gutenberg number) and is usually the top hit that any internet search will get you. This is unfortunate, as this book appears to be a much abridged version of the Routledge edition.

Another important resource for any Jules Verne fan is Zvi Har'El's Jules Verne Collection. This is, among other things, where I got all of the illustrations from the original *Hetzel* edition, that I am including in this book

My French sucks. As a Canadian I have been exposed to it for much of my life and know a few phrases, but I can't pretend be able to carry on any sort of conversation in it, or read anything complicated, so I relied on Google Translate *a lot* when creating this. My basic process is to start with the Google translation from the French original, and then start editing it, cleaning up the prose, and fixing things that it gets wrong, referencing the other English translations where I have difficulties figuring out what the heck Verne was trying to say. (And I sometimes discover that the earlier English translators had problems with exactly the same passages.) My first pass through a chapter is mainly just restoring all the bits that got cut out, with the primary goal being complete, not especially well polished prose. Translating each chapter will also often involve trips down the Wikipedia rabbit hole, researching various animals, plants, or historical events and people that Verne mentions. As he was writing in the nineteenth century, he sometimes uses words, or names for things and places that have gone out of use, or obsolete spelling. I also spent a lot of time in Google Earth, reviewing his geography.

When I came to the Māori in the New Zealand section of the book I made extensive use of Kendall and Lee's *A Grammar and Vocabulary of the Language of New Zealand*,[fn1] first published in 1820. Verne himself appears to have used a version of

this book as a reference, for I've been able to find just about every word or phrase he uses in it. (Though he seems to have modified many of the spellings, to conform with French phonetic rules.) It was also the reference book Dumont D'Urville used when he was visiting New Zealand in 1827, an event which Verne references multiple times.

My primary goal in creating this is completeness. I want there to be a complete version of this book available for English readers. The second is readability. I am endeavouring to produce good English prose.

How well I accomplish the first is something that can be judged fairly objectively. The second, not so much, but I hope that I am producing something that people will enjoy reading.

As I progress, I am marking the text to indicate what I have done. Sections that were present in the English translations I used for reference are unadorned. Sections that I have restored from the French original are highlighted like this. These sections are much more prevalent in the South America section, as I hadn't yet found the Routledge version when I did it. Anything I have added myself (generally footnotes, Verne liked his footnotes, so I continue the practice) is highlighted like this. The few changes I felt compelled to make are highlighted like this.

When it comes to actual changes, I am trying to be very sparing with them. The first is a minor tweak to the section on the interpretation of the English, German and French documents in chapter two. Verne's characters are Scottish, but Verne was French, writing in French, for a French audience, so he has them do their reconstruction of the message in the bottle in French, despite it having been created by English speakers as well. I have them working in English, and make a couple of minor adjustments to the legible fragments of the English document, to make it look more like something a native English speaker would write. (This is something I had to keep going back to, as the multiple re-interpretations of the document made the first changes I made incompatible with later interpretations.)

Where Verne, speaking in his authorial voice, imparts a bit of history that doesn't match up with my research, I put in the more current understanding of the events described, and footnote the changes. If it is one of Verne's characters (usually Paganel) who is imparting what I consider to be incorrect information, I generally leave it unchanged, but again add some footnotes.

Many of my changes are to details of geography that are not correct. The *Hetzel* edition has footnotes that give metric conversions of English measurements stated by the characters, but sometimes the conversions don't match. These conversions also used the French *lieue*, which is commonly translated as 'league' and is equal to 4 kilometres. I also include the conversion to kilometres. Verne sometimes puts geographic features in the wrong places, or gives incorrect distances. I have tried to adjust all numbers to be consistant with reality. Sometimes when Verne puts

something in the wrong place, I will substitute the place name with something which is close to where Verne said it was.

I have found a couple of continuity errors, which I have tried to correct. (For example, Verne's characters start their trek across Australia with a wagon being pulled by six oxen. About ¾ of the way across, two of them just disappear, without any reference to what happened to them.)

More egregious, is the problem with the dates in the story. Verne starts the story in July of 1864, and continues to give the year as 1864, up until the end of December. Then it is suddenly January of 1866, having skipped all of 1865. Meanwhile while it is still 1864 he makes reference to the assassination of Abraham Lincoln, which took place on April 14, 1865. To correct this I have added 1 year to the dates for all the fictional events before 1866 in the story.

Jules Verne was a nineteenth century man, and sometimes it shows. While he was progressive, for his time, some of his word choices, and attitudes toward issues such as race, are … problematic … for many modern readers. While he doesn't treat all non-Europeans as somehow lesser people (Indeed, if there is one race that gets dumped on a lot, it's the Anglo-Saxons. Verne's main characters are all Scottish and French, and none of them much like the English.) Verne did think that race is important, and that "pure" races are superior to "mixed" races. While I haven't removed this completely from the book, I have toned it down a bit by changing, or omitting, some adjectives.

But when it came to his descriptions of the Australian Aborigines, I was sorely tempted to give them a major rewrite. Instead I just added a bunch of annotations about some of what Verne was getting wrong. And I didn't relegate all those annotations to the footnotes.

I also gave Thaouka a sex change. The first time Google gave me a pronoun when talking about her, it was feminine, so I went back and added "mare" to my initial description of her. After coming across a few "him"s and "he"s in further descriptions of the horse, I figured out why Google had messed up that first one, but I thought that the book could use *some* female representation in that section, so I went with it. And really, that trip across the Pampas would have gone much smoother for them if they'd paid more attention to that horse.

I'd like to thank James D. Keeline for his help, especially in pointing me to the online versions of the Routledge editions. I'd also like to thank the members of the Jules Verne Forum for their help with some of the trickier bits of translation.

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fn1. Kendall, Thomas; Lee, Samuel. *A Grammar and Vocabulary of the Language of New Zealand*. London: Church Missionary Society, 1820

Book One: South America

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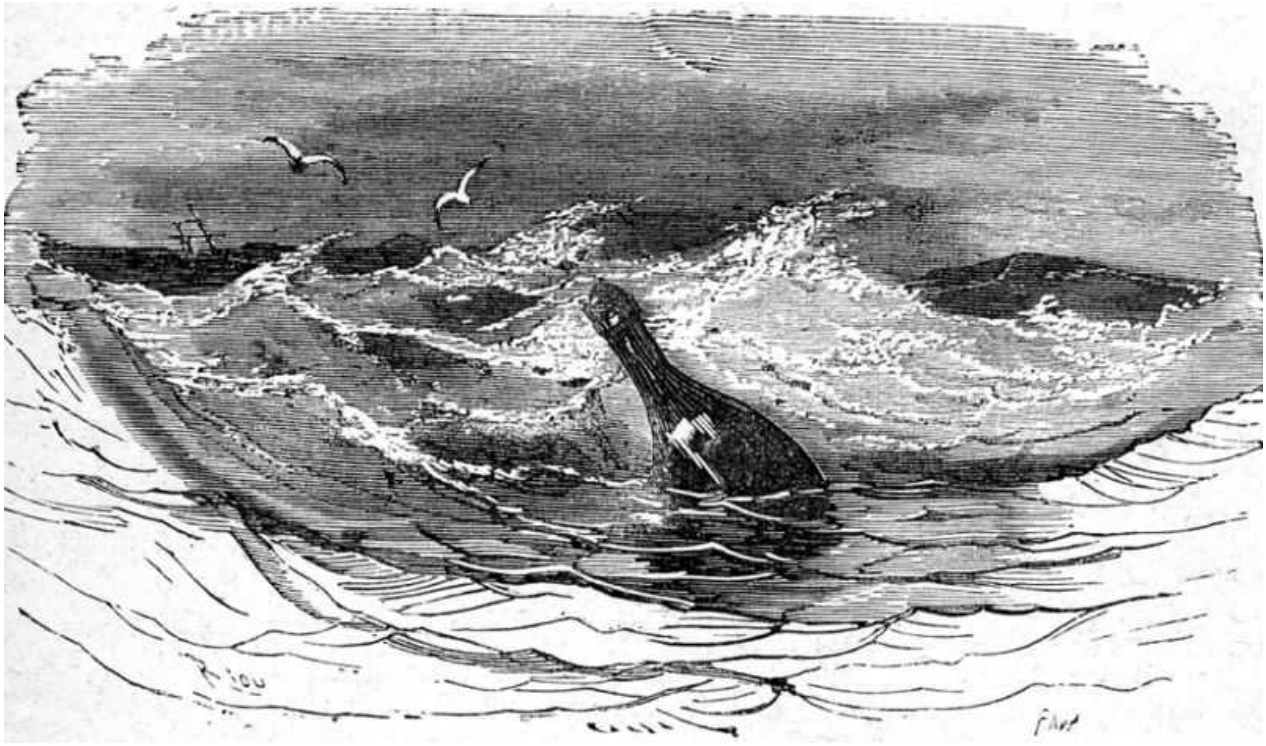
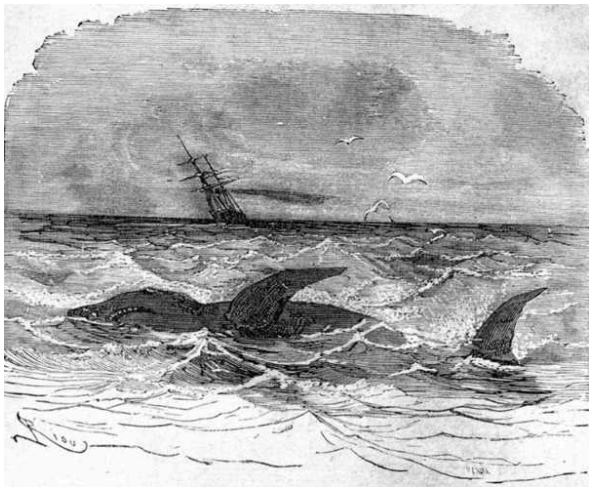


Chapter I
The Balance-Fish

On the 26th of July, 1865[FN1], in a strong north-east breeze, a magnificent yacht was steaming over the waves of the North Channel. The English flag flapped at the mizzen-mast. At the top of the main mast flew a blue standard bearing the initials E. G., embroidered in gold, and surmounted by a ducal coronet. This yacht was the *Duncan*, and it belonged to Lord Glenarvan, one of the sixteen Scottish peers who sit in the Upper House, and the most distinguished member of the *Royal Thames Yacht Club*, so famous throughout the United Kingdom.

Lord Edward Glenarvan was on board with his young wife, Lady Helena, and one of his cousins, Major MacNabbs.

The newly built *Duncan* had been making a trial cruise a few miles outside the Firth of Clyde. She was returning to Glasgow, and the Isle of Arran already loomed in the distance, when the watchman pointed out a huge fish frolicking in the wake of the yacht. Captain John Mangles immediately informed Lord Edward, who climbed to the quarterdeck with Major MacNabbs, and asked the captain what he thought of this animal.



A huge fish frolicking in the wake of the yacht

"Really, Your Honour," said Captain Mangles, "I think it's a shark, and a fine large one, too."

"A shark in these waters?"

"There is nothing unusual about that," said the captain. "If I'm not much mistaken it's a 'balance-fish,'[fn2] and those rascals are known in all latitudes, and seas! If Your Honour agrees, and Lady Glenarvan wishes to witness a novel hunt, we'll soon know what it is."

"What do you say, MacNabbs?" asked Lord Glenarvan. "Shall we try to catch it?"

"If it pleases you," said the major calmly.

"The more of those terrible creatures that are killed the better," said John Mangles, "so let's seize the chance. It will not only give us a little diversion, but be doing a good turn."

"Do it, John," said Lord Glenarvan, and sent for his wife.

Lady Helena soon joined her husband on deck, quite tempted at the prospect of such exciting sport. The sea was magnificent; the rapid movements of the shark, every vigorous plunge and dart, could easily be followed on its surface.

John Mangles gave his orders. The sailors threw a strong rope over the starboard side of the yacht with a big hook at the end of it, concealed in a thick lump of bacon. The shark sensed the bait immediately, though it was still a full fifty yards off. It made rapidly for the yacht, beating the waves violently with its fins — grey at the end, black at their base — while its tail held it in a perfectly straight line. As it got nearer its great projecting eyes could be seen inflamed with greed, and its gaping jaws uncovered a quadruple row of teeth. Its head was large, and shaped like a double headed hammer. Captain Mangles was right: this was the most voracious specimen of the family of sharks, what the English call the balance-fish.

The passengers and sailors on the *Duncan* followed all the shark's movements with keen interest. It soon came within reach of the bait, turned over on his back to seize it, and the bacon and hook vanished into its vast throat. It gave a violent jerk on the rope, and the sailors hauled in the enormous shark by means of tackle attached to the yardarm.

The shark struggled desperately against being removed from its natural element, but its captors were prepared for its violence, and had a long rope ready with a noose which caught its tail and paralyzed its movements. In a few moments it was hoisted up over the side of the yacht and thrown on the deck. A sailor approached it cautiously, and with one powerful stroke of an axe, cut off its tail.

This satisfied the sailors' vengeance, and there was no longer any reason to fear the shark, but their curiosity was not yet satisfied. It is customary on board any vessel to examine a shark's stomach carefully. Sharks were well known for their voracious appetites, and the contents of a shark might be worth investigation.

Lady Glenarvan declined to be present at such a disgusting exploration, and withdrew to the cabin again. The fish lay gasping on the deck. It was ten feet long, and weighed more than six hundred pounds. This was nothing extraordinary, for

though the balance-fish is not classed among the giants of the sharks, it is always reckoned among the most formidable.

The huge brute was soon unceremoniously ripped open with an axe. The hook had caught in the stomach, which was found to be absolutely empty. Obviously the animal had been fasting for a long time, and the disappointed sailors were just about to throw the remains overboard, when the boatswain's attention was attracted by a large object sticking fast in its viscera.

"Hey! What's that?" he cried.

"That," replied one of the sailors, "is a piece of rock the beast swallowed by way of ballast."

"No!" said another sailor. "It's a cannonball that the fellow has swallowed, and couldn't digest."

"Be quiet, all of you!" said Tom Austin, the mate of the *Duncan*. "Don't you see that it's a bottle! This animal was a drunkard, and in order not to lose anything he drank not only the wine, but also the bottle!"

"What!" said Lord Glenarvan. "Do you mean to say that the shark has got a bottle in his stomach?"

"It's really a bottle," said the boatswain, "but not from the wine cellar."

"Well, Tom, be careful how you take it out," said Lord Glenarvan, "for bottles found in the sea often contain valuable documents."

"You think?" asked Major MacNabbs.

"It might, at any rate."

"Oh! I'm not saying it doesn't," said the major. "There may perhaps be some secret in it."

"That's just what we're to see," said Glenarvan. "Well, Tom?"

"Here it is," said the mate, holding up a shapeless lump he had managed to pull, with some difficulty, from the shark's stomach.

"Well, get the ugly thing washed, and bring it to the cabin."

"What!" said Lord Glenarvan. "Do you mean to say that the shark has got a bottle in his stomach?"

Tom obeyed, and this bottle — found in such singular circumstances — was placed on the table of the saloon, around which Lord Glenarvan, Major MacNabbs, Captain John Mangles, and even Lady Helena took their places, for women, they say, are always a little curious.

Everything is an event at sea. For a moment they all sat silent, gazing at this frail relic, wondering if it told a tale of sad disaster, or only an insignificant message entrusted to the mercy of the waves by some idle navigator?

The only way to know was to examine the bottle. Glenarvan set to work without further delay, with the care of a coroner[fn3] making an inquest, as the most minute of details might lead to an important discovery.

He started with a close inspection of the exterior of the bottle. The neck was long and slender, and around the thick rim there was still an end of wire hanging, though eaten away with rust. The sides were very thick, and strong enough to bear great pressure. It was evidently of Champagne origin. The Aï or Epernay winemakers block carriage wheels with these bottles, without any evidence of a crack. The bottle had thus been able to bear the chances of a long peregrination with impunity.

"That's one of Clicquot's bottles," said the major, and as he ought to know, no one contradicted him.

"My dear Major," said Lady Helena. "What does it matter about the bottle, if we don't know where it comes from?"

"We shall know that, too, my dear Helena," said Lord Edward. "And we can already say that it comes from far away. Look at those petrifactions all over it, these different substances almost turned to mineral through the action of sea water! This waif had been tossing about in the ocean a long time before the shark swallowed it."

"I quite agree with you," said MacNabbs. "This fragile vessel, protected by its stone envelope, has been on a long journey."

"But where does it come from?" asked Lady Glenarvan.

"Wait a little, dear Helena, wait. We must have patience with bottles. But if I am not much mistaken, this one will answer all our questions." Lord Glenarvan began to scrape away the hard material protecting the neck. Soon the cork made its appearance, but it was badly damaged by the sea water.

"That's unfortunate," said Lord Edward, "for if there are any papers in there, they'll be in very bad shape."

"That is to be expected," said the major.

"But it's a lucky thing the shark swallowed them, I must say," added Glenarvan; "for the bottle would have sunk to the bottom before long with such a cork as this."

"No doubt," replied John Mangles. "But it would have been better to have fished it up in the open sea. Then we might have found out the road it had come by taking the exact latitude and longitude, and studying the atmospheric and submarine currents; but with such a postman as a shark that goes against wind and tide, there's no clue whatever to the starting-point."

"We shall see." Glenarvan gently pulled out the cork. A strong odour of salt water pervaded the whole saloon.

"Well?" asked Lady Helena.

"I was right!" said Glenarvan. "I see papers inside!"

"Documents! Documents!" exclaimed Lady Helena.

"Only, they seem to be eaten away by moisture," said Glenarvan, "and it will be impossible to remove them, for they appear to be sticking to the sides of the bottle."

"Let's break it," said the major.

"I'd rather keep it intact."

"No doubt you would," said Lady Helena, "but the contents are more valuable than the bottle, and we'll have to sacrifice the one for the other."

"If Your Honour would break off the neck, I think we might remove the papers, without damaging them" suggested John Mangles.

"Try it, my dear Edward," said Lady Helena.

Lord Glenarvan couldn't see any other way to proceed, so he decided to break the neck of the precious bottle. He had to use a hammer, for the stony envelope had acquired the hardness of granite. Soon the debris fell on the table, and several pieces of paper were seen adhering to each other, and the inner walls of the bottle. Glenarvan carefully removed, separated, and spread them on the table, while Lady Helena, Major MacNabbs, and Captain Mangles crowded around him.

The papers were carefully removed, and spread out on the table

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fn1. Verne's date was 1864, and he continues to say that the year is 1864, up until the New Year, when it suddenly becomes 1866. He also makes reference to historical events that happened in 1865, during the 1864 sections of the novel, so I'm adding a year to any pre-1865 dates given.

fn2. The balance-fish is so named by English sailors because its head has the form of a balance. It is more commonly known today as the hammerhead shark.

fn3. Officer who investigates criminal cases.

Chapter II
The Three Documents

THESE PIECES OF PAPER, HALF DESTROYED BY THE SEA-WATER, HAD ONLY A FEW LEGIBLE words, the indecipherable remains of lines almost entirely erased. Lord Glenarvan examined them carefully for a few minutes. He turned them around; he held them up to the light; he observed the least traces of writing left by the sea. Then he looked at his friends, who regarded him anxiously.

"There are three distinct documents here," he said. "Apparently copies of the same document in three different languages. One in English, the second in French, and a third in German. The few words that have survived leave me in no doubt about it."

"But can you make any sense out of them?" asked Lady Helena.

"That's hard to say, my dear Helena; the words remaining on these documents are very incomplete."

"Maybe they compliment each other?" said the major.

"Very likely they will," said John Mangles. "It is unlikely for sea-water to have gnawed these pages precisely in the same places, and by bringing these fragments of phrases together, we may find an intelligible meaning."

"That is what we are going to do," said Lord Glenarvan, "but let us proceed methodically. Here is the first document."

The document had the following layout, and words:

63 *Bri*
gow *sank*
stra
skipp *Gr*
e land
this docum
of long
sistance *lost.*[fn1]

"That doesn't mean much," said the major, disappointedly.

"But in any case," said the captain, "it is English."

"There's no doubt of it," said Glenarvan. "The words 'sank,' 'land,' 'this,' and, 'lost' are intact; 'skipp' is evidently part of the word *skipper*, and most likely the captain of the shipwrecked vessel's name begins with 'Gr'."

"The meanings of 'docum' and 'sistance', have plain interpretations, as well," said Captain Mangles.

"We've made good progress, already," said Lady Helena.

"Yes, but unfortunately we are missing whole lines," said the major, "How do we find the name of the lost ship? The place of the sinking?"

"We'll get to that, in due course," said Lord Edward.

"I don't doubt it," replied the major, who was naturally agreeable. "But how?"

"By comparing one document with the others."

"Let's find out," said his wife.

The second piece of paper was even more damaged than the first. Only a few scattered words remained here and there. It ran as follows:

7 Juni
Glas

zwei atrosen

grau

bring ihnen

"This is written in German," said John Mangles, as soon as he glanced at the paper.

"And you know that language, John?" asked Lord Glenarvan.

"Perfectly, Your Honour."

"Then tell us what these words mean."

The captain examined the document carefully. "Well, first we have a date: '7 Juni' means *June 7*; and if we put that before the figures '62' from the English document, it gives us the complete date: *7th of June, 1862*."

"Excellent!" exclaimed Lady Helena. "Go on, John!"

"On the next line," continued the young captain, "there is the syllable 'Glas' and if we add that to the 'gow' we found in the English paper, we get the whole word *Glasgow*. The documents evidently refer to some ship that sailed out of the port of Glasgow."

"That is my opinion," said the major.

"The next line is entirely missing," said the captain; "but further down are two important words: 'zwei,' which means *two*, and 'atrosen,' likely *matrosen*, the German for *sailors*."

"Then I suppose it is about a captain and two sailors," said Lady Helena.

"It seems so," replied Lord Glenarvan.

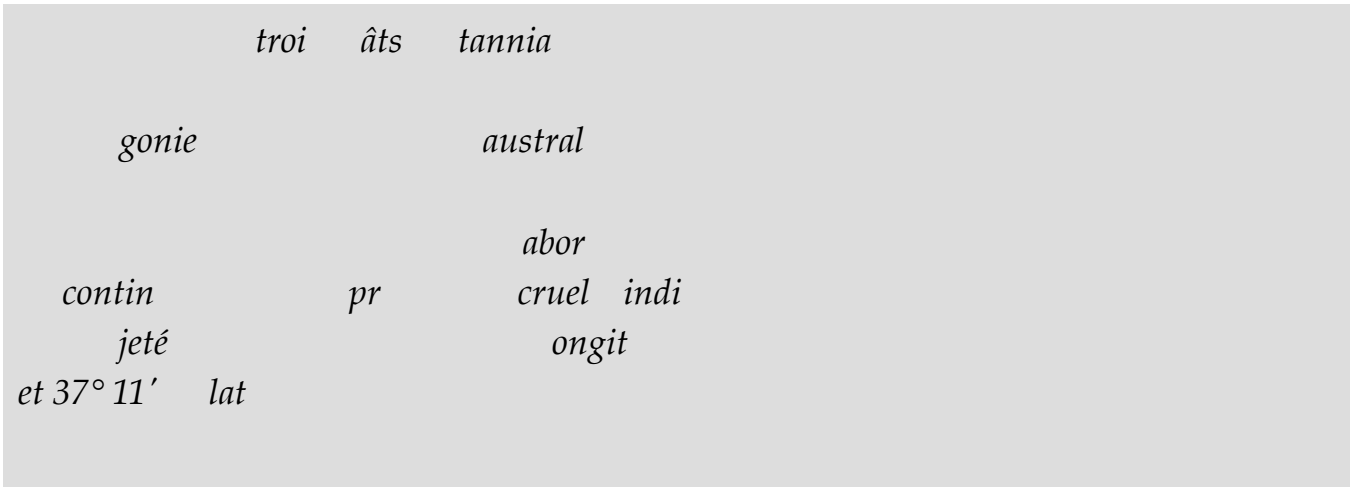
"I must confess, Your Honour, that the next word, 'grau,' puzzles me. I can make nothing of it. Perhaps the third document may throw some light on it. The last two words are plain enough. '*Bring ihnen*' means *bring them*, and if we combine them with the line of the English paper where we had *assistance*, we get: *Bring them assistance*."

“Yes, that must be it,” said Lord Glenarvan. “But where are the poor fellows? We have not the slightest indication of the place, nor of where the catastrophe happened.”

“Let’s hope that the French copy will be more explicit,” said Lady Helena.

“Here it is, then,” said Lord Glenarvan, “and that is in a language we all know.”

Here is the exact facsimile of the third document:


troi âts tannia

gonie austral

abor

contin pr cruel indi

jeté ongit

et 37° 11′ lat

“There are numbers!” cried Lady Helena. “See gentlemen! *See!”*

“Let us be orderly,” said Lord Glenarvan, “and begin at the beginning. I think we can make out from the incomplete words in the first line that it is a three-master, whose name, from the fragments of the English papers is the *Britannia*. As to the next two words, ‘gonie’ and ‘austral,’ it is only *austral*[fn2] that has any meaning to us.”

“That is a precious detail,” said John Mangles. “The shipwreck occurred in the southern hemisphere.”

“That’s vague,” said the major.

“Well, we’ll go on,” resumed Glenarvan. “Here is the word ‘abor’; that is clearly the root of the verb *aborder*. The poor men have landed somewhere; but where? ‘Contin.’ Does that mean *continent*? ‘Cruel’!”

“Cruel!” interrupted John Mangles. “I see now what ‘grau’ is part of in the second document. It is *grausam*, the word in German for *cruel!”*

“Let us go on! Let us go on!” said Lord Glenarvan, becoming quite excited over his task as the meanings of the incomplete words took form. “‘Indi.’ Is it *India* where they have been shipwrecked? And what can this word ‘ongit’ be part of? Ah! I see! It is *longitude;* and here is the latitude, ‘37° 11′.’ That is a precise indication at last, then!”

“But the longitude is missing,” said MacNabbs.

“But we can’t have everything, my dear Major, and it is something at any event, to have the exact latitude. The French document is decidedly the most complete of the three, and it is plain enough that each is the literal translation of the other, for they all contain exactly the same number of lines. What we have to do now is to put together all the words we have found, translated into one language, and try to ascertain their most probable and logical meaning.”

"Well, what language shall we choose?" asked the major. "English, German, or French?"

"I think we had better keep going in English, as that was evidently the native tongue of the author, as well as ours." [fn3]

"Your Honour is correct," said John Mangles.

"Very well. I am going to write out this document by bringing together these remnants of words and fragments of sentences, respecting the spacing which separates them, completing those whose meaning can not be doubtful; then, we will compare and judge."

Glenarvan immediately took the pen, and a few minutes later he presented to his friends a paper on which were drawn the following lines:

June 7, 1863, three-master Britannia,
Glasgow, sank
gonie, southern
two sailors
skipper Gr landed abor
contin pr cruel indi
thrown this document longitude
and 37° 11′ of latitude. Bring them assistance,
lost.

As he was finishing, one of the sailors came to inform the captain that the *Duncan* was entering the Firth of Clyde, and to ask what were his orders.

"What are Your Honour's intentions?" asked John Mangles, addressing Lord Glenarvan.

"To get to Dumbarton as quickly as possible, John. Lady Helena will return to Malcolm Castle, while I go on to London and lay this document before the Admiralty."

John Mangles gave his orders accordingly, and the sailor went to deliver them to the mate.

"Now, friends," said Lord Glenarvan, "let us continue our research; for we are on the trail of a great catastrophe, and the lives of several men may depend on our wisdom. We must put all our intelligence into the solution of this enigma."

"We are ready, my dear Edward," said Lady Helena.

"First of all, there are three very distinct things to be considered in this document.

Captain John Mangles

One, the things we know; two, the things we may conjecture; and three, the things we do not know.

"What are those we know? We know that on the 7th of June a three-mast vessel, the *Britannia* of Glasgow, sank; that two sailors and the captain threw this document into the sea at 37° 11′ of latitude, and they ask for help."

"Perfectly," said the major.

"What can we conjecture?" said Glenarvan. "First, that the shipwreck occurred in the southern seas; and here I would draw your attention at once to the incomplete word *gonie*. Doesn't the name of a country strike you even in the mere mention of it?"

"Patagonia!" exclaimed Lady Helena.

"Undoubtedly."

"But is Patagonia crossed by the 37th parallel?" asked the major.

"That is easy to check," said the captain, unfolding a map of South America. "Yes, it is; Patagonia just touches the 37th parallel. It cuts through Araucanía, goes over the Pampas — northern Patagonian lands — and loses itself in the Atlantic."

"Well, let's continue with our conjectures. The two sailors and the captain *land* … land where? *Contin* … on a continent; on a continent, mark you, not an island. What becomes of them? There are two letters here providentially which give a clue to their fate: 'pr,' that must mean *prisoners*, and *cruel Indians* is evidently the meaning of the next two words. These unfortunate men are captives in the hands of cruel Indians. Don't you see it? Don't the words seem to come of themselves, and fill in the blanks? Isn't the document quite clear now? Isn't the meaning self-evident?"

Glenarvan spoke with conviction, and his eyes burned with confidence. His enthusiasm was contagious, for the others all exclaimed, "Yes, it's obvious, quite obvious!"

After a moment, Lord Edward went on. "All these hypotheses, my friends, seem to me extremely plausible; the disaster took place on the shores of Patagonia, but still I will have inquiries made in Glasgow, as to the destination of the *Britannia*, and we shall know if it is possible she could have been wrecked on those shores."

"Oh, there's no need to send so far to find that out," said John Mangles. "I have the *Mercantile and Shipping Gazette* here, which should tell us all about it."

"Come on, let's see!" said Lady Glenarvan.

John Mangles took a bundle of newspapers from the year 1863 and quickly flipped through it. His search did not take long, and soon he said with a tone of satisfaction: "May 30, 1863, Peru-Callao, with cargo for Glasgow, the *Britannia*, Captain Grant."

"Grant!" exclaimed Lord Glenarvan. "That is the bold Scot who wanted to found a New Scotland in the Pacific Seas!"

"Yes," replied John Mangles, "The same person who, in 1861, sailed from Glasgow in the *Britannia*, and has not been heard of since."

"No doubt! No more doubt!" said Glenarvan. "It's him. The *Britannia* left Callao on the 30th of May, and on the 7th of June, eight days after her departure, she is lost on the coast of Patagonia. We find her entire story in these remnants of words that seemed indecipherable. You see, my friends, our conjectures hit the mark very well; we know all now except one thing, and that is the longitude."

"That is not needed now," said John Mangles. "We know the country. With the latitude alone, I could undertake to go straight to the scene of the sinking."

"We know everything, then?" said Lady Helena.

"All, my dear Helena; and those blanks that the sea has left between the words of the document, I will fill without difficulty, as if Captain Grant were dictating to me."

Lord Glenarvan picked up the pen, and he wrote the following note:

> "*On* the 7th of June, 1863, *the* three-master, *Britannia*, *of* Glasgow, *has* sunk *on the coast of Pata*gonia, *in the* southern *hemisphere.* Making for the shore, two sailors *and* Captain Grant *are about to land on the* contin*ent, where they will be taken* pr*isoners by* cruel Indi*ans. They have* thrown this document *into the sea, at* longitude ___ and latitude 37° 11′. Bring them assistance, *or they are* lost."

"*Very good*, dear Edward," said Lady Helena. "If these wretches see their country again, it is you that they will have to thank for it."

"And they will see it again," said Lord Glenarvan. "The statement is too explicit, too clear, and too certain for England to hesitate about going to the aid of her children, castaway on a desert coast. What she has done for Franklin[fn4] and so many others, she will do today for these poor shipwrecked men of the *Britannia*."

"But these wretches doubtless have families who mourn their loss," said Lady Helena. "Maybe this poor Captain Grant has a wife, children…"

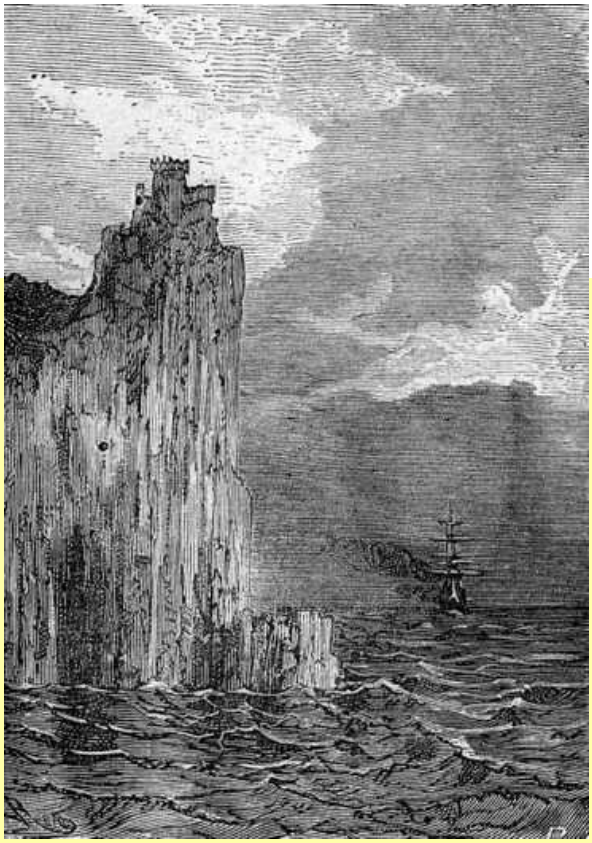
"Very true, my dear lady, and I'll not forget to let them know that there is still hope. But now, friends, we had better go up on deck, as we must be getting near the harbour."

In fact, the *Duncan* was now following the shores of the Isle of Bute at full steam, and passing Rothesay off her starboard side, with its charming little town lying in its fertile valley. Then she rushed into the narrowed passes of the gulf, sailed before Greenok, and at six o'clock she anchored at the foot of the basaltic rock of Dumbarton, crowned by the famous Wallace Castle, of the Scottish hero.

A carriage was hitched there to take Lady Helena and Major MacNabbs to Malcolm Castle. Lord Glenarvan after kissing his young wife, rushed to catch the express train to Glasgow.

But before leaving he had given a faster agent an important notice, and a few minutes afterward it flashed along the electric telegraph to London, for the following words to appear next day in the *Times and Morning Chronicle*:

"For information on the fate of the three-master *Britannia*, of Glasgow, Captain Grant, apply to Lord Glenarvan, Malcolm Castle, Luss, Dumbartonshire, Scotland."



She anchored at the foot of the basaltic rock of Dumbarton

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fn1. I have made minor tweaks to the wording and formatting of the English version of the document. I don't know how good Verne's English was, and some of the word choices in his original look to me like they were translated into English by someone who didn't know the language very well. Verne had *sink* instead of *sank*, *aland* instead of *e land*, and *that monit* (which John took to obviously be a fragment of *monition*, meaning 'document') instead of *this docum*. I have also changed the year of the shipwreck from 1862 to 1863. — DAS

fn2. French words whose meanings were clear to Lord Glenarvan, and the others: *trois:* three, *austral:* southern, *jeté:* thrown. (Verne had a footnote giving the French translation of some of the legible words in the English document.) — DAS

fn3. Verne's characters decide to work in French, as that was the language he was writing in. — DAS

fn4. The Franklin Expedition disappeared in the Canadian Arctic in 1845, searching for a Northwest Passage. Their fate remained unknown for many years, and many expeditions were mounted to search for survivors. None were ever found. The wrecks of his two ships, The *Erebus*, and the *Terror*, were not found until 2014, and 2016. — DAS

Chapter III
Malcolm Castle

MALCOLM CASTLE, ONE OF THE MOST POETIC IN THE HIGHLANDS, IS LOCATED NEAR THE village of Luss, where it dominates the pretty valley. The limpid waters of Loch Lomond bathe the granite of its walls. Since time immemorial it belonged to the Glenarvan family, who kept the old ways of the heroes of Walter Scott in the country of Rob Roy and Fergus MacGregor. During the social revolution many people who could not pay the heavy rents to the old clan chiefs were driven off the land in Scotland. Some died of hunger; some became fishermen; others emigrated. It was a time of great despair.

The Glenarvans believed that fidelity bound the great and the small, and they remained faithful to their tenants. No one was evicted from the home in which he had been born, nor from the land where his ancestors rested; all remained in the clan of their old lords. At this time, in this century of disaffection and disunity, the Glenarvan family considered the Scots at Malcolm Castle — as well as on board the *Duncan* — as their own people. All were descended from vassals of MacGregor, MacFarlane, MacNabbs, and MacNaughton. They were children of the counties of Stirling and Dumbarton: brave people, devoted body and soul to their master, and some of whom still spoke the Gaelic of Old Caledonia.

Lord Glenarvan's fortune was enormous, and he spent it to do much good. His kindheartedness was even greater than his generosity, for the one knew no bounds while the other, of necessity, had its limits. As Lord of Luss and "laird" of Malcolm, he represented his county in the House of Lords; but, with his Jacobite ideas, he little pleased the House of Hanover. He was looked upon coldly by the statesmen of England because of the tenacity with which he clung to the traditions of his forefathers, and his energetic resistance to the political encroachments of Southerners.

Loch Lomond in moonlight

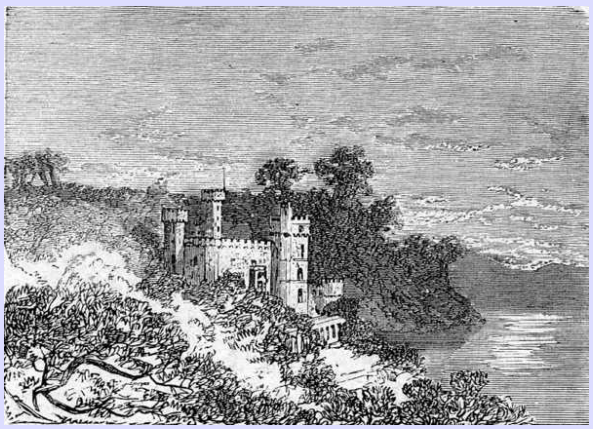
And yet he was not a man behind the times, and there was nothing little or narrow-minded about him. While always keeping his ancestral county open to progress, he remained Scottish at heart, and it was for the

honour of Scotland that he competed in the yacht races of the *Royal Thames Yacht Club*.

Edward Glenarvan was thirty-two years old. He was tall in person, and had rather sharp features; but there was an exceeding sweetness in his look, and a stamp of Highland poetry about his whole bearing. He was known to be brave to excess, enterprising, and chivalrous, a nineteenth-century Fergus. But his goodness excelled every other quality, and he was more charitable than St. Martin himself, for he would have given his entire cloak to the poor people of the Highlands.

He had scarcely been married three months, and his bride was Miss Helena Tuffnell, the daughter of William Tuffnell, the great traveller, one of the many victims of geographical science and of the passion for discovery.

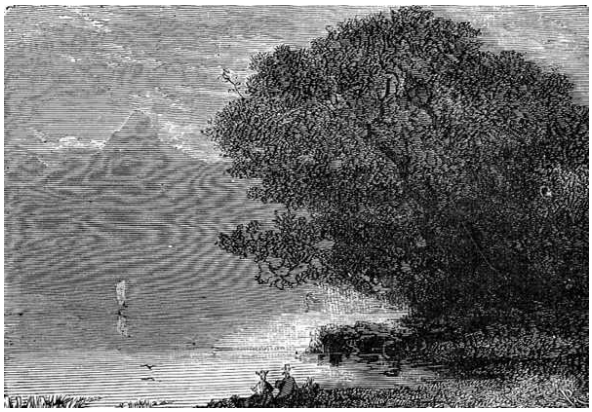
Miss Helena did not belong to a noble family, but she was Scottish, which was worth more than nobility in the eyes of Lord Glenarvan. The Lord of Luss had made this charming, courageous, devoted young woman his life's companion. When he first met her, she was an orphan, alone, almost without fortune, in her father's house at Kilpatrick. He saw that the poor girl would be a valiant woman; he married her. Miss Helena was twenty-two years old; she was a fair-haired young woman with blue eyes like the water of Scottish lakes on a beautiful spring morning. Her love for her husband outweighed her gratitude. She loved him as if she had been the rich heiress, and he the abandoned orphan. As for his tenants and servants, they were ready to give their lives for whom they called "our good Lady of Luss."


Malcolm Castle

Glenarvan and Lady Helena lived happily at Malcolm Castle, amid the beautiful nature of the wild Highlands. They walked in the dark alleys of chestnut and sycamore trees, and on the banks of the lake where rang the pibrochs[fn1] of the old days. They explored the depths of uncultivated gorges in which the history of Scotland is written in secular ruins. They would lose themselves in the birch or larch woods, or amidst the vast fields of yellow heather. They would climb the steep summits of Ben Lomond, or ride on horseback through the abandoned glens: studying, understanding, admiring this poetic land — all these famous sites so valiantly sung of by Walter Scott — still called "the country of Rob Roy."

In the evening, at nightfall, when "the lantern of MacFarlane"[fn2] was lit on the horizon, they would wander along the bartizans — an old circular gallery that made a chain of battlements to Malcolm Castle — and there, thoughtful, forgotten, and as if alone in the world, they would sit on some detached stone in the midst of the silence of nature while daylight faded from the summits of the darkening mountains, and

the pale moon shone down upon them. They lost themselves in the ecstasy and intimate rapture that loving hearts alone have the secret to on Earth.


They walked on the banks of the lake

But Lord Glenarvan did not forget that his wife was the daughter of a great traveller, and he thought it likely that she would inherit her father's predilections. In the first month of their marriage he had the *Duncan* built expressly that he might take his bride to the most beautiful lands in the world, and complete their honeymoon by sailing the Mediterranean, and through the clustering islands of the Archipelago. Lady Helena had been overjoyed when her husband showed her the *Duncan*. What greater happiness could there be than to walk with one's love through those charming regions of Greece, and to see the honeymoon rise on the enchanted shores of the East?

Lord Glenarvan had gone now to London. The lives of the shipwrecked men were at stake, and Lady Helena was herself too much concerned about them to begrudge her husband's temporary absence. A telegram next day gave her hope that he would return soon, but a letter came that evening warning her that he might be further delayed, and the next morning brought another in which he openly expressed his dissatisfaction with the Admiralty.

Lady Helena became anxious as the day wore on. In the evening, when she was sitting alone in her room, Mr. Halbert, the house steward, came in and asked if she would see a young girl and boy who wanted to speak to Lord Glenarvan.

"Local people?" asked Lady Helena.

"No, Madame," said the steward, "I do not know them. They have just arrived by rail to Balloch, and walked the rest of the way to Luss."

"Tell them to come up, Halbert."

In a few minutes a girl and boy were shown in. They were evidently brother and sister, for the resemblance was unmistakable. The girl was about sixteen years old. Her tired pretty face, sorrowful eyes, resigned but courageous look, as well as her neat though poor attire, made a favourable impression. The boy she held by the hand was about twelve, but his face expressed such determination that he appeared quite his sister's protector.

The girl seemed too shy to utter a word at first, but Lady Helena quickly relieved her embarrassment by saying, with an encouraging smile: "You wish to speak to me, I think?"

"No," replied the boy, in a firm tone. "Not to you, but to Lord Glenarvan."

"Excuse him, Madame," said the girl, with a look at her brother.

"Lord Glenarvan is not at the castle just now," said Lady Helena, "but I am his wife, and if I can do anything for you—"

"You are Lady Glenarvan?" asked the girl.

"Yes, miss."

"The wife of Lord Glenarvan, of Malcolm Castle, that put an announcement in the *Times* about the shipwreck of the *Britannia?"*

"Yes, yes," said Lady Helena, eagerly. "And you?"

"I am Mary Grant, Madame, and this is my brother, Robert."

"I am Mary Grant, Madame, and this is my brother, Robert."

"Miss Grant, Miss Grant!" exclaimed Lady Helena, drawing the young girl toward her, and taking both her hands and kissing the boy's rosy cheeks.

"What is it you know, Madame, about the shipwreck? Tell me, is my father still living? Shall we ever see him again? Oh, tell me," said the girl.

"My dear child," replied Lady Helena. "Heaven forbid that I should answer lightly such a question. I would not delude you with vain hopes."

"Oh, tell me all, tell me all, Madame. I'm proof against sorrow. I can bear to hear anything."

"My poor child, there is but a faint hope; but with the help of Almighty Heaven it is just possible you may one day see your father again."

"My God! My God!" exclaimed Miss Grant, who could not contain her tears, while Robert covered Lady Glenarvan's hands with kisses.

As soon as they grew calmer, the girl asked countless questions. Lady Helena told them the story of the document. How the *Britannia* was lost on the shores of Patagonia; how, after the shipwreck, the captain and two sailors, the only survivors, must have reached the continent; and finally, how they implored the help of the whole world in this document, written in three languages, and abandoned to the caprices of the ocean.

Robert Grant devoured Lady Helena with his eyes while she recited her story, hanging on her every word. His childish imagination evidently retraced all the scenes of his father's shipwreck. He saw him on the deck of the *Britannia*, and then struggling with the waves, then clinging to the rocks, and lying at length exhausted on the beach.

More than once he cried out, "Oh, *papa!* My poor *papa!"* and hugged his sister close.

Mary Grant sat silent and motionless through Lady Helena's account, with clasped hands, and all she said when the narration ended, was "Oh, Madame, may I see the paper, please?"

"I do not have it anymore, my dear child," said Lady Helena.

"You do not have it?"

"No. Lord Glenarvan has taken it to London, for the sake of your father; but I have told you all it contained, word for word, and how we managed to make out the complete meaning from the fragments of words left — all except the longitude, unfortunately."

"We can do without that," said the boy.

"Yes, Mr. Robert," rejoined Lady Helena, smiling at the child's sure tone. "And so you see, Miss Grant, you know the smallest details now just as well as I do."

"Yes, Madame, but I should like to have seen my father's writing."

"Well, tomorrow, perhaps tomorrow, Lord Glenarvan will be back. My husband determined to lay the document before the Lords of the Admiralty, to induce them to send out a ship immediately in search of Captain Grant."

"Is it possible, Madame," exclaimed the girl, "that you have done that for us?"

"Yes, my dear Miss Grant, and I am expecting Lord Glenarvan back any minute now."

"Oh, Madame! Heaven bless you and Lord Glenarvan," said the young girl fervently, overcome with grateful emotion.

"My dear girl, we deserve no thanks; anyone in our place would have done the same. I only pray the hopes we are leading you to entertain may be realized, but until my husband returns, you will remain at the Castle."

"Oh, no, Madame. I could not abuse the sympathy you show to strangers."

"*Strangers*, dear child!" interrupted Lady Helena. "You and your brother are not strangers in this house, and I should like Lord Glenarvan, when he returns, to be able to tell the children of Captain Grant himself what is going to be done to rescue their father."

It was impossible to refuse an invitation given with such heart, and Miss Grant and her brother consented to await the return of Lord Glenarvan to Malcolm Castle.

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fn1. A form of Scottish bagpipe music involving elaborate variations on a theme, typically of a martial or funerary character.

fn2. The full moon. — DAS

Chapter IV
Lady Glenarvan's Proposal

Lady Helena thought it best to say nothing to the children about the fears Lord Glenarvan had expressed in his letters respecting the decisions of the Lords of the Admiralty with regard to the document. Nor did she mention the probable captivity of Captain Grant among the Indians of South America. Why sadden the poor children, and dampen their newly cherished hopes? It would not alter the actual state of affairs in the least; so not a word was said, and after answering all Miss Grant's questions, Lady Helena began to interrogate her in turn, asking her about her past life and her present circumstances.

It was a touching, simple story she heard in reply, and one which increased her sympathy for the young girl.

Mary and Robert were the captain's only children. Harry Grant had lost his wife when Robert was born, and during his long voyages he left his children in the care of his cousin who was a good old lady. Captain Grant was a fearless sailor. He not only thoroughly understood navigation, but commerce as well: a two-fold qualification eminently useful to skippers in the merchant service. He lived in Dundee, in Perthshire, Scotland. His father, a minister of St. Katrine's Church, had given him a thorough education, as he believed that that could never hurt anybody.

Harry Grant's voyages, first as a mate, and then as captain where highly successful, and a few years after Robert was born, he found himself in possession of a considerable fortune.

It was then that he proposed the grand scheme which made him so popular in Scotland. Like Glenarvan, and a few noble families in the Lowlands, he had no love for the union with England. In his eyes the interests of his country were not in line with those of the Anglo-Saxons, and to give scope for personal development he resolved to found a Scottish colony on one of the continents of Oceania. He might have thought that some day they would achieve their independence, as the United States had done — an example doubtless to be followed eventually by Australia and India. But whatever his motives might be, he had a dream of colonization. As is easily understood, the Government opposed his plans, and put difficulties in his way that would have dissuaded a lesser man, but Harry would not be beaten. He appealed to the patriotism of his countrymen, placed his fortune at the service of the cause, built a ship, manned it with a picked crew, and leaving his children in the care of his cousin, set off to explore the great islands of the Pacific. This was in 1862, and for a year, up until May, 1863,[fn1] regular news was received from him. But since his departure from Callao in May, no one heard any more of the *Britannia*, and the *Maritime Gazette* became silent as to the captain's fate.

It was then that Harry Grant's old cousin died, and the two children were left alone in the world.

Mary Grant was only fourteen, but she resolved to face her situation bravely, and to devote herself entirely to her little brother, who was still a mere child. By dint of close economy, combined with tact and prudence, she managed to support and educate him. She worked day and night — denying herself everything — that she might give him all he needed; watching over him and caring for him like a mother.

The two children were living in this touching manner in Dundee, struggling patiently and courageously with their poverty. Mary thought only of her brother, and indulged in dreams of a prosperous future for him. She had long given up all hope of the *Britannia*, and was fully persuaded that her father was dead. What, then, were her emotions when she accidentally saw the notice in the *Times*?

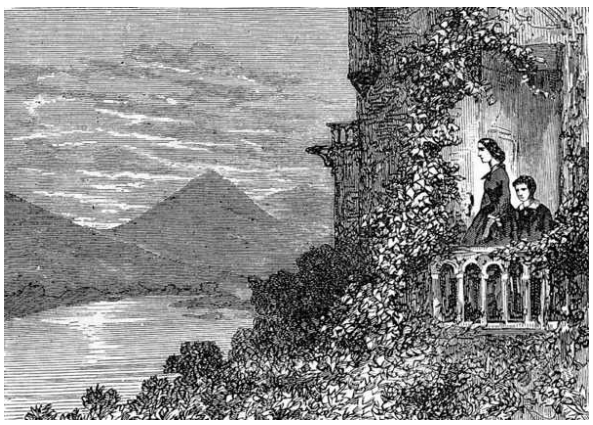
She never hesitated for an instant as to the course she should adopt, but determined to go to Dumbartonshire immediately, to learn the best and worst. Even if she were to be told that her father's lifeless body had been found on a distant shore, or in the bottom of some abandoned ship, it would be a relief from the incessant doubt and torturing suspense.

She told her brother about the advertisement, and the two children started off together that same day for Perth, where they took the train, and arrived in the evening at Malcolm Castle.

Such was Mary Grant's sorrowful story, and she recounted it in so simple and unaffected a manner, that it was evident she never thought her conduct through those long and trying years had been that of a heroine. But Lady Helena thought it for her, and more than once she put her arms around both the children, and could not restrain her tears.

As for Robert, this seemed to be the first time he had heard many of these particulars. He gazed at his sister with wide-open eyes, all the while she was speaking. Only learning now how much she had done and suffered for him; and, as she ended, he flung himself on her neck, and exclaimed, "Oh, mamma! My dear little mamma!"

Night had fallen while they talked. Lady Helena brought their conversation to an end, for she knew they must be tired after their journey. She had the children taken to their rooms, where they were soon both sound asleep, dreaming of a better future.



Night had fallen while they talked

After they had retired, Lady Helena sent for Major MacNabbs, and told him the incidents of the evening.

"That Mary Grant must be a brave girl," said the major.

"I only hope my husband will succeed, for the poor children's sake," said Lady Helena. "It would be terrible for them if he did not."

"He will be sure to succeed, or the Lords of the Admiralty must have hearts harder than Portland stone."

In spite of MacNabbs' assurance, Lady Helena passed the night in great anxiety, and could not get any sleep.

Mary Grant and her brother were awake at dawn the next morning, and were walking about in the courtyard when they heard the sound of a carriage approaching. It was Lord Glenarvan, coming as quickly as his horses could pull him. Almost immediately, Lady Helena and the major came out to meet him.

Lady Helena flew toward her husband the moment he alighted, but he embraced her silently, looking gloomy and disappointed — indeed, even furious.

"Well, Edward? Edward?" she asked.

"Well, my dear Helena," said Lord Glenarvan. "Those people have no heart!"

"They refused?"

"Yes. They have refused me a ship! They talked of the millions that had been wasted in the search for Franklin, and declared that the document was obscure and unintelligible. And then they said it was two years now since they were castaway, and there was little chance of finding them. Besides, they would have it that the Indians, who made them prisoners, would have dragged them into the interior, and it was impossible, they said, to hunt all through Patagonia for three men — three Scots — that the search would be vain and perilous, and cost more lives than it saved. In short, they assigned all the reasons that people invent who have made up their minds to refuse. The truth is, they remembered Captain Grant's project, and that is the secret of the whole affair. So the poor fellow is lost for ever."

"My *father!* My poor *father!"* cried Mary Grant, throwing herself on her knees before Lord Glenarvan.

"Your father?" he exclaimed in amazement. "What? Is this Miss—"

"Yes, Edward," said Lady Helena, "This is Miss Mary Grant and her brother, Robert. The two children condemned to orphanage by the cruel Admiralty!"

"Oh! Miss Grant," said Lord Glenarvan, raising the young girl. "If I had known of your presence—"

He said no more. A painful silence, interspersed with sobs, reigned in the courtyard. No one raised their voice, neither Lord Glenarvan, nor Lady Helena, nor the major, nor the servants of the castle ranged silently around their masters. But by their attitude, all these Scots protested against the conduct of the English government.

At last the major addressed Lord Glenarvan, "Then you have no hope whatever?"

"None."

"Very well, then," exclaimed little Robert, "I'll go and speak to those people myself, and we shall see—"

He did not complete his threat, for his sister stopped him; but his clenched fists showed his unspiritual intentions.

"No, Robert," said Mary Grant. "We will thank this noble Lord and Lady for what they have done for us, and never cease to think of them with gratitude; and then we'll both go together."

"Mary!" said Lady Helena, in a tone of surprise.

"Go where?" asked Lord Glenarvan.

"I am going to throw myself at the Queen's feet, and we shall see if she will turn a deaf ear to the prayers of two children, who ask for the life of their father."

"My father! My poor father!" cried Mary Grant

Lord Glenarvan shook his head; not that he doubted the kind heart of Her Majesty, but he that knew Mary Grant would never gain access to her. Supplicants rarely reach the steps of a throne. It seems as if royal palaces had the same inscription on their doors that the English have on their ships:

Passengers are requested not to
speak to the man at the wheel.

Lady Glenarvan understood what her husband was thinking, and she felt the young girl's attempt would be useless, and only plunge the poor children into deeper despair. It was then that she had a great, and wonderful idea.

"Mary Grant!" she cried. "Wait, my child, and listen to what I'm going to say."

Mary had just taken her brother by the hand, and turned to go away; but she turned back at Lady Helena's bidding.

Lady Helena, her eyes moist, but her voice firm and her features animated, advanced toward her husband. "Edward, when Captain Grant wrote that letter and threw it into the sea, he committed it to the care of God. God has sent it to us — *to us!* Undoubtedly God intends us to undertake the rescue of these poor men."

"What do you mean, Helena?"

"I mean," said Lady Helena, "that we ought to think ourselves fortunate if we can begin our married life with a good action. I know, Edward, that to please me you planned a pleasure trip; but what could give us such genuine pleasure, or be so useful, as to save those unfortunate fellows, cast off by their country?"

"*Helena!*" exclaimed Lord Glenarvan.

"*Yes,* you understand me, Edward. The *Duncan* is a good and strong ship. She can venture in the Southern Seas, or go around the world if necessary. Let us go, Edward. Let us start off and search for Captain Grant!"

Lord Glenarvan made no reply to this bold proposition, but smiled, and holding out his arms, drew his wife into a close, fond embrace. Mary and Robert seized her hands, and covered them with kisses. The servants who thronged the courtyard and had been witnesses of this touching scene, shouted with one voice:

"*Hurrah* for the Lady of Luss. *Hurrah!* Three cheers for Lord and Lady Glenarvan! *Hurrah!*"

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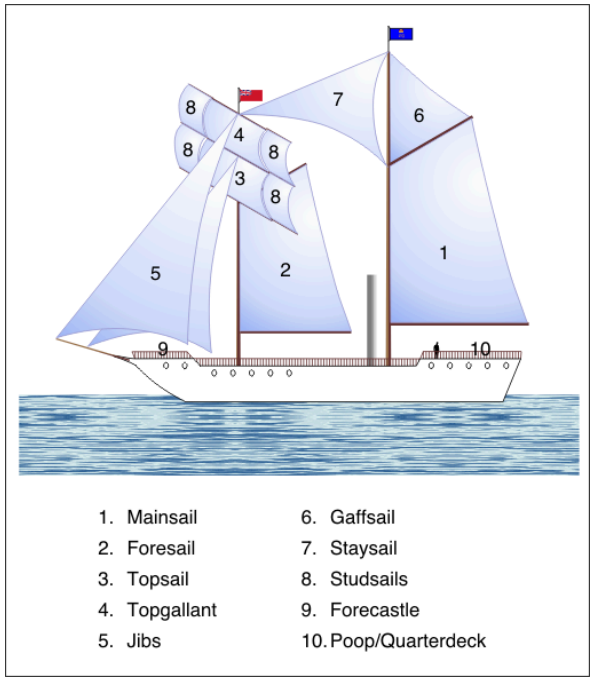
fn1. Updated the year of the shipwreck.

Chapter V
The Departure of the *Duncan*

It has been said that Lady Helena had a brave and generous soul, and what she had just done proved it without a doubt. Her husband had good reason to be proud of this noble woman, who complemented him in every way. The idea of going to Captain Grant's rescue had occurred to him in London when his request was refused. It was only the thought of leaving Helena that had prevented him from making the suggestion himself. But now that she, herself, proposed to go, all of his hesitation was gone. The servants of the Castle had hailed the project with loud acclamations — for it was to save their brothers: Scots, like themselves — and Lord Glenarvan cordially joined his cheers with theirs, for the Lady of Luss.

With the decision made, there was not an hour to lose. A telegram was immediately dispatched to John Mangles with Lord Glenarvan's orders to take the *Duncan* to Glasgow right away to make preparations for a voyage to the South Seas, and possibly around the world, for Lady Helena was correct that the *Duncan* was built with such strength and speed that she could safely attempt the circumnavigation of the globe, if necessary.

The *Duncan* was the finest class of steam yacht. She displaced 210 tons, and the first ships that had landed in the New World, or made the great voyages of the age of exploration — those of Columbus, Vespucci, Pinçon, or Magellan — were much smaller.[fn1]



She was a twin masted, topsail schooner. Her mainmast had a fore-and-aft rigged mainsail, and a gaff rigged topsail. Her foremast had a fore-and-aft mainsail, and square rigged topsail and topgallant, like those of a brigantine. She also boasted large and small jibs, and staysails. Her sails allowed her to ride the winds like an ordinary clipper, taking advantage of any favourable breeze, but her main motive power came from her steam engine. This engine, of the latest high-pressure design, produced 160 horsepower, driving a double bladed helical screw. During her trials in the Firth of Clyde the patent-log[fn2] indicated her speed as 17 knots.[fn3] As she was, the *Duncan* was quite capable of sailing around the world, so John Mangels had only to see to her interior fittings and provisioning to prepare her for her journey.

His first task was to enlarge the bunkers to carry as much coal as possible, for it might be difficult to get fresh supplies en route. He had to do the same with the store-rooms, and managed so well that he succeeded in laying in enough provisions for two years. Lord Glenarvan had granted him a generous budget, and enough money remained to buy a pivot cannon, which he mounted on the forecastle. There was no knowing what might happen, and it is always good to be able to send an eight pound cannonball over four miles.

John Mangles understood his business. Though he was only the captain of a pleasure yacht, he was one of the best skippers in Glasgow. He was thirty years old, and his rough countenance expressed both courage and goodness. He had been brought up at the castle by the Glenarvan family and had become an excellent sailor, having already shown skill, energy, and composure in multiple long voyages. When Lord Glenarvan offered him the command of the *Duncan* he jumped at the chance, for he loved Lord Glenarvan like a brother, and this was an opportunity to serve him as he had always wanted to.

Tom Austin, the mate, was an old sailor, worthy of all confidence. The crew — consisting of twenty-five men including the captain and mate — were all from Dumbartonshire, experienced sailors, and all came from the Glenarvan estate. They formed a regular clan, and even carried a traditional bagpiper[fn4] with them. They made a loyal crew for Lord Glenarvan, skilled in their calling, devoted, full of courage, and as practiced in handling fire-arms as maneuvering a ship; a valiant little troop, ready to follow him anywhere, even on the most dangerous expeditions. When the crew heard where they were bound, they could not restrain their enthusiasm, and the rocks of Dumbarton rang again with their joyous outbursts of cheers.

While John Mangles made the stowage and provisioning of the yacht his chief business, he did not forget to arrange the apartments of Lord and Lady Glenarvan for a long trip, as well. He had to prepare cabins for Captain Grant's children too, for Lady Helena could not turn down Mary's request to follow her aboard the *Duncan*.

As for young Robert, he would have smuggled himself in the hold of the *Duncan*, rather than be left behind. It was impossible to resist the little fellow, and indeed, no one tried. He refused to go as a passenger, but insisted that he must serve in some capacity: as a cabin-boy, like Nelson or Franklin; an apprentice, or a sailor: he did not care which. So he was put in the charge of John Mangles, to be properly trained for his vocation.

"And I hope he won't spare me the 'cat-o-nine-tails'[fn5] if I don't do properly," said Robert.

"Rest easy on that score, my boy," said Lord Glenarvan, gravely. He did not add that this mode of punishment was forbidden on board the *Duncan*, and moreover, was quite unnecessary.

Next on the roll of passengers was Major MacNabbs. The major was about fifty years of age, with a calm face and regular features. He was a man who did whatever

he was told, of an excellent, even temper; modest, silent, peaceable, and amiable; agreeing with everybody on every subject, never arguing, never getting angry. He wouldn't move a step quicker, or slower, whether he walked upstairs to bed or mounted a breach. Nothing could excite him, and nothing could disturb him, not even a cannon ball, and no doubt he would die without ever having known a passing feeling of irritation.

This man was endowed in eminent degree not only with ordinary animal courage, that physical bravery of the battle-field, but he had what is far nobler: moral courage, firmness of soul. If he had any fault it was his being so intensely Scottish from head to toe, a pure Caledonian, an obstinate stickler for all the ancient customs of his country. This was the reason he would never serve in England, and he gained his rank of major in the 42nd regiment, the Highland Black Watch, composed entirely of Scottish noblemen. As a cousin of Glenarvan's, he lived in Malcolm Castle, and as a major it was quite natural that he went with the *Duncan*.

Such, then, were the personnel of this yacht, so unexpectedly called to make one of the most marvellous voyages of modern times. From the hour the *Duncan* reached the steamboat quay at Glasgow she completely monopolized the public attention. A considerable crowd visited her every day, and the *Duncan* was the only topic of interest and conversation, to the great irritation of the other captains in the port, especially of Captain Burton, in command of the *Scotia*, a magnificent steamer lying close beside her, and soon to depart for Calcutta.

Considering her size, the *Scotia* might justly look upon the *Duncan* as a mere fly-boat,[fn6] and yet this pleasure yacht of Lord Glenarvan's was the centre of attention, and the excitement about her increased daily.

John Mangles' work brought the moment of departure quickly upon them. A month after her tests in the Firth of Clyde, the *Duncan*, stowed, stocked, and laid out, was ready to go to sea. The departure was set for August 25th, which would have the yacht arriving in the southern hemisphere at the beginning of spring.

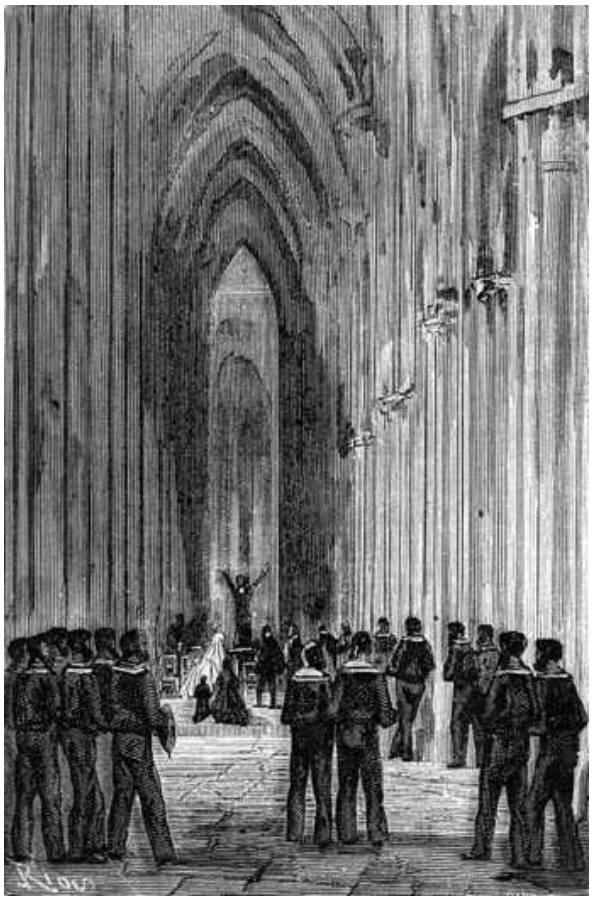
Many people opposed Lord Glenarvan as soon as his plan was made public, and warned him of the difficulties and dangers of the journey as he prepared to leave Malcolm Castle. The majority declared itself for the Scottish lord, and all the newspapers, with the exception of the "government organs," unanimously condemned the conduct of the Admiralty in this affair. Lord Glenarvan was indifferent to either criticism or praise; he did his duty as he saw it, and cared little for the rest.

On August 24th, Lord Glenarvan, Lady Helena, Major MacNabbs, Mary and Robert Grant, Mr. Olbinett — the Yacht Steward — and his wife Mrs. Olbinett — attached to the service of Lady Glenarvan — left Malcolm Castle, having received the touching farewells of the servants of the family. A few hours later they were on board the *Duncan*. The people of Glasgow welcomed Lady Helena, the young and

courageous woman who renounced the tranquil pleasures of a life of luxury and flew to the rescue of the castaways.

The apartments for Lord Glenarvan and his wife occupied the rear quarter of the *Duncan* in the poop. They consisted of two bedrooms, a parlour, and two washrooms. Then there was a common saloon, surrounded by six cabins, five of which were occupied by Mary and Robert Grant, Mr. and Mrs. Olbinett, and Major MacNabbs. John Mangles and Tom Austin had cabins in the forecastle which opened onto the deck. The crew was comfortably lodged below deck, for the yacht carried no cargo other than her coal, provisions, and arms. John Mangles had not stinted on the interior fittings.

The *Duncan* was to leave at three o'clock on the morning tide of August 25th. But before that, the people of Glasgow witnessed a moving ceremony. At eight o'clock in the evening of the 24th, Lord Glenarvan and his guests, the whole crew, from the stokers to the captain — all who were to take part in this journey — abandoned the yacht and went to St. Mungo's, the old Glasgow Cathedral. This ancient church, so marvellously described by Walter Scott, remains intact amid the ruins of the Reformation. It was there, in the grand nave beneath its lofty arches, in the presence of an immense crowd and surrounded by tombs as thickly set as in a cemetery, that Reverend Morton implored the blessings of Heaven, and put the expedition under the care of Providence. There was a moment when Mary Grant's voice rose in the old church. The girl prayed for her benefactors and poured before God the sweet tears of gratitude. The assembly was deeply moved as it withdrew.



Reverend Morton implored the blessings of Heaven and put the expedition under the care of Providence

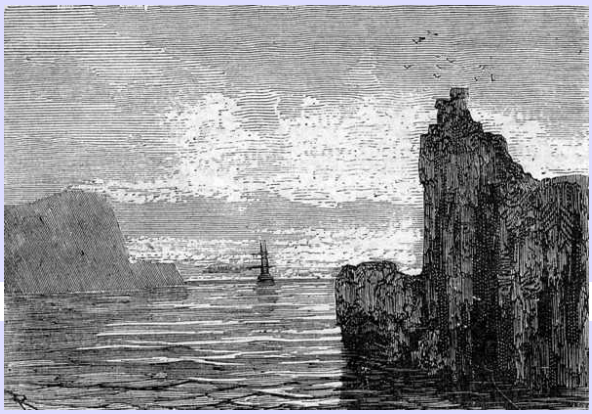
At eleven o'clock the passengers and crew returned on board the *Duncan*. John Mangles and the crew began their final preparations. At midnight, the boilers were lit, and soon billows of black smoke mingled with the mists of the night. The sails of the *Duncan* had been furled and carefully stowed in canvas holsters to protect them from the pollution of the coal, for the wind was blowing from the southwest. She would depart under steam power alone.

At two o'clock the *Duncan* began to shudder with the quivering of her boilers; the pressure gauge indicated a full head of steam, with a pressure of four atmospheres; the heated steam whistled through relief valves; the tide was running; the twilight already made it possible to see the Clyde channel between the beacons and the biggings[fn7] whose lanterns were gradually fading before the dawn. It was time to leave.

John Mangles called Lord Glenarvan, who immediately climbed the bridge.

Soon the ebb-tide was felt; the *Duncan* blew vigorous whistles in the air, dropped her moorings, and separated herself from the surrounding ships. The screw was set in motion and pushed the yacht into the river channel. John had not taken on a pilot, for he knew the channels of the Clyde well, and no one on board was better able to maneuver her. The yacht responded silently and surely to his slightest touch, with his right hand controlling the engine order telegraph, and his left the helm. Soon the last factories of Glasgow gave way to the villas raised on the riverine hills, and the rumours of the city faded in the distance.

An hour after departing Glasgow, the *Duncan* raised the rocks of Dumbarton; two hours later she was in the Firth of Clyde; at six o'clock in the morning she doubled the Mull of Cantyre, left the northern channel, and sailed into the open ocean.



The *Duncan* doubled the Mull of Cantyre, and sailed into the open ocean

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fn1. The fourth voyage of Christopher Columbus was undertaken with four ships. The largest, the caravel *Capitana*, commanded by Columbus, displaced 70 tons; the smallest only 50. They were real coasters.

fn2. The patent-log is an instrument which, by means of needles rotating on a graduated circle, indicates the speed of the ship.

fn3. 17 nautical miles per hour. The nautical mile being 1852 metres, 17 knots is nearly 32km/h, or 20mph.

fn4. The bagpiper who still exists in Highlander regiments.

fn5. It is a martinet composed of nine belts, very much in use in the English navy.

fn6. Riverboat.

fn7. Small mounds of stones marking the channel of the Clyde.

I can find no reference to "biggings" as any sort of channel marker, but I'm assuming that it's a perfectly cromulent, if obscure, word for such things, since Verne used it, but still felt the need to footnote it. — DAS

Chapter VI
The Passenger in Cabin Six

THE OCEAN WAS ROUGH ON THE *DUNCAN*'S FIRST DAY AT SEA, AND THE YACHT TOSSED AND pitched in the waves. The wind freshened toward evening, so the ladies didn't appear on the quarterdeck, but chose to remain in their cabins.

But the wind changed the next morning, and Captain Mangles ordered the men to put up the foresail, topsail, and topgallant, which steadied the vessel on the waves, lessening her rolling and pitching. Lady Helena and Mary Grant were able to join Lord Glenarvan, Major MacNabbs, and the captain on the deck at dawn.

The sunrise was magnificent. The day star rose from the ocean like an electroplated golden disc from its immense voltaic bath. The *Duncan* slipped through this splendid irradiation with her sails stretched out to catch the sun's rays. The yacht's passengers watched the rising of the radiant star in silent contemplation.

"What a beautiful sight!" said Lady Helena. "This is the beginning of a beautiful day. May the winds continue to blow fair for the *Duncan*."

"It would be impossible to desire a better one, my dear Helena," said Lord Glenarvan, "and we have no reason to complain of this beginning of the journey."

"Will the crossing be long, my dear Edward?"

"It's up to Captain John to answer us," said Glenarvan. "Do we go well? Are you satisfied with your ship, John?"

"Very satisfied, Your Honour," replied John. "It is a marvellous ship, and a sailor likes to feel the sea under his feet. Never have I felt a hull and engine better matched. You see how smooth the wake of the yacht is, and how easily she cuts through the waves? We sail at seventeen knots. If we maintain this speed, we will cross the Equator in ten days, and in five weeks we will have doubled Cape Horn."

"You hear, Mary," said Lady Helena. "Five weeks!"

"Yes, Madame," said the girl, "I hear, and my heart beats very hard at the captain's words."

"And how do you find the sea, Miss Mary?" asked Lord Glenarvan.

"Pretty well, my Lord. I am not very much inconvenienced by it. Besides I shall soon get used to it."

"And our young Robert?"

"Oh, as for Robert," said the captain, "whenever he is not poking about down below in the engine room, he is perched somewhere aloft among the rigging. A youngster like that laughs at sea-sickness. Why, look at him this very moment! Do you see him?"

The captain pointed toward the foremast, and sure enough there was Robert, hanging on the yards of the topgallant, a hundred feet above the deck. Mary involuntarily gave a start.

“Oh, don’t be afraid, Miss Mary," said the captain. “He is all right, take my word for it. I’ll have a capital sailor to present to Captain Grant before long, for we’ll find the worthy captain, depend upon it.”

“Heaven grant it, Mr. John,” said the young girl.

“My dear child,” said Lord Glenarvan, “there is something so providential in the whole affair, that we have every reason to hope. We are not going, we are led; we are not searching, we are guided. And look at all the brave men who have enlisted in the service of this good cause. We shall not only succeed in our enterprise, but there will be little difficulty in it. I promised Lady Helena a pleasure trip, and if I am not mistaken, I will keep my word.”

“Edward,” said his wife, “you are the best of men.”

“Not at all, but I have the best of crews and the best of ships. Do you not admire the *Duncan*, Miss Mary?”

“On the contrary, my Lord, I do admire her, and I’m a connoisseur of ships,” said the young girl.

“Indeed?”

“Yes. I have played all my life on my father’s ships. He should have made me a sailor, for I dare say, at a push, I could reef a sail or braid a lanyard, easily enough.”

“Do you say so, miss?” asked John Mangles.

“If you talk like that you and John will be great friends, for he can’t think any calling is equal to that of a seaman; he can’t fancy any other, even for a woman. Isn’t it true, John?”

“Quite so,” said the young captain, “and yet, Your Honour, I must confess that Miss Grant is more in her place on the poop than reefing a topsail. But for all that, I am quite flattered by her remarks.”

“And especially when she admires the *Duncan*,” said Glenarvan.

“Well, really,” said Lady Glenarvan, “you are so proud of your yacht that you make me wish to look over all of it; and I should like to go down and see how our brave men are lodged.”

“Their quarters are first-rate,” said John. “They are as comfortable as if they were at home.”

“And they really are at home, my dear Helena,” said Lord Glenarvan. “This yacht is a portion of our old Caledonia, a fragment of Dumbartonshire, making a voyage by special favour, so that in a manner we are still in our own country. The *Duncan* is Malcolm Castle, and the ocean is Loch Lomond.”

“Very well, my dear Edward; do us the honours of the Castle then.”

“At your service, Madame; but let me tell Olbinett first.”

The steward of the yacht was an excellent butler, a Scot, who might have been French for his airs of importance, but he discharged his functions with zeal and intelligence. He appeared promptly when summoned.

"Olbinett, we are going to have a tour of the ship before breakfast." said Glenarvan, as if he was proposing a walk to Tarbert or Loch Katrine. "I hope we shall find the table served when we come back."

Olbinett bowed gravely.

"Are you coming with us, Major?" asked Lady Helena.

"If you command me," said MacNabbs.

"*Oh*, the major is absorbed in his cigar," said Lord Glenarvan. "You mustn't tear him from it. He is an inveterate smoker, Miss Mary, I can tell you. He is always smoking, even while he sleeps."

The major gave an assenting nod, and Lord Glenarvan and his party went below.

MacNabbs remained alone, talking to himself, as was his habit, but never contradicting himself. Soon he was enveloped in thick clouds of smoke. He stood motionless, watching the wake of the yacht. After some minutes of this silent contemplation he turned around, and suddenly found himself face to face with a stranger. Certainly, if anything could have surprised him, this encounter would, for he had never seen the man before in his life.

He was a tall, thin, withered-looking man, about forty years old, resembling a long nail with a big head. His head was large and thick, his forehead high, his nose long, his mouth wide, his chin strongly hooked. His eyes were concealed by enormous round spectacles, and his eyes seemed to have that particular uncertainty of the nyctalope.[fn1] His countenance announced that he was an intelligent and happy man. He did not have the forbidding expression of those grave individuals who never laugh on principle, and cover their dull-wittedness with a mask of seriousness. He looked far from that. His careless, good-humoured air, and easy, unceremonious manners, showed plainly that he knew how to take men and things at their best. Though he had not yet opened his mouth, he gave the impression of being a great talker, and moreover, one of those absent minded folks who neither see, though they are looking; nor hear, though they are listening. He wore a travelling cap, and stout yellow buskins with leather gaiters. His pantaloons and jacket were of brown velvet, and their innumerable pockets were stuffed with note-books and diaries,

He was a tall, thin, withered-looking man, about forty years old

books, wallets, and a thousand other things as awkward as they were useless, not to mention a telescope, which he carried slung from a baldric.

The stranger's excitement was a strong contrast to the major's placidity. He walked around MacNabbs, looking at him and questioning him with his eyes without eliciting one remark from the imperturbable Scot. Or awakening his curiosity in the least to know where he came from, and where he was going, and how he had got on board the *Duncan*.

Finding all his efforts confounded by the major's indifference, the mysterious passenger seized his telescope, drew it out to its fullest extent, about four feet, and began gazing at the horizon, standing motionless with his legs wide apart. After gazing at the horizon for five minutes, he lowered the telescope, set it up on deck, and leaned on it as if it had been a cane. The telescope immediately collapsed in on itself so suddenly that he fell full length on deck, and lay sprawling at the foot of the mainmast.

The stranger drew out his telescope and began gazing at the horizon

Anyone but the major would have at least smiled at such a ludicrous sight, but MacNabbs never moved a muscle of his face.

This was too much for the stranger.

"Steward!" he called, with an clearly foreign accent.

He waited a minute, but nobody appeared, and he called again, still louder, *"Steward!"*

Mr. Olbinett was passing at that moment on his way to the galley in the forecastle. He was astonished at hearing himself addressed like this by a lanky individual of whom he had no knowledge, whatever.

"Where can he have come from? Who is he?" he thought to himself. "He can not possibly be one of Lord Glenarvan's friends?"

However, he went up on the poop, and approached the stranger.

"Are you the steward of this vessel?"

"Yes, sir," said Olbinett; "but I have not the honour of—"

"I am the passenger in cabin six."

"Cabin six?" repeated the steward.

"Certainly; and your name, what is it?"

"Olbinett."

"Well, Olbinett, my friend, we must think of breakfast, and that pretty quickly. It is thirty-six hours since I have had anything to eat, or rather thirty-six hours that I have been asleep — pardonable enough in a man who came all the way, without stopping, from Paris to Glasgow. What is the breakfast hour?"

"Nine o'clock," replied Olbinett, mechanically.

The stranger tried to pull out his watch to see the time, but it was not until he had rummaged through the ninth pocket that he found it.

"Ah, well," he said, "it is not yet eight o'clock. Well then, Olbinett, a biscuit and a glass of sherry to wait, because I'm starving."

Olbinett heard him without understanding what he meant, for the voluble stranger kept on talking incessantly, flying from one subject to another.

"The captain? Isn't the captain up yet? And the chief officer? What is he doing? Is he asleep too? It is fine weather, fortunately, and the wind is favourable, and the ship goes on quite by herself—"

Just at that moment John Mangles appeared at the top of the stairs.

"Here is the captain!" said Olbinett.

"Ah! Enchanted, Captain Burton," exclaimed the stranger. "Delighted to make your acquaintance."

John Mangles stood stunned, as much at seeing the stranger on board as at hearing himself called "Captain Burton."

But the newcomer went on in the most affable manner. "Let me shake your hand, sir; and if I did not do so yesterday evening, it was only because I did not wish to be troublesome when you were preparing to sail. But today, Captain, it gives me great pleasure to make your acquaintance."

John Mangles opened his eyes as wide as possible, and looked back and forth between the stranger, and Olbinett.

"Now the introduction is made, my dear Captain, we are old friends," the fellow rattled on. "Let's have a little talk, and tell me how you like the *Scotia*."

"What do you mean by 'the *Scotia*'?" said John Mangles at last.

"By the *Scotia* why, the ship we're on, of course — a good ship that has been commended to me, not only for its physical qualities, but also for the moral qualities of its commander, the brave Captain Burton. Would you be some relation of the famous African traveller[fn2] of that name? A bold man. I offer you my congratulations."

"Sir," interrupted John. "I am not only no relation to Burton the great traveller, but I am not even Captain Burton."

"Ah, is that so? Is it Mr. Burdness, the chief officer, that I am talking to at present?"

"Mr. Burdness?" repeated John Mangles, beginning to suspect the truth. He only wondered whether the man was mad, or some heedless rattle pate? He was about to explain the case in a categorical manner, when Lord Glenarvan, his wife, and Miss Grant came back up on the deck.

The stranger caught sight of them "Ah! Passengers!" he exclaimed. "Passengers! Excellent! I hope you are going to introduce me to them, Mr. Burdness!"

But he could not wait for anyone's introduction, and going up to them with perfect ease and grace, said, bowing to Miss Grant, "Madame;" then to Lady Helena, with another bow, "Miss;" and to Lord Glenarvan, "Sir."

Here John Mangles interrupted him, and said, "Lord Glenarvan."

"My Lord," said the stranger, "I beg your pardon for presenting myself to you, but at sea it is well to relax the strict rules of etiquette a little. I hope we shall soon become acquainted with each other, and that the company of these ladies will make our voyage in the *Scotia* appear as short as it is pleasant."

Lady Helena and Miss Grant were too astonished to be able to utter a single word. The presence of this intruder on the poop of the *Duncan* was perfectly inexplicable.

"Sir," said Lord Glenarvan, "to whom have I the honour of speaking?"

"To Jacques-Éliacin-François-Marie Paganel, Secretary of the *Geographical Society of Paris*, Corresponding Member of the Societies of Berlin, Bombay, Darmstadt, Leipzig, London, Petersburg, Vienna, and New York; Honorary Member of the *Royal Geographical and Ethnographical Institute of the East Indies*; who, after having spent twenty years of his life in geographical work at a desk, wishes to see active service, and is on his way to India to gain for science what information he can by following in the footsteps of great explorers."

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fn1. A person who has a peculiar construction of the eye which makes their sight imperfect in the day and better at night.

fn2. Sir Richard Francis Burton (not the actor). 1820 – 1890. Noted explorer, ethnologist, linguist, spy, and translator. One of many explorers who sought the source of the Nile in Central Africa, and known for translating *One Thousand and One Arabian Nights*, and the *Kama Sutra* into English. — DAS

Chapter VII
Where Did Jacques Paganel Come From?

THE SECRETARY OF THE *GEOGRAPHICAL SOCIETY* WAS EVIDENTLY AN AMIABLE MAN, FOR ALL this was said in a most charming manner. Lord Glenarvan knew quite well who he was now, for he had often heard Paganel spoken of, and was aware of his merits. His geographical works, his reports on modern discoveries inserted into the reports of the Society, and his world-wide correspondence gave him a most distinguished place among the scholars of France.

Lord Glenarvan could not but welcome such a guest, and shook hands cordially. "And now that our introductions are over," he added, "you will allow me, Monsieur Paganel, to ask you a question?"

"Twenty, my Lord, " replied Paganel. "It will always be a pleasure to converse with you."

"Was it last evening that you came on board this ship?"

"Yes, my Lord, about eight o'clock. I jumped into a cab at the Caledonian Railway, and from the cab into the *Scotia*, where I had booked my cabin before I left Paris. It was a dark night, and I saw no one on board, so I found cabin number six, and went to my berth immediately — for I had heard that the best way to prevent sea-sickness is to go to bed as soon as you start, and not to stir for the first few days; and, moreover, I had been traveling for thirty hours. So I tucked myself in, and slept conscientiously, I assure you, for thirty-six hours."

Paganel's listeners understood the whole mystery of his presence on the *Duncan*, now. The French traveller had mistaken his vessel, and gone on board while the crew were attending the service at St. Mungo's. All was explained. But what would the learned geographer say when he heard the name and destination of the ship in which he had taken passage?

"Then it is Calcutta, Monsieur Paganel, that you have chosen as your point of departure on your travels?"

"Yes, my Lord. To see India is an idea I have cherished all my life. It will be the realization of my fondest dreams, to find myself in the country of elephants and Thugs." [fn1]

"Then it would be by no means a matter of indifference to you, to visit another country instead."

"No, my Lord; indeed it would be very disagreeable, for I have letters of recommendation from Lord Somerset to the Governor-General of India, and also a mission to execute for the *Geographical Society*."

"Ah, you have a mission?"

"Yes, I have to attempt a curious and important journey, the plan of which has been drawn up by my learned friend and colleague, M. Vivien de Saint Martin. I am

to pursue the track of the Schlaginweit Brothers; and Colonels Waugh and Webb, and Hodgson; and Huc and Gabet, the missionaries; and Moorecroft and M. Jules Remy, and so many celebrated travellers. I mean to try and succeed where Krick, the missionary so unfortunately failed in 1846; in a word, I want to follow the course of the Yarou-Dzangbo-Tchou, which waters Tibet for a distance of fifteen hundred kilometres, flowing along the northern base of the Himalayas, and to find out at last whether this river joins itself to the Brahmaputra in the northeast of Assam.[fn2] The gold medal, my Lord, is promised to the traveller who succeeds in ascertaining a fact which is one of the greatest *desiderata* to the geography of India."

Paganel was magnificent. He spoke with superb animation, soaring away on the wings of imagination. It would have been as impossible to stop him as to stop the Rhine at Schaffhausen Falls.

Paganel spoke with superb animation

"Monsieur Jacques Paganel," said Lord Glenarvan, after a brief pause, "that would certainly be a grand achievement, and you would confer a great boon on science, but I should not like to allow you to continue labouring under a mistake, and I must tell you, therefore, that for the present at least, you must give up the pleasure of a visit to India."

"Give it up! And why?"

"Because you are turning your back on the Indian peninsula."

"What? Captain Burton!"

"I am not Captain Burton," said John Mangles.

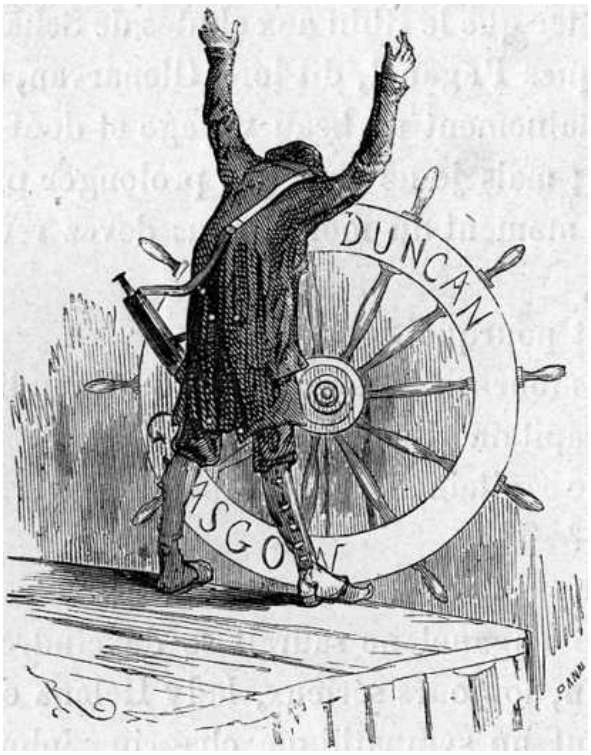
"But the *Scotia!"*

"This ship is not the *Scotia*."

It would be impossible to depict the astonishment of Paganel. He stared first at one and then at another in the utmost bewilderment.

Lord Glenarvan was perfectly grave, and Lady Helena's and Mary's expressions showed their sympathy for his vexation. As for John Mangles, he could not suppress a smile, but the major appeared as unconcerned as usual. At last the poor fellow shrugged his shoulders, pushed down his spectacles over his nose and said "You are joking."

But just at that very moment his eye fell on the wheel of the ship, and he saw the two highlighted words on it:



"The *Duncan*! The *Duncan*!" he exclaimed, with a cry of despair

Duncan
Glasgow

"The *Duncan! The* ***Duncan!***" he exclaimed with a cry of despair, and rushed down the stairs, and away to his cabin.

As soon as the unfortunate scientist had disappeared, everyone — except the major — broke out into such peals of laughter that the sound reached the ears of the sailors in the forecastle. To mistake a railway and to take the train to Edinburgh when you wanted to go to Dumbarton might happen; but to mistake a ship and be sailing for Chile when you meant to go to India — that is a blunder indeed!

Paganel rushed down the stairs to his cabin

"However," said Lord Glenarvan, "I am not much astonished at it in Paganel. He is quite famous for such misadventures. One day he published a celebrated map of America, and put Japan in it! But for all that, he is a distinguished scientist, and one of the best geographers in France."

"But what shall we do with the poor gentleman?" said Lady Helena; "we can't take him with us to Patagonia."

"Why not?" said MacNabbs, gravely. "We are not responsible for his distraction. Suppose he were in a railway train, would they stop it for him?"

"No, but he could get out at the next station."

"Well," said Glenarvan. "That is just what he can do here, too, if he likes; he can disembark at the first place we land."

Paganel, pitiful and ashamed, was coming back up onto the quarterdeck. He had been making sure that his luggage was all on board, and kept repeating incessantly the unlucky words "The *Duncan!* The *Duncan!"* He could find no others in his vocabulary. He paced restlessly up and down; sometimes stopping to examine the mast, or gaze inquiringly at the mute horizon of the open sea.

Finally he returned to Lord Glenarvan. "And this *Duncan* — where is she going?"

"To America, Monsieur Paganel."

"And to what particular part?"

"To Concepción."

"In Chile! *In Chile!"* cried the unfortunate geographer. "And my mission to India. But what will M. de Quatrefages, the President of the Central Committee, say? And M. d' Avezac? And M. Cortanbert? And M. Vivien de Saint Martin? How shall I show my face at the meetings of the Society?"

"Come, Monsieur Paganel, don't despair. It can all be managed; you will only have to put up with a little delay. The Yarou-Dzangbo-Tchou will wait for you in the mountains of Tibet. We shall soon put in at Madeira, and you will get a ship there to take you back to Europe."

"Thank you, my Lord. I suppose I must resign myself to it; but people will say it is a most extraordinary misadventure, and it is only to me such things happen. And then, too, there is a cabin taken for me on board the *Scotia*."

"As to the *Scotia*, you'll have to give that up."

"But the *Duncan* is a pleasure yacht, is it not?" began Paganel again, after a fresh examination of the ship.

"Yes, sir," said John Mangles, "and she belongs to Lord Glenarvan."

"Who begs you to draw freely on his hospitality," said Lord Glenarvan.

"A thousand thanks, my Lord! I deeply feel your courtesy, but allow me to make one observation: India is a fine country, and can offer many a surprising marvel to travellers. These ladies, I suppose, have never seen it. Well now, the man at the helm has only to give a turn at the wheel, and the *Duncan* will sail as easily to Calcutta as to Concepción; and since it is only a pleasure trip that you are—"

His proposal was met by such grave, disapproving shakes of the head, that he stopped short before the sentence was completed.

"Monsieur Paganel," said Lady Helena. "If we were only on a pleasure trip, I should reply, 'Let us all go to India together,' and I am sure Lord Glenarvan would not object; but the *Duncan* is going to bring back shipwrecked mariners who were castaway on the shores of Patagonia, and we could not alter such a destination."

In a few minutes the French traveller was made aware of the situation; he learned, not without emotion, of the providential discovery of the documents, the story of Captain Grant, and the generous proposal of Lady Helena.

"Madame, permit me to express my admiration of your conduct throughout," he said. "My unreserved admiration. Let your yacht continue her course. I should reproach myself were I to cause a single day's delay."

"Will you join us in our search, then?" asked Lady Helena.

"It is impossible, Madame. I must fulfill my mission. I shall disembark at the first place you touch at, wherever it may be."

"That will be Madeira," said John Mangles.

"Madeira be it then. I shall only be 180 leagues from Lisbon, and I shall wait there for some means of transport."

"Very well, Monsieur Paganel, it shall be as you wish; and, for my own part, I am very glad to be able to offer you, in the meantime, a few days' hospitality. I only hope you will not find our company too dull."

"Oh, my Lord," exclaimed Paganel, "I am but too happy to have made a mistake which has turned out so agreeably. Still, it is a very ridiculous plight for a man to be in: to find himself sailing to America when he set out to go to the East Indies!"

But in spite of this melancholy reflection, the Frenchman submitted gracefully to the compulsory delay. He made himself amiable and merry, and even diverting, and enchanted the ladies with his good humour. Before the end of the day he was friends with everybody. At his request, the famous document was brought out. He studied it carefully and minutely for a long time, and finally declared his opinion that no other interpretation of it was possible. Mary Grant and her brother inspired a keen interest in him. He gave them great hope; indeed, the young girl could not help smiling at his sanguine prediction of success, and his odd way of foreseeing future events. But for his mission, he would surely have joined in the search for Captain Grant!

As for Lady Helena, when he heard that she was William Tuffnell's daughter, there was an explosion of admiring epithets. He had known her father, and many letters had passed between them when William Tuffnell was a corresponding member of the Society! It was he himself that had introduced him and M. Malte Brun. What a meeting this was, and what a pleasure to travel with William Tuffnell's daughter!

He wound up asking permission to kiss her, which Lady Helena granted, though it was, perhaps, a little improper.

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fn1. "Thug" from the Indian "thuggee" meaning bandit. During the British colonial era the popular idea arose that the thuggee were members of an ancient secret cult of murderers and assassins.
More recent scholarship contends that the thuggee were simply bands of robbers, often composed of disbanded soldiers from the native standing armies. Characterizing them as an ancient secret cult enabled the British to impose laws criminalizing entire communities. — DAS

fn2. What Paganel calls the Yarou-Dzangbo-Tchou is the Yarlung Tsangpo River of Tibet, and it is indeed the same river as the Brahmaputra. That they are the same river wasn't settled until 1913, so Paganel's hopes to prove this might have been overambitious. The largest waterfall on the river wasn't seen by westerners until 1998. (Though the Chinese authorities claim to have photographed it from a helicopter in 1987.) — DAS

Chapter VIII
A Brave Man Onboard the *Duncan*

THE *DUNCAN*, FAVOURED BY THE CURRENTS FROM THE NORTH OF AFRICA, WAS MAKING RAPID progress toward the Equator. On the 30th of August they sighted the Madeira group of islands, and Glenarvan, true to his promise, offered to put in there, and land his guest.

"My dear Lord," said Paganel. "I won't stand on ceremony with you. Tell me, did you intend to stop at Madeira before I came on board?"

"No," said Glenarvan.

"Well, then, allow me to profit by my unlucky mistake. Madeira is an island too well known to be of much interest to a geographer now. Everything about this group of islands has been said and written already. Besides, the place is going completely down hill as far as viticulture is concerned. Just imagine, there are hardly any vineyards remaining in Madeira! In 1813, 22,000 pipes[fn1] of wine were made there, and in 1845 the number fell to 2,669. It is a grievous spectacle! If it is all the same to you, we might go on to the Canary Isles instead."

"We can easily stop in the Canaries instead," said Glenarvan. "It will not the least interfere with our route."

"I know it will not, my dear Lord. In the Canary Islands, you see, there are three groups of islands to study, besides the Peak of Tenerife, which I always wished to visit. This is an opportunity, and I should like to avail myself of it, and make the ascent of the famous mountain while I am waiting for a ship to take me back to Europe."

"As you please, my dear Paganel," said Lord Glenarvan, with a smile.

The Canary Islands are not far from Madeira, scarcely 250 miles[fn2], a trifling distance for as swift a ship as the *Duncan*. Next day, on the 31st of October, about two p.m., John Mangles and Paganel were walking on the poop. The Frenchman was assailing his companion with all sorts of questions about Chile, when the captain interrupted him, and pointed toward the southern horizon.

"Monsieur Paganel?" he said.

"Yes, my dear Captain."

"Be so good as to look in this direction. Do you see anything?"

"Nothing."

"You're not looking in the right place. It is not on the horizon, but above it in the clouds."

"In the clouds? What am I looking for?"

"There, there, by the upper end of the bowsprit."

"I see nothing."

"Then you don't want to see. Yet I tell you that the Peak of Tenerife is quite visible above the horizon, though we are forty miles off."

But whether Paganel could not or would not see it then, two hours later he was forced to yield to the evidence of his eyes, or declare himself blind.

"You do see it at last, then," said John Mangles.

"Yes, yes, distinctly," said Paganel, adding in a disdainful tone, "and that's what they call the Peak of Tenerife?"

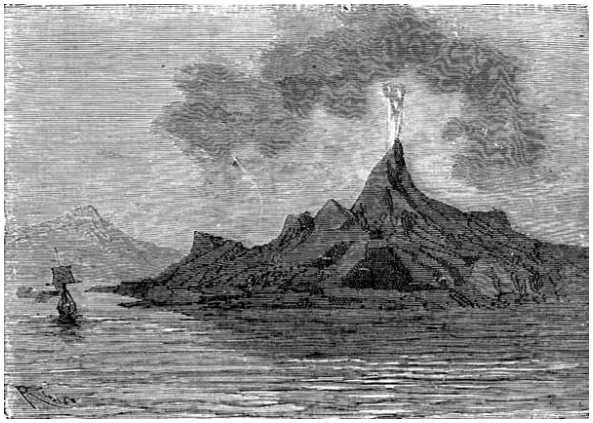
"That's the Peak."

"It doesn't look all that high."

"It is 11,000 feet, though, above sea level."

"That is not as tall as Mont Blanc."

"That's true, but when it comes to climbing it, you'll probably think it's high enough."



Tenerife

"Climb it? *Climb it?* My dear Captain, what would be the good in that after Humboldt and Bonpland? That Humboldt was a great genius. He climbed this mountain, and his description of it leaves nothing to be desired. He tells us that it comprises five different zones — the vine zone, the laurel zone, the pine zone, the alpine heath zone, and, lastly, the sterile zone. He set his foot on the summit, and found that there was not even enough room to sit down. The view from the summit was very extensive, stretching over an area equal to Spain. Then he went right down into the volcano, and examined the extinct crater. What could I do, I should like you to tell me, after that great man?"

"Well, certainly, there isn't much left to glean. That is unfortunate, too, for you would find it dull work waiting for a ship in the port of Tenerife. There isn't much distraction here."

"Except mine," laughed Paganel. "But, I say, my dear Mangles, are there no ports in the Cape Verde Islands that we might touch at?"

"Oh, yes, nothing would be easier than putting you off at Villa Praia."

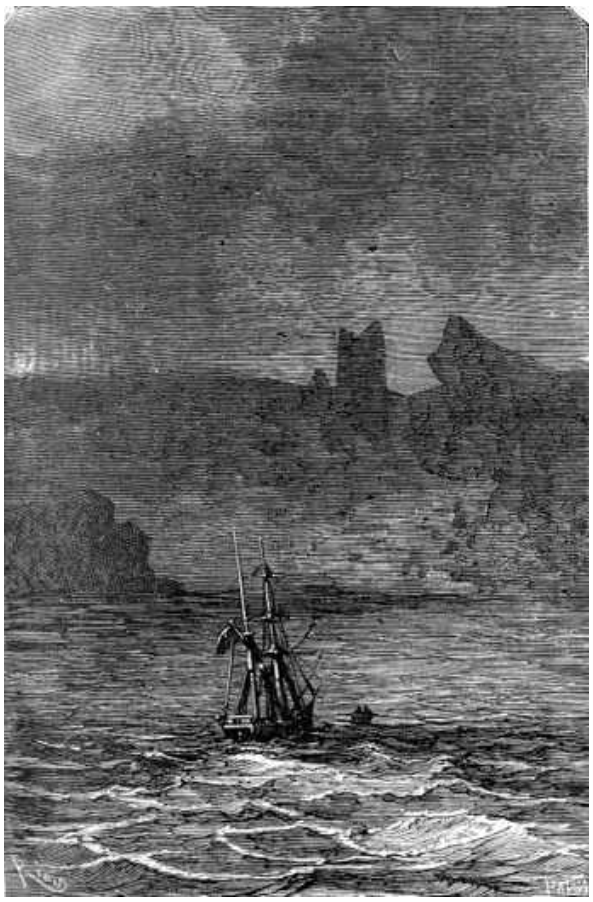
"And then I should have an additional advantage, which is by no means inconsiderable — Cape Verde is not far from Senegal, where I should find some compatriots. I am quite aware that the islands are said to be devoid of much interest, and wild, and unhealthy; but everything is curious in the eyes of a geographer. Seeing is a science. There are people who do not know how to use their eyes, and who travel about with as much intelligence as a shell-fish. But that's not in my line, I assure you."

"As you please, Monsieur Paganel. I have no doubt geographical science will gain by your sojourn in the Cape Verde Islands. We must stop there anyway for coal, so your disembarkation will not occasion the least delay."

The captain gave immediate orders for the yacht to continue her course, steering to the west of the Canary group, and leaving Tenerife on her larboard. She made rapid progress, and crossed the Tropic of Cancer on September 2nd at five o'clock in the morning.

The weather began to change, and the air became damp and heavy. It was the rainy season, "*le tempo das aguas*," as the Spanish call it, a difficult season for travellers, but useful to the inhabitants of the African Islands which lack trees, and consequently water. The rough weather prevented the passengers from going on deck, but did not make the conversation any less animated in the saloon.

On September 3rd Paganel began to collect his luggage in preparation for his departure. The *Duncan* was already steaming among the Cape Verde Islands. She passed the Isle of Salt, a flat wasteland of sand and salt ponds, infertile and desolate; she went on among the vast coral reefs and passed along side the Isle of St. Jacques, with its long north-south chain of basaltic mountains, until she entered the port of Villa Praia and anchored in eight fathoms of water. The weather was frightful, and the surf high, though the bay was sheltered from the sea winds. The rain fell in such torrents that the town was scarcely visible through it. It lay on a rising series of plateaus of volcanic rocks three hundred feet high. The appearance of the island through the thick veil of rain was mournful in the extreme.



The appearance of the island through the thick veil of rain was mournful in the extreme

Lady Helena could not go on shore as she had planned; indeed, even coaling was a difficult business, and the passengers had to content themselves below the decks as best they could. Naturally enough, the main topic of conversation was the weather. Everybody had something to say about it except the major, who surveyed the universal deluge with the utmost indifference. Paganel walked up and down shaking his head.

"It is clear enough, Paganel," said Lord Glenarvan, "that the elements are against you."

"I'll be all right," said the Frenchman.

"You could not face rain like that, Monsieur Paganel," said Lady Helena.

"Oh, I can face it, Madame. It is my luggage and instruments that I am worried about. Everything will be ruined."

"The disembarking is the worst part of the business. Once at Villa Praia you might manage to find pretty good quarters. They wouldn't be overly clean, and you might find the monkeys and pigs not always the most agreeable companions. But travellers can not be too particular, and, moreover, in seven or eight months you would get a ship, I dare say, to take you back to Europe."

"Seven or eight *months!"* exclaimed Paganel.

"At least. The Cape Verde Islands are not much frequented by ships during the rainy season. But you can employ your time usefully. This archipelago is still but little known. There's still a lot of work to do in topography, climatology, ethnography, hypsometry…"

"You can explore the large rivers," suggested Lady Helena.

"There are none, Madame."

"Well, then, the small rivers."

"There are none of those, either."

"Brooks, then?"

"Pas davantage."

"You can console yourself with the forests if that's the case," put in the major.

"You can't make forests without trees, and there are no trees."

"A charming country!" said the major.

"Comfort yourself, my dear Paganel, you'll have the mountains at any rate," said Glenarvan.

"Oh, they are neither lofty nor interesting, my Lord, and they have been described already."

"Already!" said Lord Glenarvan.

"Yes, that is always my luck. At the Canary Islands, I saw myself anticipated by Humboldt, and here by M. Charles Sainte-Claire Deville, a geologist."

"Impossible!"

"It is too true," replied Paganel, in a doleful voice. "Monsieur Deville was on board the government corvette, *La Décidée,* when she touched at the Cape Verde Islands, and he explored the most interesting of the group, and went to the top of the volcano in Isle Fogo. What is left for me to do after him?"

"It is really a great pity," said Helena. "What will become of you, Monsieur Paganel?"

Paganel remained silent.

"You would certainly have done much better to have landed at Madeira, even if there was no more wine," said Glenarvan.

Still the learned secretary of the *Society of Geography* was silent.

"I'll wait," said the major, exactly as if he'd said "I won't wait."

Paganel remained silent for several more seconds. "My dear Glenarvan, where do you mean to touch next?"

"At Concepción."

"*Diable!* That is a long way out of my way to India."

"Not really. From the moment you pass Cape Horn, you are getting closer to it."

"I guess so."

"Besides," continued Lord Glenarvan, perfectly seriously, "when you are going to the Indies it doesn't matter much whether it is to the East or West."

"I'll wait."

"*What?* It does too matter!"

"Not to mention that the inhabitants of the Pampas in Patagonia are as much Indians as the natives of the Punjab."

"Well done, my Lord," said Paganel. "That's a reason that would never have entered my head!"

"And then, my dear Paganel, you can gain the gold medal anyway. There is as much to be done, and sought, and investigated, and discovered in the Cordilleras of the Andes as in the mountains of Tibet."

"But the course of the Yarou-Dzangbo-Tchou — what about that?"

"Go up the Rio Colorado instead. It is a river but little known, and its course on the map is marked out too much according to the fancy of geographers."

"I know it is, my dear Lord. They have made grave mistakes. Oh, I have no question that the *Geographical Society* would have sent me to Patagonia as soon as to India, if I had sent in a request to that effect. But I never thought of it."

"Just like you."

"Come, Monsieur Paganel, will you go with us?" asked Lady Helena, in her most winning tone.

"Madame, and my mission?"

"I must tell you, we shall pass through the Straits of Magellan," said Lord Glenarvan.

"My Lord, you are a tempter."

"Let me add, that we shall visit Port Famine."

"Port Famine!" exclaimed the Frenchman, besieged on all sides. "That port celebrated in geographical splendour!"

"Think, too, Monsieur Paganel, that by taking part in our enterprise, you will be forging bonds between France and Scotland," said Lady Helena.

"Undoubtedly."

“A geographer would be of much use to our expedition, and what can be nobler than to bring science to the service of humanity?”

“That’s well said, Madame.”

“Take my advice, then, and yield to chance, or rather Providence. Follow our example. Providence sent us the document, and we set sail. Providence brought you on board the *Duncan*. Don’t leave her.”

“Shall I say yes, my good friends? Come, now, tell me. You want me very much to stay, don’t you?” said Paganel.

“And you’re dying to stay, now, aren’t you, Paganel?” returned Glenarvan.

“*Parbleu!*” exclaimed the learned geographer, “but I was afraid of being presumptuous!”

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fn1. One pipe is approximately 500 litres. (About 125 gallons. — DAS)
fn2. About 90 leagues. (360 kilometres. — DAS)

Chapter IX
Through the Straits of Magellan

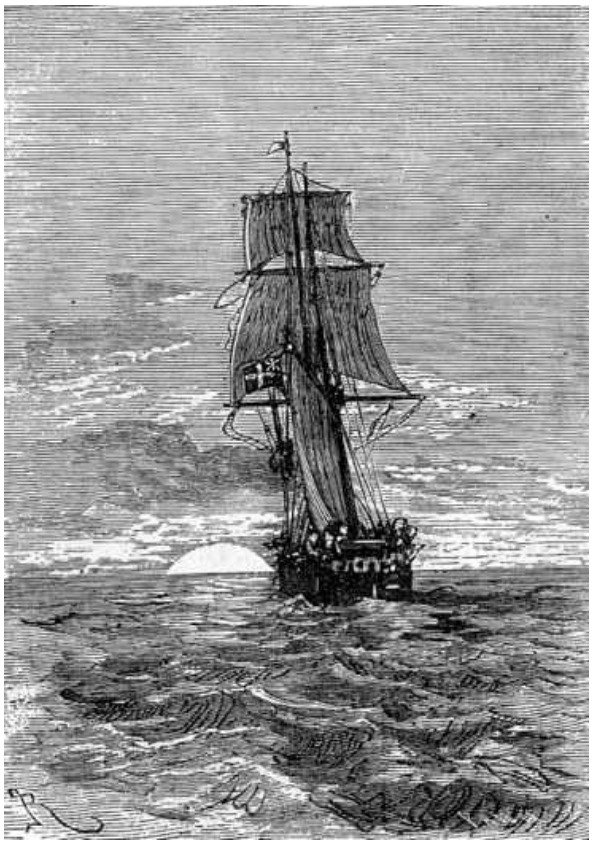
Everyone aboard the *Duncan* was overjoyed to learn of Paganel's decision. Young Robert threw himself on the Secretary to hug him with enough force that he nearly knocked Paganel over. "He's a tough *petit bonhomme*," said Paganel. "I'll teach him geography."

Robert was bound to become an accomplished gentleman some day, for John Mangles was making a sailor of him, the major was teaching him self control, and Lord and Lady Glenarvan were instilling him with courage, goodness and generosity, while Mary was inspiring him with gratitude toward his instructors.

The *Duncan* soon finished taking on coal, and turned her stern to the dismal region. She was soon in the current flowing down the coast of Brazil, and on the 7th of September entered the southern hemisphere.

So far, the crossing had been uneventful. Everyone was hopeful for the success of their mission, and each day their faith in finding Captain Grant grew. Captain Mangles was among the most confident on board, but his confidence mainly arose from the desire he had to see Miss Mary happy. He was quite smitten with this young girl, and managed to conceal his sentiments so well that everyone on board the *Duncan* saw it — except himself and Mary Grant.

As for the learned geographer, he was probably the happiest man in all the southern hemisphere. He spent whole days in studying maps which were spread out on the saloon table — to the great annoyance of Mr. Olbinett who could never get the cloth laid for meals without disputes on the subject. But all the passengers took Paganel's side — except the major, who was perfectly indifferent about geographical questions, especially at dinner-time. Paganel also came across a trove of old books in the mate's chest that included a number of Spanish volumes. He determined forthwith to teach himself the language of Cervantes, as no one on board understood it, and it would be helpful in their search along the Chilean coast. Thanks to his talent for languages, he expected to be able to speak the language fluently when they



The *Duncan* at sea

arrived at Concepción. He studied it diligently, and was constantly muttering heterogeneous syllables to himself.

He spent his spare time teaching young Robert, and instructing him in the history of the country they were so rapidly approaching.

On the 10th of September, at latitude 5° 37′ and longitude 31° 15′, Lord Glenarvan learned something that many more educated people probably do not know. Paganel told the story of America, and the great navigators in whose path the *Duncan* now followed. He went back to Christopher Columbus, and how he had gone to his grave without ever knowing that he had discovered a New World.

His whole audience was surprised, but Paganel persisted in his contention.

"Nothing is more certain," he said. "I do not wish to diminish the glory of Columbus, but the fact is certain. At the end of the fifteenth century everyone had the same objective: to facilitate communication with Asia. In a word, go by the shortest route to "Spice Country." That is what Columbus tried to do: to seek the East by sailing West. He made four journeys. He touched the coasts of America at Cumaná[fn1], Honduras, Mosquitos, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, and Panama — which he took for the lands of Japan and China. He died without having realized that he had discovered a great continent to which he should have bequeathed his name!"

"I want to believe you, my dear Paganel," said Glenarvan, "however, you will allow me to be surprised, and to ask you who are the navigators who did learn the truth about the discoveries of Columbus?"

"His successors, Ojeda, who had already accompanied him in his travels, as well as Vincent Pinzon, Vespucci, Mendoza, Bastidas, Cabral, Solis, and Balboa. These navigators skirted the eastern coasts of America. They mapped them three hundred and sixty years ago, moving southward, carried by the same current that carries us along! My friends, we crossed the Equator at the very spot where Pinzon crossed it in the last year of the fifteenth century, and we are approaching that eighth degree of southern latitude where he landed in Brazil. A year later, Cabral of Portugal reached the port of Seguro. Then Vespucius, in his third expedition in 1502, went farther south. In 1508, Vincent Pinzon and Solis joined forces for the mapping of the American shores, and in 1514, Solis discovered the mouth of the Rio de la Plata, where he was devoured by the natives, leaving Magellan the glory of rounding the continent. This great navigator set out with five ships in 1519; followed the coast of Patagonia; discovered the ports of Desire, and San Julian, where he had a long rest; found Cape Virgenes at the mouth of this strait that bears his name at fifty-two degrees of latitude, and on the 28th of November, 1520, he emerged into the Pacific Ocean. Ah! what a joy he must have felt, and how his heart must have beat, when he saw a new sea sparkle on the horizon beneath the rays of the sun!"

"Yes, Mr. Paganel!" said Robert Grant, excited by the words of the geographer. "I would have liked to be there!"

"Me too, my boy, and I would not have missed such an opportunity, if Heaven had given birth to me three hundred years ago!"

"That would have been unfortunate for us, Mr. Paganel," said Lady Helena, "for you would not be on the *Duncan*'s poop now to tell us this story."

"Another would have said it in my place, Madame, and he would have added that the mapping of the west coast is due to the brothers Pizarro. Those bold adventurers were great founders of cities. Cusco, Quito, Lima, Santiago, Villarica, Valparaiso and Concepción — where the *Duncan* takes us — are their work. At that time, Pizarro's discoveries were connected with those of Magellan, and the complete American coast appeared on the maps, much to the satisfaction of the old world's scientists."

"Well," said Robert, "I would not have been satisfied yet."

"Why is that?" asked Mary, looking at her younger brother, who was passionately hanging on every word of this tale of discoveries.

"Yes, my boy. Why?" asked Lord Glenarvan with the most encouraging smile.

"Because I'd want to know what was beyond the Strait of Magellan."

"Bravo, my friend," said Paganel, "and I too would have liked to know whether the continent extended to the pole, or whether there was a free sea, as Drake supposed — one of your compatriots, my Lord. It is therefore obvious that if Robert Grant and Jacques Paganel had lived in the seventeenth century, they would have followed Shouten and Lemaire, two Dutch explorers eager to solve this geographic enigma.

"Were they scientists?" asked Lady Helena.

"No, but daring traders, who cared little for the scientific side of their discoveries. At the time, the Dutch East Indian Company had an absolute monopoly over all the trade through the Straits of Magellan. Since no other passage was yet known to reach Asia by travelling West, this monopoly gave them enormous profit. Some merchants wished to thwart this monopoly by discovering another strait. One of these men was Isaac Lemaire, an intelligent and educated man. He paid for an expedition commanded by his nephew, Jacob Lemaire, and Shouten, an experienced sailor from Horn. These bold navigators set out in June 1615, nearly a century after Magellan; they discovered the strait of Lemaire, between Tierra del Fuego and the Staten Island,[fn2] and on February 12, 1616, they doubled the famous Cape Horn, which, even more than its brother, the Cape of Good Hope, would have deserved to be called 'The Cape of Storms!'"

"Oh, I would have liked to be there!" said Robert.

"And you would have experienced the greatest satisfaction, my boy," said Paganel, becoming more animated. "Is there, in fact, a truer satisfaction, a pleasure more real than that of the navigator who adds his own discoveries to the map? He sees a land gradually forming under his gaze, island by island, promontory by promontory, and, so to speak, emerging from the bosom of the waves! At first, the

outlines are vague, broken, and interrupted! Here a solitary cape; there an isolated bay; further a gulf of unknown breadth. Slowly the discoveries come together; the lines meet; the dotted lines of guesswork give way to the solid lines of fact. The bare bones are fleshed out by the indentations of the bays; the capes attach to fixed shores until, finally, the new continent with its lakes, rivers, mountains, valleys, and plains; villages, towns, and capitals is spread out on the globe in all its magnificent splendour! *Ah*, my friends, a discoverer of land is a real inventor! He has the greatest joy and wonder! But now this mine is almost exhausted! We have seen everything, identified everything, invented the continents or new worlds, and we — the latest ones to come in geographical science — have we nothing more to do?"

"Yes, my dear Paganel," replied Glenarvan.

"What?"

"What we do!"

The *Duncan*, continued in the course of Vespucci and Magellan with marvellous speed. On September 15th, she crossed the tropic of Capricorn, and the course was set for the entrance of the famous strait. Several times the lower coasts of Patagonia were seen as a barely visible line on the horizon, more than ten miles away, and Paganel's famous telescope gave him only a vague idea of these American shores.

On the 25th of September, the *Duncan* arrived off the Straits of Magellan, and entered them without delay. This route is generally preferred by steamers on their way to the Pacific Ocean. The exact length of the straits is 376 miles.[fn3] Ships of the largest tonnage find sufficient water depth throughout, even close to the shore. There is a good bottom everywhere, an abundance of fresh water, rivers abounding in fish, forests in game, and plenty of safe and accessible harbours. In fact a thousand things that are lacking in Lemaire Strait and Cape Horn, with its terrible rocks incessantly visited by hurricanes and tempests.

For the first few hours, that is sixty to eighty miles — as far as Cape Gregory — the coasts were low and sandy. Jacques Paganel did not want to miss a single view, nor a single detail of the straits. The passage would take thirty-six hours, and the moving panorama on both sides, seen in all the clearness and glory of the light of a southern sun, was well worth the trouble of looking at and admiring. On the Terra del Fuego side, a few wretched-looking people were wandering about on the rocks, but on the other side not a solitary inhabitant was visible.

Paganel was so disappointed at not being able to catch a glimpse of any Patagonians, that his companions were quite amused by him. He would insist that a Patagonia without Patagonians was not a Patagonia at all.

"Patience, my worthy geographer," said Lord Glenarvan. "We shall see the Patagonians yet."

"I am not sure of it."

"But there are such a people," said Lady Helena.

"I greatly doubt it, Madame, since I don't see them."

"But surely the very name of Patagonia, which means 'big feet' in Spanish, would not have been given to imaginary beings."

"Oh, the name doesn't have anything to do with it," said Paganel, who was arguing simply for the sake of arguing. "And besides, to speak the truth, we are not sure if that is their name."

"What an idea!" said Glenarvan. "Did you know that, Major?"

"No. And I wouldn't give a Scotch pound-note for the information."

"You shall hear it, however, Major Indifferent," said Paganel. "Though Magellan called the natives of this country Patagonians, the Fuegians called them 'Tiremenen,' the Chileans 'Caucalhues,' the colonists of Carmen 'Tehuelches,' the Araucans 'Huiliches'; Bougainville gives them the name of 'Chauha,' and Falkner that of 'Tehuelhets'. The name they give themselves is 'Inaken'. Now, tell me, how would you identify them? Indeed, is it likely that a people with so many names has any actual existence?"

"That's a queer argument, certainly," said Lady Helena.

"I'll admit that," said her husband, "but our friend Paganel must also admit that even if there are doubts about the name of the Patagonians, there is none about their size."

"Indeed, I will never admit to anything as outrageous as that," replied Paganel.

"They are tall," said Glenarvan.

"I don't know."

"Small?" asked Lady Helena.

"No one can say."

"About average, then?" said MacNabbs, looking for a compromise.

"I don't know that either."

"That's going a little too far," said Glenarvan. "Travellers who have seen them—"

"Travellers who have seen them," interrupted Paganel, "don't agree at all in their accounts. Magellan said that his head scarcely reached to their waist."

"Well, that proves—"

"Yes, but Drake declares that the English are taller than the tallest Patagonian!"

"About what I'd expect from an Englishman," said the major, disdainfully, "but what would a Scot say?"

"Cavendish assures us that they are tall and robust," said Paganel. "Hawkins makes out that they are giants. Lemaire and Shouten declare that they are eleven feet tall."

"These are all credible witnesses," said Glenarvan.

"Yes, quite as much as Wood, Narborough, and Falkner, who say they are of medium stature. Again, Byron, Giraudais, Bougainville, Wallis, and Carteret, declared that the Patagonians are six feet six inches tall while M. d'Orbigny, the scholar who knows these lands best, gives them an average height of five feet four inches."

"But what is the truth, then, among all these contradictions?" asked Lady Helena.

"Just this, Madame; the Patagonians have short legs, and a large trunk; or by way of a joke we might say that these natives are six feet tall when they are sitting, and only five when they are standing."

"*Bravo!* My dear geographer," said Glenarvan. "That is very well put."

"Unless the race has no existence: that would reconcile all statements," said Paganel. "But here is one consolation, in any event: the Straits of Magellan are very magnificent, even without Patagonians."

The *Duncan* was rounding the peninsula of Brunswick between splendid panoramas. Seventy miles after doubling Cape Gregory, she passed the penitentiary of Punta Arena on her starboard. The church steeple and the Chilean flag gleamed for an instant among the trees, and then the strait wound on between huge granitic masses which had an imposing effect. Cloud-capped mountains appeared, their heads white with eternal snows, and their feet hidden in immense forests. Toward the southwest, Mount Tarn rose 6,500 feet high. Night came on after a long lingering twilight — the light imperceptibly melting away into soft shades.

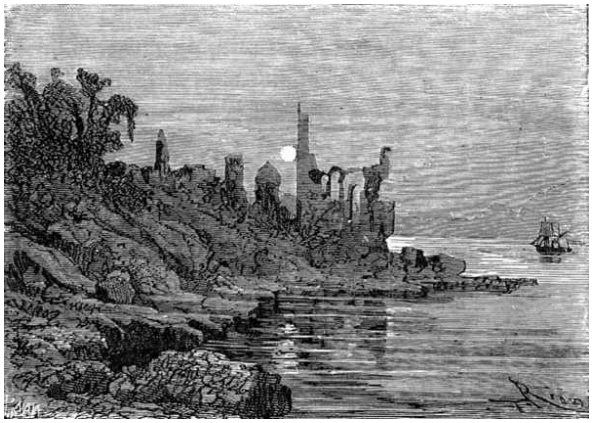
Often the end of *Duncan*'s yards grazed the branches of the Antarctic beeches leaning over the waves

The sky glittered with brilliant stars, and the Southern Cross pointed the way for navigators seeking the south pole. In the midst of this luminous darkness, in the light of these stars which replace the lighthouses on the civilized coast, the yacht continued its course audaciously, without anchoring in any of the easy bays that abound on this shore. She continued her course fearlessly through the luminous darkness. Often the end of her yards grazed the branches of the Antarctic beeches leaning over the waves. Her screw beat the waters of the great rivers, waking geese, ducks, snipe, and teal.

Presently ruins came in sight, crumbling buildings, which the night invested with grandeur: the sad remains of a deserted settlement, whose name will be an eternal protest against these fertile shores and forests full of game. The *Duncan* was passing Port Famine.

It was on this site that the Spaniard Sarmiento, settled with three hundred immigrants in 1584. He founded the settlement of *Rey Don Felipe*, but the extreme severity of the winters decimated the colony, and those who had survived through

the cold subsequently died of starvation. The English privateer Thomas Cavendish landed at the site in 1587, and found only ruins. He named the site Port Famine.[fn4]



Port Famine

The *Duncan* sailed past these deserted shores, and at daybreak entered a series of narrow channels. She sailed between forests of beech, ash, and birch from which emerged green domes of foothills carpeted with vigorous holly. Sharp crags, Buckland's Obelisk the tallest among them, rose above the hills. She passed the bay of St. Nicholas, formerly French Bay, so named by Bougainville. In the distance, herds of seals and pods of large whales played. Their spouts could be seen from four miles away. At length the *Duncan* doubled Cape Froward, still bristling with the ice of the last winter. On the other side of the strait, in Terra del Fuego, stood Mount Sarmiento, towering to a height of 6,000 feet: an enormous accumulation of rocks, separated by bands of cloud, forming a sort of aerial archipelago. Cape Froward is the true southern tip of the American continent, for Cape Horn is nothing but a rock lost at sea at a latitude of 52°.

Beyond Cape Froward the strait narrowed between Brunswick Peninsula and Desolation Island: a long island lying between a thousand islets, like a huge cetacean beached upon of the rocks. What a contrast between this jagged end of America and the sharp peaks of Africa, Australia or India! What unknown cataclysm had pulverized this immense promontory thrown up between two oceans?

These fertile shores gave way to a series of barren coasts, wild-looking, indented by the thousand fjords of this labyrinth. The *Duncan*, without error or hesitation, followed a sinuous course, mixing the eddies of her smoke with the mists churned by the rocks. She passed, without slowing, before some Spanish factories established on these abandoned banks. The strait widened at Cape Tamar. At last, thirty-six hours after entering the strait, she saw the rock of Cape Pilares appear on the western extremity of Desolation Island. An immense, free, sparkling sea stretched out before her bow, and Jacques Paganel greeted her with an enthusiastic gesture. He felt himself as moved as Ferdinand Magellan himself at the moment when the *Trinidad*[fn5] sailed into the breezes of the Pacific Ocean.

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fn1. Venezuela. — DAS

fn2. Named after the Netherlands States-General, just like the New York borough. Now part of Argentina, and known as *Isla de los Estados*. — DAS

fn3. 130 leagues. (520 kilometres. — DAS)

fn4. Verne has the settlement founded in 1581, and Cavendish finding one survivor. — DAS

fn5. The ship that carried Magellan.

Chapter X
The 37th Parallel

Eight days after they had doubled Cape Pilares, the *Duncan* steamed into the Talcahuano Bay, a magnificent estuary, twelve miles long and nine broad. The weather was splendid. The skies of this country are cloudless from November to March, and the southerly wind invariably reigns along the coast sheltered by the Andean range. Following Lord Glenarvan's orders, John Mangles had sailed as closely to the Chiloé Archipelago as possible, and examined all the inlets and windings of the coast, hoping to discover some traces of the shipwreck. A broken spar or a piece of wood worked by the hands of men could have put them on the right track, but they found nothing and the *Duncan* continued on her way until she dropped anchor at the port of Talcahuano, forty-two days after leaving the misty waters of the Clyde.

Glenarvan had a boat lowered immediately, and accompanied by Paganel, landed at the foot of the pier. The learned geographer gladly availed himself of the opportunity to make use of the Spanish he had been studying so conscientiously, but to his astonishment, found he could not make himself understood by the natives.

"I don't have the accent," he said.

"Let's go to Customs," said Glenarvan.

There, he learned by means of a few English words, aided by expressive gestures, that the British Consul lived at Concepción, an hour's ride away. Glenarvan easily found two swift horses, and he and Paganel were soon within the walls of the great city founded by the enterprising genius of Valdivia, the valiant comrade of the Pizarros. It had declined from its former splendour. Often pillaged by the natives, and burned in 1819, it lay in desolation and ruin, its walls still blackened by the flames. It scarcely numbered 8,000 inhabitants, now, and was overshadowed by Talcahuano. Grass was growing in the streets beneath the lazy feet of its citizens, and all trade and business, indeed any variety of activity, was impossible. The notes of mandolins resounded from every balcony, and languid songs floated on the breeze. Concepción, the ancient city of men, had become a village of women and children.

Lord Glenarvan was unwilling to inquire into the causes of this decay, though Paganel tried to draw him into a discussion on the subject. Without losing a moment he went to J. R. Bentock, Esq., Consul of her Britannic Majesty, who received them very courteously, and, on learning the story of Captain Grant, undertook to make inquiries all along the coast.

As to the question of whether the three-master *Britannia* had come to grief near the 37th parallel along the Chilean or Araucanían coast, he had no information. No report of such an event had reached the Consul, or any of his colleagues from other nations. Glenarvan was not discouraged; he went back to Talcahuano, and spared

neither pains nor expense. He dispatched agents to make an examination of the coast, but it was all in vain. The most careful inquiries made among the neighbouring populations were fruitless, and Lord Glenarvan returned to the yacht to report his lack of success. It had to be concluded that the *Britannia* had left no trace of her shipwreck.

Concepción

When Glenarvan told his companions of his failure to learn anything, Mary Grant and her brother could not restrain their grief. It was six days after the arrival of the *Duncan* at Talcahuano. The passengers were gathered on the poop. Lady Helena did her best to console them, not with words (What could she say?) but with hugs and caresses. Jacques Paganel took up the document and began studying it again, as if he wanted to snatch new secrets from it. He had been poring over it for more than an hour when Glenarvan interrupted him.

"Paganel! I appeal to your intelligence. Has our analysis of this document been wrong? Is there anything illogical about our interpretation?"

Paganel was silent, absorbed in reflection.

"Have we mistaken the place where the catastrophe occurred?" asked Glenarvan. "Does not the name Patagonia seem apparent even to the least clear-sighted individual?"

Paganel was still silent.

"Besides," said Glenarvan, "does not the word *Indian* prove we are right?"

"Perfectly," said MacNabbs.

"And is it not evident, then, that at the moment of writing the words, the shipwrecked men were expecting to be made prisoners by the Indians?"

"I wouldn't go that far, my dear Lord," said Paganel. "Even if your other conclusions are correct, that last one, at least, does not seem to be the only interpretation to me."

"What do you mean?" asked Lady Helena, while all eyes were fixed on the geographer.

"I mean," said Paganel, emphasizing his words, "that Captain Grant is *now* a prisoner of the Indians, and I further add that the document states it unmistakably."

"Explain yourself, sir," said Mary Grant.

"Nothing is plainer, dear Mary. Instead of reading the document *'seront prisonniers'*, read *'sont prisonniers'*, and the whole thing is clear."

"But that's impossible," said Lord Glenarvan.

"Impossible? Why, my noble friend?" asked Paganel, smiling.

"Because the bottle could only have been thrown into the sea just when the vessel broke on the rocks, and consequently the latitude and longitude given refer to the actual place of the shipwreck."

"There is no proof of that," said Paganel, sharply. "And I see nothing to preclude the supposition that the poor fellows — after having been dragged by the Indians into the interior of the continent — sought to make known the place of their captivity by means of this bottle."

"Except for the fact, my dear Paganel, that in order to throw a bottle into the sea, the sea must be there."

"Or in the absence of the sea, a river which ran into it."

An astonished silence greeted this unexpected, and yet reasonable, answer. The brightening of everyone's eyes revealed the rekindling of their hope to Paganel. Lady Helena was the first to speak.

"What an idea!"

"And what a *good* idea," added the geographer, innocently.

"What would you advise, then?" said Glenarvan.

"My advice is to follow the 37th parallel from the point where it touches the American continent to where it dips into the Atlantic, without deviating from it half a degree, and possibly in some part of its course we shall find the shipwrecked from the *Britannia*."

"There is a poor chance of that," said the major.

"Poor as it is," said Paganel, "we must not neglect it. If I am right in my conjecture, that the bottle reached the sea on the current of some river, we cannot fail to fall on the path of the prisoners. You can easily convince yourselves of this by looking at this map of the country."

He laid out a map of Chile and the Argentinian provinces on the table as he spoke.

"Just follow me across the American continent for a moment. Let us cross the narrow strip of Chile, and over the Andes mountains, and get into the heart of the Pampas. Will we find any lack of rivers, watercourses, or streams? No, for the Rio Negro, Rio Colorado, and their tributaries are intersected by the 37th parallel, and any of them might have carried the bottle on its waters. There, perhaps, in the midst of a tribe in some Indian settlement at the edge of some little-known river in the gorges of the mountains, those whom I may call my friends await some providential intervention. Ought we to disappoint their hopes? Do you not all agree with me that it is our duty to go along the line my finger is pointing out at this moment on the map? And if, against all odds, we find I have been mistaken, is it not then our duty to

keep moving straight on, and follow the 37th parallel until we find those we seek, even if we go all around the world?"

His generous enthusiasm so touched his listeners that they involuntarily rose to their feet and came to shake his hands.

"Yes!" cried Robert, devouring the map with his eyes. "My father is there!"

"And wherever he is," said Glenarvan, "we will find him. Nothing can be more logical than Paganel's theory, and we must, without hesitation, follow the course he points out. Captain Grant may have fallen into the hands of a large tribe, or his captors may be but a handful. In the latter case we shall carry him off at once. If the former, after we have reconnoitred the situation, we will meet with the *Duncan* on the eastern coast and go to Buenos Aires, where we can soon organize a detachment of men, with Major MacNabbs at their head, strong enough to tackle all the Indians in the Argentinian provinces."

"Hear, hear, Your Honour!" said John Mangles, "And may I ask, will this crossing of the continent be without peril?"

"Without danger, or hardship," said Paganel. "How many have already accomplished it, who had scarcely any resources, and whose courage was not supported by the grandeur of this enterprise! Did not Basilio Villarino go from Carmen to the Cordilleras in 1782? Didn't Don Luiz de la Cruz, a Chilean alcalde of the province of Concepción, follow this 37th parallel across the Andes from Antuco to Buenos Aires in only forty days in 1806? Finally, have not Colonel Garcia, Mr. Alcide d'Orbigny, and my honourable colleague, Dr. Martin de Moussy, travelled this country in every direction, and done for science what we are going to do for humaneness?"

"Monsieur, Monsieur!" said Mary Grant in a voice broken with emotion. "How can you follow a vocation that exposes you to so many dangers?"

"Dangers!" exclaimed Paganel. "Who said anything about danger?"

"Not me!" said Robert Grant, his eyes wide and bright.

"Dangers!" scoffed Paganel, "They aren't worth considering. A journey of three hundred and fifty leagues, in a straight line. A journey which will take place at a latitude similar to Spain, Sicily, or Greece in the other hemisphere and therefore in a climate almost identical. A trip whose duration will be a month at most! It's a walk in the country!"

"Monsieur Paganel," asked Lady Helena, "you have no fear then that if the poor fellows have fallen into the hands of the Indians their lives at least have been spared."

"What a question? Why, Madame, the Indians are not cannibals! Far from it. One of my own countrymen, M. Guinnard, who I knew at the *Geographical Society*, was a prisoner among the Indians in the Pampas for three years. He suffered. He was badly treated, but came out victorious from his ordeal. A European is a useful being in these countries. The Indians know his value, and take care of him as if he were some prize animal."

"There is no time for delay," said Lord Glenarvan. "We must go, and as soon as possible. What route should we take?"

"One that is both easy and agreeable," said Paganel. "It is rather mountainous at first, but then it slopes gently down the eastern side of the Andes into a smooth plain, turfed and gravelled quite like a garden."

"Let's see the map," said the major.

"Here it is, my dear MacNabbs. We shall pick up the 37th parallel on the coast, between Rumena Point and Carnero Bay, pass through the capital of Araucanía, and cut through the mountains by Antuco Pass north of the volcano. Then gliding gently down the mountain sides, past the Rio Neuquén and the Rio Colorado we reach the Pampas, Lake Epecuén,[fn1] the Guamini River, to the Sierra Tapalquen. There we shall reach the frontier of the province of Buenos Aires. This we shall cross, and pass over the Sierra Tandil, pursuing our search to the very shores of the Atlantic, as far as Point Medano."

Paganel went through this itinerary for the expedition without so much as a glance at the map. He was so well informed in the travels of Frézier, Molina, Humboldt, Miers, and d'Orbigny, that he had the geographical nomenclature at his finger tips, and trusted implicitly to his never-failing memory.

"You see then, my dear friends," he added, "that it is a straight road. In thirty days we shall have gone over it, and arrived on the eastern side to reunite with the *Duncan*, however much she may be delayed by the westerly winds."

"Then the *Duncan* is to cruise between Cape Corrientes and Cape San Antonio," said John Mangles.

"Just so."

"And how is the expedition to be organized?" asked Glenarvan.

"As simply as possible. All there is to be done is to reconnoiter the situation of Captain Grant and not to fight with the Indians. I think that Lord Glenarvan, our natural leader; the major, who would not yield his place to anybody; and your humble servant, Jacques Paganel—"

"And me!" said young Robert.

"Robert!" exclaimed Mary.

"Why not?" asked Paganel. "Travel shapes the young. We four, and three sailors from the *Duncan*."

"And does Your Honour mean to pass me by?" John Mangles asked Glenarvan.

"My dear John," said Glenarvan, "we're leaving the ladies on board, those dearer to me than life, and who is to watch over them but the *Duncan*'s devoted captain?"

"Then we can't accompany you?" asked Lady Helena, a shade of sadness clouding her eyes.

"My dear Helena, the journey must be accomplished with great speed. Our separation will be short."

"Yes, dear, I understand. It's all right; and I do hope you will succeed."

"Besides, you can hardly call it a journey," said Paganel.

"What is it, then?" asked Lady Helena

"A passage, nothing more. We will pass, like the honest man of the earth, doing as much good as possible. *Transire beneficiendo*[fn2] shall be our motto."

This ended the discussion, if a conversation can be so called where all who take part in it are of the same opinion. Preparations commenced the same day, but as secretly as possible to prevent the Indians getting wind of it.

Tom Austin, Wilson, and Mulrady

The day of departure was set for the 14th of October. When it came to choosing the sailors to go with them, all volunteered, and Glenarvan was spoiled for choice. To prevent jealousy among the crew he chose the three to accompany him by lot. Fortune favoured the mate, Tom Austin; Wilson, a strong, jovial young fellow; and Mulrady, so good a boxer that he might have entered the lists with Tom Sayers[fn3] himself.

Glenarvan had been very busy with the preparations, for he was anxious to be ready by the appointed day. John Mangles was equally busy in coaling and provisioning the ship, so she would be ready to put to sea as soon as the land party departed. He wanted to be the first to reach the Argentinian coast. The friendly rivalry between them benefitted them all.

On the 14th of October, at the appointed hour, everything was ready. The whole search party assembled in the saloon to bid farewell to those who remained behind. The *Duncan* was just about to get under way, and already the blades of her screw were agitating the limpid waters of Talcahuano. Glenarvan, Paganel, MacNabbs, Robert Grant, Tom Austin, Wilson, and Mulrady stood armed with Colt rifles and revolvers. Guides and mules awaited them at the end of the pier.

"It is time," said Lord Edward at last.

"Go then, dear Edward," said Lady Helena, restraining her emotion.

Lord Glenarvan clasped her closely to his breast for an instant, and then turned away, while Robert flung his arms round Mary's neck.

"And now, dear companions," said Paganel, "a final handshake, to last us to the shores of the Atlantic!"

It was a lot to ask, but he certainly got strong enough grips and hugs to go some way toward satisfying his desire. They went up onto the deck, and the seven

searchers left the *Duncan*. They were soon on the quay, and as the yacht came about to set course for the harbour channel, she came within half a cable of the wharf.

Lady Helena called out "God help you, my friends!" one last time from the quarterdeck.

"And he will help us, Madame," shouted Paganel in reply, "for you may be sure we will help ourselves."

"All ahead!" the captain shouted to his engineer.

"Move out!" ordered Lord Glenarvan.

And as the travellers turned their mounts to follow the path along the shore, the *Duncan*, propelled by her screw, was heading out to sea.

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fn1. Verne has "Salinas" here, but that lake is 500 miles (800 kilometres) north of Paganel's projected route, and Lake Epecuén is right where he placed Salinas. — DAS

fn2. Latin: to travel along while doing good. — DAS

fn3. A famous boxer from London.

Chapter XI
Crossing Chile

THE NATIVE TROOPS ORGANIZED BY LORD GLENARVAN CONSISTED OF THREE MEN AND A BOY. The captain of the muleteers was an Englishman who had become naturalized through twenty years' residence in the country. He made a livelihood by renting out mules to travellers and leading them over the difficult passes of the Cordilleras, after which he put them in the charge of a *baqueano*, or Argentinian guide, familiar with the routes through the Pampas. This Englishman had not spent so much time among mules and Indians that he had forgotten his mother tongue. This was fortunate as Lord Glenarvan found it far easier to pass his orders through him if he wanted to see them carried out, than to rely on Paganel's still imperfect grasp of the language.

The *catapez*, as he was called in Chilean, had two native peons and a boy about twelve years old under him. The peons took care of the baggage mules and the boy led the *madrina*, a young mare adorned with rattles and bells which walked in front, leading the ten mules. The searchers rode seven of these, and the *catapez* another. The remaining two mules carried provisions, and a few bales of goods intended to secure the goodwill of the *caciques* of the plain. The peons walked, as was their custom. Travelling in this manner was considered to be the quickest, and safest way to cross the continent.

The madrina walked in front, leading the ten mules

Crossing the Andes is not a simple journey to undertake. It could not be accomplished without the help of the famously hardy Argentinian mules. These excellent animals are far superior to other breeds. They are not particular about their food, drink only once a day, and they can easily travel ten leagues in eight hours while carrying a load of fourteen *arrobes*[fn1] without complaint.

There would be few inns along this road from one ocean to another. The searchers took provisions of dried meat and rice seasoned with pimento, which they would supplement with such game as could be shot along the way. They would drink the water from mountain torrents and streams in the plains, seasoned by the addition of a few drops of rum. Each man carried a supply of this in a bullock's horn, called a *chiffle*. They had to be careful not to abuse alcoholic beverages however, as the climate itself had a peculiarly exhilarating effect on the nervous system. Their saddles, called *recado* by the natives, also served as their bedding. This saddle is made of *pelions* — sheepskin, tanned on one side and woolly on the other — fastened by ornately

embroidered straps. Wrapped in these warm coverings a searcher could sleep soundly, well protected on the damp nights.

Glenarvan was an experienced traveller who knew how to adapt himself to the customs of other countries. He adopted the Chilean costume for himself and his whole party. Paganel and Robert, like two children — one big and one small — were wild with delight as they inserted their heads in the national *poncho*: an immense tartan cloth with a hole in the centre. Their legs were encased in high, colt leather boots. The mules were richly caparisoned, with Arabian bits in their mouths, and long reins of plaited leather which also served as a whip; the headpiece of the bridle was decorated with metal ornaments, and each mule carried *alforjas*, double sacks of brightly coloured cloth, containing the day's provisions.

Robert and Paganel

Paganel, distracted as usual, was nearly kicked three or four times by his excellent steed before he could mount it. But once in the saddle, his inseparable telescope hung on his baldric, he held on well enough: keeping his feet fast in the stirrups and trusting entirely to the intelligence of his mule. As for young Robert, his first attempt at mounting was successful, and he showed that he had the makings of an excellent horseman.

The weather was splendid when they set out; the sky was a deep cloudless blue; the heat of the sun was moderated by refreshing sea breezes. They made their way quickly along the winding shore of Talcahuano Bay on their way to the parallel, thirty miles to the south. They spoke little as they passed through the reeds of old desiccated marshes, the farewells of their departure still a poignant memory. The smoke from the *Duncan* was still visible on the horizon. All were silent, except for Paganel, who talked to himself in Spanish, asking and answering questions.

The *catapez* was a naturally taciturn man, and his calling had not made him more talkative. He hardly spoke to his peons. They understood their duties perfectly. If one of the mules stopped they urged it on with a guttural cry, and if that proved insufficient a good-sized pebble, thrown with unerring aim, soon cured the animal's obstinacy. If a strap came loose, or a rein fell, a peon came forward instantly and threw his poncho over the animal's head to calm it until the tack could be repaired and the march resumed.

It was the custom of the muleteers to start at eight o'clock, right after breakfast, and not to stop until they made camp for the night, about four o'clock in the afternoon. Glenarvan kept with the practice, and the first halt was just as they arrived at Arauco, at the very end of the bay, without having abandoned the frothy edge of the ocean. To reach the western end of the 37th parallel they would have to continue as far as Carnero Bay, twenty miles further, but Glenarvan's agents had already scoured that part of the coast without encountering any sign of the sinking. To repeat the exploration would have been pointless. It was therefore decided that Arauco should be their jumping off point, and that they should strike inland from from there.

The little troop entered the city to spend the night, and encamped in an inn, the comfort of which was still rudimentary.

Arauco is the capital of Araucanía, a country a hundred and fifty leagues long, thirty wide, and inhabited by the Mapuche, the descendants of the Chilean race sung of by the poet Ercilla.[fn2] A proud and strong people, the only one in the two Americas that has never submitted to foreign domination.[fn3] If Arauco had once belonged to the Spaniards, the people at least had not submitted. They resisted the Spaniards as they now resisted the invading Chileans, and their independent flag — a white star on a field of azure — still floated at the top of the fortified hill which protected the city.

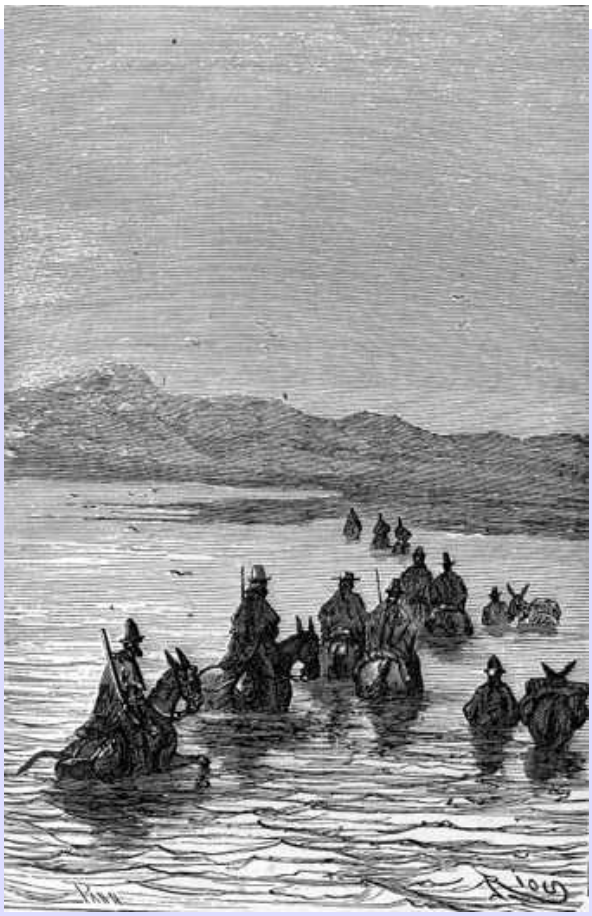
While supper was being prepared, Glenarvan, Paganel, and the *catapez* walked among the thatched houses. Except for a church and the remains of a Franciscan convent, Arauco offered little to the curious tourist. Glenarvan tried unsuccessfully to gather some information. Paganel was desperate to make himself understood by the inhabitants, but since they spoke Araucanían — a tongue that was in general use all the way to the Strait of Magellan — Paganel's Spanish served him as well as Hebrew. He had to use his eyes, rather than his ears, in his scholarly pursuits, and took great delight in observing the variety of Mapuche people around him. The men were tall, with flat faces, coppery complexions, shaved chins, skeptical eyes, and large heads lost in long black hair. They seemed doomed to the special idleness of warriors who do not know what to do in peacetime. Their grim and courageous wives were busy with the hard work of the household: grooming the horses, cleaning the weapons, ploughing, hunting for their husbands, and still finding time to weave richly embroidered ponchos that required two years to make, and could sell for over 100 dollars.[fn4]

In short, these Mapuches were an uninteresting people, with rather wild manners. They have almost all the human vices, against one virtue: the love of independence. "True Spartans," said Paganel when his walk was over and he took his place at the evening meal.

The worthy scholar perhaps exaggerated the qualities of the Mapuches, and was even less understood when he added that his French heart was beating loudly during his visit to the city of Arauco. When the major asked him the reason for this

unexpected “beating,” he replied that his emotion was very natural, since a fellow Frenchman had once occupied the throne of Araucanía. The major begged him to be good enough to make known the name of this sovereign. Jacques Paganel proudly named the brave Orélie-Antoine de Tounens, an excellent man, a former lawyer from Perigueux, a little too bearded, and who had undergone what dethroned kings like to call “the ingratitude of their subjects.”[fn5] The major smiled slightly at the idea of a former solicitor driven from the throne; Paganel replied very seriously that it was perhaps easier for a lawyer to make a good king, than for a king to make a good lawyer.

And on that note, everyone laughed and drank a few drops of *chicha*[fn6] to the health of Orélie-Antoine I^{er}, the former King of Araucanía. A few minutes later the searchers, wrapped in their ponchos, were all soundly asleep.



The ford of the Rio de Tubal

At eight o’clock the next day, with the *madrina* at the head, and the peons at the tail, the little troop returned to following the 37th parallel to the east. They crossed the fertile territory of Araucanía, rich in vineyards and herds. But, little by little, it became more desolate. Sometimes, after miles without seeing anything, they’d pass by a hut of a *rastreadores*: an Indian tracker, famous throughout America. Sometimes they’d see an abandoned post house that served as a shelter for a wandering plains native. Their route was intersected by two rivers: the Rio de Raque and the Rio de Tubal. But the *catapez* led them to fords that allowed them to cross. The chain of the Andes unfolded on the horizon, its foothills swelling and peaks multiplying. These were still the low vertebrae of the enormous spine running down the back of the New World.

At four o’clock in the evening, after a journey of thirty-five miles, they stopped in the middle of the countryside under a bouquet of giant myrtle. The mules were unbridled and went off to graze the thick grass of the meadow. The *alforjas* supplied the accustomed meat and rice. The *pelions* laid out on the ground served as blankets and pillows, and each of them found a restful repose on these improvised beds while the peons and the *catapez* took turns keeping watch.

Since the weather remained so favourable, the whole party was in perfect health, and the journey had commenced under such happy auspices, the entire party wanted

to push forward as quickly as possible. The next day they marched thirty-five miles or more, crossed the Bell Rapids without incident, and encamped at nightfall on the banks of Rio Biobio which separates Spanish Chile from independent Chile. The country was still rich and fertile and abounded in amaryllis, tree violets, fluschies, daturas and cactuses with golden flowers. Some animals were seen among the brush, but there were not many natives. A few *guassos*, the degenerate offspring of Indians and Spaniards, passed like shadows on horses galloping across the plain. The horses' flanks were bloodied by cruel thrusts from the spurs of their riders' feet. It was impossible to make inquiries when there was no one to question and Lord Glenarvan came to the conclusion that Captain Grant must have been dragged right over the Andes into the Pampas, and that it would be useless to search for him elsewhere. The only thing to be done was to press forward with all the speed in their power.

On the 17th they set out in the usual line of march: a line which was difficult for Robert to keep. His eagerness constantly compelled him to get ahead of the *madrina*, to the great despair of his mule. Nothing but a sharp recall from Glenarvan kept the boy in his proper place.

The country became more rugged, and the rising ground promised future mountains. Rivers were more numerous, and came rushing noisily down the slopes. Paganel consulted his maps and when he found any of these streams not marked, which happened often, all the fire of a geographer would burn in his veins.

"An unnamed river is like having no civil standing," he would declare with charming anger. "It has no existence in the eye of geographical law!"

He did not hesitate to baptize these unnamed rivers and mark them down on the map, qualifying them with the most high-sounding adjectives he could find in the Spanish language.

"What a language!" he said. "How full and sonorous it is! It is like the finest bronze that church bells are made of — composed of seventy-eight parts of copper and twenty-two of tin."

"But do you make any progress in it?" asked Glenarvan.

"Most certainly, my dear Lord. Ah, if it wasn't the accent, that wretched accent!"

And for want anything better to do, Paganel whiled away the time along the road by practising the difficulties in pronunciation, repeating all the jawbreaking words he could, though still making geographical observations. Any question about the country that Glenarvan might ask the *catapez* was sure to be answered by the learned Frenchman before he could reply, to the great astonishment of the guide who gazed at him in bewilderment.

About ten o'clock that same day they came to a crossroad, and naturally enough Glenarvan inquired the name of it.

"It is the road from Yumbel to Los Ángeles," said Paganel.

Glenarvan looked at the *catapez*.

"Quite right," he said. Turning toward the geographer, he added "You have traveled in these parts before, sir?"

"*Parbleu!*" said Paganel, seriously.

"On a mule?"

"No, in an armchair."

The *catapez* did not understand, but shrugged his shoulders and resumed his post at the head of the party.

At five in the evening they stopped in a shallow gorge, some miles above the little town of Loja, and encamped for the night at the foot of the Sierras: the first rungs of the great Cordillera.

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fn1. The *arrobe* is a local measure equivalent to 11.5 kilograms.

fn2. Alonso de Ercilla was a sixteenth century Spanish nobleman, soldier and poet, who wrote an epic poem, *La Araucana*, about the Araucanían insurrection. — DAS

fn3. This was not to last much longer. The Chilean Occupation of Araucanía was completed by 1883. — DAS

fn4. 500 francs. (£20. — DAS)

fn5. Orélie-Antoine de Tounens' "subjects," the Mapuches, seemed to be quite happy with him. It was the government authorities of Chile who took exception, arrested him, declared him insane, and shipped him back to France. — DAS

fn6. Fermented corn brandy.

Chapter XII
Twelve Thousand Feet Aloft

THE PASSAGE ACROSS CHILE HAD TAKEN PLACE WITHOUT ANY SIGNIFICANT INCIDENTS, BUT all the obstacles and dangers of a mountain journey were about to crowd on the searchers. The struggle with the natural barrier was truly beginning.

An important question had to be resolved before they began. Lord Glenarvan asked the *catapez* which pass would take them over the Andes, without taking them too far away from the 37th parallel?

"I do not know," he said, "but there are only two practicable passes that I know of in this part of the Cordilleras."

"One is undoubtedly the pass of Arica discovered by Valdivia Mendoze," said Paganel.

"Exactly."

"And the other is that of Villarica, located south of Nevado."

"Just so."

"Well, my good fellow, both these passes have only one fault; they take us too far out of our route, either north or south."

"Have you another pass to propose?" asked the major.

"Certainly," said Paganel. "There is the Antuco Pass on the slope of the volcano at latitude, 37° 30′, or in other words, only half a degree out of our way. It is only a thousand fathoms high and has been scouted by Zamudio de Cruz."

"That would do," said Glenarvan. "Are you acquainted with this Antuco Pass, *catapez?"*

"Yes, your Lordship, I have crossed it, but I did not mention it as it is just a cattle path used by the Indian shepherds of the eastern slopes."

"Well, my friend," said Glenarvan, "where the herds of mares, sheep, and oxen of the Pehuenches pass, we shall pass as well. And since this keeps us on the right line, head for the Antuco Pass."

The signal for departure was given immediately, and they struck into the heart of the valley of Las Lejas, between great masses of crystalline limestone. At first they ascended a gentle slope. At about eleven o'clock it was necessary to skirt the banks of a small lake: a natural reservoir, and a scenic rendezvous of all the neighbouring rivers. The murmuring streams arrived there and mingled in a clear tranquil pool. Above the lake lay vast *llanos*, high plains covered with grasses, where Indian flocks grazed. They had to cross a marsh, running south and north, but the mules had an instinct that kept them from becoming mired in it. At one o'clock, Fort Ballenare appeared on a steep rock which it crowned with its crumbling curtain wall. They continued on. The slopes were getting steeper, and strewn with loose stones and

pebbles which the hoofs of the mules sometimes dislodged, triggering noisy cascades of stones.

At about three o'clock, they came across picturesque ruins of another fort, destroyed in the uprising of 1770. "Apparently, the mountains are not a sufficient barrier to separate men, we must strengthen them!" said Paganel.

From this point the pass began to be difficult, and even dangerous. The slopes steepened, the ledges narrowed, and frightful precipices fell off to their sides. The mules went cautiously, keeping their heads near the ground as if scenting the track. They went on in single file. Sometimes the *madrina* would disappear around a sudden bend of the road, and the little caravan guided itself by the distant tinkle of her bells. Often some capricious winding would bring the column in two parallel lines, and the *catapez* could speak to his peons across a crevasse not two fathoms wide, though two hundred deep, creating an uncrossable abyss between them.

Vegetation still struggled to take root against the invasions of stone. There was a feeling of the mineral and vegetable kingdoms struggling against one another. A few rust-coloured lava streaks, bristling with needle-shaped yellow crystals, showed they were approaching the volcano of Antuco. The rocks — piled on top of each other, and ready to fall — stood against all the laws of balance. In considering these uneven peaks, these clumsy domes, these badly seated hillocks, it was easy to see that future cataclysms would easily reshape this land; the hour of its final settling had not yet come for this mountainous region.

Under these conditions, the path became difficult to recognize. The almost incessant agitation of the Andean spine often changes its shape, and the landmarks shifted. The *catapez* hesitated; he stopped; he looked around him; he examined the shape of the rocks; he sought traces of Indians on the friable stone. Orientation became more difficult.

Glenarvan followed his guide step by step. He saw that he was becoming more perplexed as the way became more difficult, but did not dare to interrogate him, perhaps thinking, rightly enough, that both mules and muleteers were very much governed by instinct, and it was best to trust them.

The *catapez* kept wandering about — almost haphazardly — for another hour, though always getting higher up the mountains. At last he was obliged to stop short. They were in a narrow valley, one of those gorges the Indians called *quebradas*, and on reaching the end, a wall of porphyry rose perpendicularly before them and barred further passage. The *catapez*, having vainly sought to find an opening, dismounted, crossed his arms, and waited. Glenarvan went up to him.

"Have we gone astray?" he asked.

"No, my Lord," said the *catapez*.

"But we are not in the pass of Antuco."

"We are."

"You are sure you are not mistaken?"

"I am not mistaken. See! There are the remains of a fire left by the Indians, and there are the marks of their mares and sheep."

"They must have gone on, then."

"Yes, but no more will go; the last earthquake has made the route impassable."

"To mules," said the major, "but not to men."

"That is your business," said the *catapez*. "I have done all I can. My mules and myself are at your service to try the other passes of the Cordilleras."

"And that would delay us?"

"Three days at least."

Antuco Pass

Glenarvan considered the matter. The *catapez* knew his business and was clearly correct. His mules could go no farther. However, when the proposal was made to turn back, Glenarvan turned to his companions.

"Do you want to go on, anyway?"

"We will follow you," said Tom Austin.

"And even precede you," said Paganel. "What is it after all? We have only to cross a mountain range whose opposite slopes offer an incomparably easier descent! That done, we shall find *baqueanos*, Argentinian shepherds, who will guide us through the Pampas, and swift horses accustomed to galloping over the plains. Forward then, I say, and without hesitation."

"Forward!" cried Glenarvan's companions.

"You will not go with us, then?" Glenarvan asked the *catapez*.

"I am a mule driver."

"As you please," said Glenarvan.

"We can do without him," said Paganel. "On the other side of this wall we shall find the Antuco Pass again, and I'm quite sure I can lead you to the foot of the mountain as straight as the best guide in the Cordilleras."

Glenarvan settled accounts with the *catapez*, and bade farewell to him and his peons and mules. Weapons, instruments, and a small stock of provisions were divided among the seven searchers and it was unanimously agreed that the ascent should recommence at once, and if necessary, should continue into the night. There was a very steep winding path on the left, which the mules never would have attempted. It was toilsome work, but after two hours' exertion and detours, the little party found themselves once more in the trail through Antuco Pass.

They were in the Andes proper now, and not far from the upper ridge of the Cordilleras, but the clear path petered out again. The entire region had been overturned by recent earthquakes, and all they could do was keep on climbing higher and higher. Paganel was rather disconcerted at finding no clear way out to the other side of the chain, and expected great hardships before the topmost peaks of the Andes could be crossed, for their mean height is between 11,000 and 12,600 feet. Fortunately the weather was calm, the sky clear, and the season favourable. In winter, from May to October, such an ascent would have been impossible. The intense cold quickly kills travellers, and those who manage to hold out against it fall victims to the violence of the *temporales* — a sort of hurricane peculiar to these regions — which yearly fills the abysses of the Cordilleras with dead bodies.

They went on, toiling steadily upward through the night: hoisting themselves up to almost inaccessible plateaus, and leaping over broad, deep crevasses. They had no ropes, but substituted by linking arms, and shoulders served for ladders. These intrepid men looked like a troop of acrobats competing in mad Icarian games. The strength of Mulrady and the dexterity of Wilson were taxed heavily now. These two brave Scots were worth a troop by themselves. But for their devotion and courage the small band could not have gone on. Glenarvan never let Robert out of his sight, for his youth and energy made him imprudent. Paganel on the other hand, advanced with a French fury. In contrast, The major only went as quickly as was necessary, neither more nor less, climbing without any apparent exertion as if he didn't know that he was climbing at all. Or perhaps he fancied himself descending.

At five o'clock in the morning, the searchers had reached a height of 7,500 feet, as determined by a barometric observation. They were on the secondary plateaus, approaching the tree line. The animals that lived there would have made a hunter happy, or rich. These agile creatures knew it, too, for they fled from the approach of men. The llama: a valuable mountain camelid, that replaces sheep, oxen and horses, and lives where even mules would not go. The chinchilla: a small, gentle and fearful rodent, rich in fur, looking like a cross between a hare and a jerboa, and with hind legs like those of a kangaroo. Nothing was as charming as watching this light animal running across the tops of the trees like a squirrel. "It's not a bird yet," said Paganel, "but it's no longer a quadruped."

These animals were not the last inhabitants of the mountain, however. At 9,000 feet, on the edge of the perpetual snows, were ruminants of incomparable beauty, the alpaca, with long, silky fur. And then a sort of horned, elegant, and proud goat with fine wool, that naturalists have named the vicuña, but it was nigh impossible to approach, and it was difficult to even glimpse it. They fled, swiftly and silently gliding on dazzling mats of whiteness.

The whole aspect of the region had changed completely. Huge blocks of glittering ice rose in ridges on all sides, glittering blue in the early light of day. The ascent became very perilous. No one moved without probing carefully for crevasses. Wilson

took the lead, and tried the ground with his feet. His companions followed exactly in his footprints. They lowered their voices to a whisper as the least sound could disturb the masses of snow suspended seven or eight hundred feet above their heads, and bring it down upon them in an avalanche.

They passed through a region of shrubs and bushes which, 250 fathoms higher, gave way to grasses and cacti. At 11,000 feet even these hardy plants had abandoned the arid soil, and all trace of vegetation disappeared. They had only stopped once, at eight o'clock, to rest and snatch a hurried meal to restore their strength. With superhuman courage they resumed their ascent, amid ever increasing dangers. They were forced to mount sharp peaks and leap over chasms so deep that they did not dare to look down them. They followed a route marked out by wooden crosses, each bearing witness to some past tragedy.

At five o'clock in the morning, the searchers had reached a height of 7,500 feet

About two o'clock they came to an immense plateau, without a sign of vegetation. A kind of desert stretched out between gaunt peaks. The air was dry and the sky deep, clear blue. At this elevation rain is unknown, and vapours only condense into snow or hail. Here and there peaks of porphyry or basalt pierced through the white shroud like the bones of a skeleton. Fragments of quartz or gneiss, loosened by the action of the air, fell at times with a faint, dull sound which was almost imperceptible in the sparse atmosphere.

An immense plateau … stretched out between gaunt peaks

Despite their courage, the little band was becoming exhausted. Glenarvan, seeing how tired his men had become, regretted having pressed so high into the mountains. Young Robert held out manfully, but he could not go much farther. At three o'clock Glenarvan stopped.

"We must rest," he said, for he knew that if he did not propose it himself, no one else would.

"Rest?" asked Paganel. "But we have no place to shelter."

"It is absolutely necessary, however, if only for Robert."

"No, no, my Lord," said the courageous child. "I can still walk. Don't stop."

"You shall be carried, my boy; but we must get to the other side of the Cordilleras, whatever the cost," said Paganel. "There we may perhaps find some hut to cover us. All I ask is another two hours of walking."

"Are you all of the same opinion?" asked Glenarvan.

"Yes," was the unanimous reply.

"I'll carry the boy," said Mulrady.

They resumed the eastward march. It was another two hours of a frightening ascent to reach the highest peaks of the mountains. The rarefaction of the atmosphere produced that painful condition known as *puna*. Blood oozed from the gums and lips, from the lack of air pressure, and perhaps also under the influence of the snow, which at a great height vitiates the atmosphere. The lack of air made their inhalations more rapid as they desperately tried to fill their lungs, which only tired them more quickly. The reflection of the sun off the snow blinded them. Whatever the will of these courageous men, the moment came when the most valiant fainted, and vertigo — that terrible mountain sickness — destroyed not only their physical strength, but also their determination. No one could fight with impunity against such fatigues. Soon the falls became frequent, and those who fell advanced only by crawling.

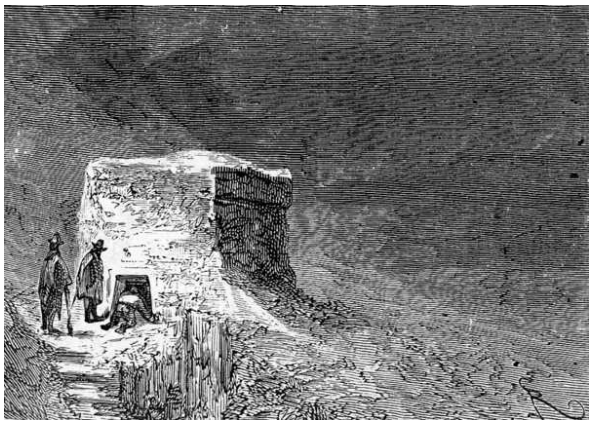
Just as exhaustion was about to make an end to any further ascent, and Glenarvan's heart began to sink at the thought of the snow spreading out as far as the eye could reach, and of the intense cold, and he saw the shadow of night fast overspreading the desolate peaks, and he knew they had no roof to shelter them, suddenly the major stopped, and spoke in a calm voice.

"A hut!"

Chapter XIII
Descent of the Cordillera

Anyone but MacNabbs might have passed beside, around, or even over the hut a hundred times without noticing it. It was covered in a carpet of snow, and scarcely distinguishable from the surrounding rocks. It had to be cleared, but after half an hour of hard work, Wilson and Mulrady succeeded in digging out the opening to the *casucha* and the little troop snuggled inside.

This *casucha* had been built by the Indians from *adobes*: mud bricks baked in the sun. It was cube shaped, twelve feet on each side, and standing on a block of basalt. A stone stair led up to the door, the only opening, and narrow as this door was, the wind, snow, and hail found their way in when the *temporales* were unleashed in the mountains.



The *casucha* was an adobe cube, twelve feet on a side

Ten people could easily fit inside it, and though the walls might be none too water-tight in the rainy season, at this time of the year, at any rate, it was sufficient protection against the intense cold, which, according to the thermometer was ten degrees below zero.[fn1] There was a sort of fireplace in it, with a chimney of bricks — badly enough put together, certainly — but it still allowed for a fire to be lit.

"This will be enough shelter," said Glenarvan, "even if it is not very comfortable. Providence has led us here, and we can only be thankful."

"I'd call it a perfect palace," said Paganel. "We only lack the sentries and courtiers. We shall do capitally here."

"Especially when we get a good fire blazing in the hearth," said Tom Austin. "For we are colder than we are hungry, right now. For my part, I would rather see a good faggot than a slice of venison, just now."

"Well, Tom, we'll try and get something that will burn," said Paganel.

Mulrady shook his head doubtfully. "Fuel on the top of the Cordilleras?"

"Since there is a chimney in the *casucha*," said the major, "it's likely that we can find something to burn in it."

"Our friend MacNabbs is right," said Glenarvan. "Get everything ready for supper, and I'll go out and turn lumberjack."

"Wilson and I will go with you," said Paganel.

"Do you want me?" asked Robert, getting up.

"No, my brave boy, rest yourself," said Glenarvan. "You'll be a man, when older people are still children."

Glenarvan, Paganel, and Wilson left the *casucha*. It was six o'clock in the evening. In spite of the perfect calmness of the air, the cold was stinging. The blue of the sky was already darkening, and the high peaks of the Andes mountains were lit by the last rays of the setting sun. Paganel had brought his barometer; consulting it showed 495 millimetres of mercury. This corresponded to an elevation of 11,700 feet.[fn2] This region of the Cordilleras had an elevation only 4,100 feet[fn3] lower than Mont Blanc. But if these mountains had the hazards with which the giant of Switzerland is bristling — if its blizzards had been unleashed against them — not one of the searchers would have survived the crossing of the great mountain chain of the New World.

On reaching a little mound of porphyry, Glenarvan and Paganel stopped to gaze about them and scan the horizon on all sides. They were now at the summit of the Cordilleras, and overlooked an area of 400 square miles.[fn4] To the east the slopes descended in gentle ramps down which the peons would slide for several hundred yards at a time. In the distance longitudinal streaks of stone and erratic blocks, pushed back by the sliding glaciers, formed immense lines of moraines. The valley of the Colorado was already lost in shadows from the setting sun. The relief of the ground, the projections of peaks and spires, was disappearing as night was fast drawing her mantle over the eastern slopes of the Andes. The buttresses that supported the sheer walls of the western flanks of the mountains were illumined by the rays of the setting sun; the peaks and glaciers bathed in its radiance were a dazzling sight. Toward the north rippled a confusion of summits which blended together like a trembling line drawn by an incompetent artist.

But to the south the view was magnificent, and with the fading light it was becoming more so. Across the wild valley of the Torbido, about two miles away, rose the volcano of Antuco. The mountain roared like the leviathan of Revelation, and vomited fiery smoke mixed with torrents of sooty flame. The surrounding peaks appeared to be on fire. Showers of incandescent stones, clouds of reddish vapour, and rockets of lava combined into sparkling streams. The apparent brightness increased from moment to moment as daylight faded. A dazzling explosion filled this vast arena with its intense reverberations while the sun, gradually stripped of its crepuscular rays, disappeared like a star extinguished in the shadows of the horizon.

Paganel and Glenarvan would have remained for a long time gazing at the magnificent struggle between the fires of Earth and Heaven if the more practical Wilson had not reminded them of the business at hand. There was no wood to be found, but the rocks were covered with a thin, dry species of lichen. They collected enough of this, as well as of a plant called *yareta*, whose root burns reasonably well. They brought this precious fuel back to the *casucha* and heaped it upon the hearth. The fire was difficult to light, and more difficult to keep burning. The air was so rarefied that there was scarcely enough oxygen in it to support combustion. At least, this was the reason given by the major.

"On the other hand," he added, "water will not need to be heated to one hundred degrees to boil. Those that want their coffee that hot will have to do without. At this height, water will boil at less than ninety degrees." fn5

MacNabbs was right, as the thermometer proved, for it was plunged into the kettle when the water boiled, and the mercury only rose to 87° C. Coffee was soon ready, and eagerly gulped down by everyone. The dry meat seemed poor fare, and Paganel couldn't help making a reasonable, yet impractical comment on it.

"*Parbleu*," he said, "I wouldn't mind some grilled llama. They say that llama is a good substitute for beef or mutton, and I would like learn if it is so for myself."

"You're not content with your supper, most learned Paganel?" asked the major.

"Enchanted with it, my brave Major; still I must confess I should not say 'no' to a dish of llama."

"You are a sybarite."

"Guilty as charged. But I'm sure that whatever you say, you wouldn't object to a beefsteak yourself, would you?"

"Probably not."

"And if you were asked to stand on watch all night in the cold and the darkness, you would do it without thinking?"

"Of course, if you want me to…"

MacNabbs' companions had hardly time to thank him for his obliging good nature when distant howls were heard. They went on for a long time, and were not the cries of a few animals, but those of an entire herd, approaching quickly. Paganel wondered if Providence was about to supply them with supper, after providing them with the hut. Glenarvan damped his optimism by pointing out that the herds of the Cordillera never ventured this high.

"Then where does the noise come from?" asked Tom Austin. "Don't you hear them getting nearer!"

"An avalanche?" suggested Mulrady.

"Impossible," said Paganel. "Those are real cries of animals."

"Come," said Glenarvan.

"And let's go hunting," said MacNabbs, who took his rifle.

They all rushed out of the *casucha*. Night had completely set in, dark and starry. The moon, now in her last quarter, had not yet risen. The peaks on the north and east had disappeared from view, and nothing was visible save the fantastic silhouette of some towering rocks here and there. The wails, clearly the cries of terrified animals, were redoubled. They came from the dark part of the Cordilleras. What could be going on there? Suddenly a furious avalanche arrived: an avalanche of living animals mad with fear. The whole plateau seemed to tremble. There were hundreds, perhaps thousands, of these animals, and in spite of the rarefied atmosphere their noise was deafening. Were they wild beasts from the Pampas, or herds of llamas and vicuñas? Glenarvan, MacNabbs, Robert, Austin, and the two sailors just had time to throw

themselves flat on the ground before the living whirlwind swept a few feet over them. Paganel, who, as a nyctalope had remained standing to see better, was knocked down in the twinkling of an eye.

At the same moment the report of a firearm was heard. The major had fired, and it seemed to him that an animal had fallen close by, while the whole herd, yelling louder than ever, had disappeared down the slopes lit by the reverberations of the volcano.

"Ah, I've got them," said a voice: the voice of Paganel.

"Got what?" asked Glenarvan.

"My spectacles. *Parbleu!* I wouldn't have cared to lose them after such a tumult as this."

"Are you hurt?"

"No, a little trampled, but by what?"

"By this," said the major, dragging the animal he had shot behind him.

They all hastened eagerly into the hut, to examine MacNabbs' prize by the light of the fire.

It was a pretty creature, like a small camel without a hump. The head was small and the body flattened, the legs were long and slender, the skin fine, and the hair the colour of *café au lait*. The underside of its belly was spotted with white.

Paganel barely glanced at it. "A guanaco!"

"What sort of beast is a guanaco?" asked Glenarvan.

"One you can eat," said Paganel.

"Is it good?"

"Tasty! A meal from Olympus! I knew we would have fresh meat for dinner, and such meat! But who is going to butcher the beast?"

"I will," said Wilson.

"Then I will grill it," said Paganel.

"Are you a cook, Monsieur Paganel?" asked Robert.

"*Parbleu*, my boy. I am French, and in every Frenchman there is always a cook."

Five minutes later Paganel began to grill large slices of venison on the coals produced by the *yareta*'s root. Ten minutes later he served up to his companions this very appetizing meat, under the name of "guanaco cutlets." No one stood on ceremony, but fell to with a hearty good will.

To the absolute stupefaction of the geographer, however, the first mouthful was greeted with a general grimace, accompanied by a *"Pouah!"*

This was followed by a chorus of *"It's horrible!" "It's inedible!"*

The poor scientist, whatever may be, was obliged to admit that this barbecue could not be enjoyed, even by hungry men. They began to banter about his "Olympian dish," and indulge in jokes at his expense, which he did not contradict. All he cared about was to find out how it was that the flesh of the guanaco — which

was reputed to be such good and edible food — had turned out so badly in his hands, when a sudden thought occurred to him.

"Eh parbleu!" he cried. *"Of course!* I have it!"

"The meat was too old, was it?" asked MacNabbs, quietly.

"No, parochial Major, but the meat had worked too much. How could I have forgotten that?"

"What do you mean?" asked Tom Austin.

"I mean that the guanaco is only good for eating when it is killed in a state of rest. If it has been long hunted, and run a long way before it is captured, it is no longer edible. I can affirm the fact by the mere taste, that this animal has come a great distance, and consequently the whole herd has."

"You are certain of this?" asked Glenarvan.

"Absolutely certain."

"But what could have frightened the creatures so, and driven them from their haunts, when they ought to have been quietly sleeping?"

"That is a question, my dear Glenarvan, I could not possibly answer. Take my advice, and let us go to sleep without troubling our heads about it. For my part, I am very tired. I say, Major, shall we go to sleep?"

"Yes, we'll go to sleep, Paganel."

Each one, thereupon wrapped himself up in his poncho, and the fire was banked for the night. Loud snores in every tune and key soon resounded from all sides of the hut, the deep bass contribution of Paganel completing the harmony.

But Glenarvan could not sleep. Uneasiness kept him in a continual state of wakefulness. His thoughts reverted involuntarily to those frightened animals flying in one common direction, impelled by one common terror. They could not be pursued by wild beasts, for at such an elevation there were scarcely any, and of hunters still fewer. What terror could have driven them toward Antuco's abysses? Glenarvan felt a premonition of approaching danger.

But gradually he fell into a half-sleeping state, and his fears gave way to hope. He saw himself on the morrow on the plains of the Andes, where the search would actually commence, and perhaps success was close at hand. He thought of Captain Grant and his two sailors, and their deliverance from cruel bondage. As these images passed rapidly through his mind, every now and then he was roused by the crackling of the fire, or sparks flying out, or some little jet of flame would suddenly flare up and illuminate the faces of his slumbering companions. Then his premonitions came back with more intensity, and he listened anxiously to the sounds outside the hut.

At times he thought he could hear distant growls, rumbling noises in the distance, dull and threatening like the mutterings of thunder before a storm. Here, those sounds could only be a storm raging down below at the foot of the mountains. He got up and went out to see.

The moon was rising. The air was pure and calm. Not a cloud was visible, either above or below. Here and there was a passing reflection from the flames of Antuco, but there was neither storm nor lightning, and myriads of bright stars glittered overhead. Still the rumbling noises continued. They seemed to be getting closer and running through the Andean range. Glenarvan returned to the *casucha* more worried than ever, wondering what the connection could be between these sounds and the flight of the guanacos. He looked at his watch and found it was about two o'clock. Not being certain of any immediate danger, he did not wake his companions, whom fatigue held fast asleep, and after a little dozed off himself, and slumbered heavily for some hours.

A violent crash made him start to his feet: a deafening noise like the roar of artillery. He felt the ground giving way beneath him, and the *casucha* rocked, and crumbled around them.

He shouted to his companions, but they were already awake, and tumbling pell-mell over each other to escape the collapsing hut. They were being rapidly drawn down a steep slope. Day dawned and revealed a terrible scene. The shape of the mountains was changing. Cones were cut off. Tottering peaks disappeared as if some hatch had opened under their base. Because of a peculiar phenomenon of the Cordilleras,[fn6] a massif, many miles wide, had been displaced entirely, and was sliding down toward the plain.

"An earthquake!" yelled Paganel.

He was not wrong. It was one of those frequent cataclysms on the mountainous edge of Chile. It was in this region where Copiapó had been destroyed twice, and Santiago laid in ruins four times in fourteen years. This region of the globe is so underlaid with volcanic fires, and the volcanoes in this chain insufficient safety valves for the subterranean vapours, that shocks known as *tremblores* are a frequent occurrence.

The plateau to which the seven stunned and terrified men were clinging, holding on by tufts of lichen, was rushing down the slope with the swiftness of an express train, at the rate of fifty miles an hour. Not a cry was possible, nor any attempt to get off or stop. They could not even have heard themselves scream. The internal rumblings, the crash of the avalanches, the clash of masses of granite

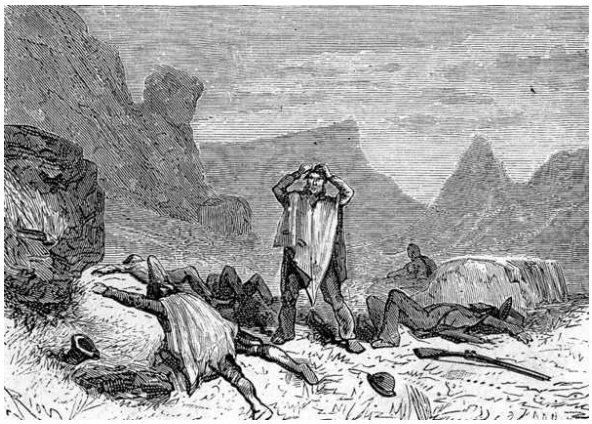
The plateau rushed down the slope with the speed of an express train

and basalt, and the whirlwind of pulverized snow, made all communication impossible. Sometimes the massif went perfectly smoothly without jolts or jerks; sometimes it would reel and roll like a ship in a storm. It ran alongside abysses into which fragments of the plateau fell away. It tore up trees by the roots, and levelled, with the precision of an immense scythe, every projection of the eastern slope.

One wonders at the power of a mass weighing several billion tons, hurtling with ever-increasing speed down a slope at an angle of fifty degrees.

How long this indescribable descent would last, no one could calculate; nor what abyss it ultimately would end in. None of the party knew whether all the rest were still alive, or whether one or another were already lying in the depths of some abyss. Stunned by the speed of the descent, frozen by the cold air which pierced through their clothing, blinded with the whirling snow, they gasped for breath. Exhausted and nearly unconscious, they clung to the rocks by a powerful instinct of self-preservation.

A shock of incomparable violence suddenly tore them from their grip on their slippery vehicle. They were thrown forward and rolled to a stop at the foot of the mountain. The plateau had stopped dead.



The major picked himself up

For some minutes no one stirred. At last one picked himself up, and stood on his feet, stunned by the shock, but still firm on his legs: the major. He shook off the dust that blinded him and looked around. His companions lay in a close circle like the lead pellets from a shotgun, piled one on top of another.

The major counted them. All except one lay on the ground around him. The one missing was Robert Grant.

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fn1. 14° Fahrenheit. — DAS

fn2. 3,570 metres. — DAS

fn3. 1,250 metres. — DAS

Verne's original French text has them 910 metres below the elevation of Mont Blanc. I adjusted the numbers to make them consistent with the true height of that mountain. — DAS

fn4. Verne has 40 square miles, but you can see that large an area from on top of a small hill. — DAS

fn5. 194° Fahrenheit. — DAS

The boiling point of water lowers by about 1° C for every 325 metres of elevation.

fn6. An almost identical phenomenon occurred on the flanks of Mont Blanc in 1820, in a terrible disaster that killed three guides from Chamonix.

Verne appears to be referring to the Hamel Accident, of 1820 which killed three climbers on Mont Blanc in an avalanche with very little resemblance to what he describes happening to the Glenarvan party. — DAS

Chapter XIV
The Gunshot of Providence

The eastern side of the Cordilleras of the Andes consists of a series of long slopes that blend down almost imperceptibly into the plain on which the portion of the massif had suddenly stopped. The soil in this new country is carpeted with rich pasture, and bristling with magnificent trees. Many of these were forests of apple trees, planted during the European conquest, and sparkling with golden fruit. It was as if a corner of Normandy had been transplanted to this plateau. The sudden transition from a desert to an oasis, from snowy peaks to verdant plains, from winter to summer, could't fail to strike the traveller's eye.

The ground, moreover, had recovered its immobility. The earthquake had subsided, though there was little doubt the subterranean forces were carrying on their devastating work farther on, for the Andes are never entirely free from earthquakes. This time the shock had been extremely violent. The outline of the mountains was wholly altered. A new panorama of peaks, ridges, and pinnacles was outlined against the blue background of the sky, and a Pampas guide would have vainly searched it for his accustomed landmarks.

A magnificent day had dawned. The sun was just emerging from its oceanic bed. It had glided beneath the continent and was now rising from the Atlantic. Its bright rays streamed over the Argentinian plains. It was eight o'clock in the morning.

Lord Glenarvan and his companions, revived by the major's efforts, gradually came back to life. They were all dizzy and disoriented, but had sustained no serious injury. They had come down the Cordilleras, and would have applauded how rapidly they had reached the plain, if only the smallest and weakest member of their party, Robert Grant, hadn't been missing from the roll call.

The brave boy was beloved by everybody. Paganel was particularly attached to him, and so was the major, for all his apparent coldness. As for Glenarvan, he was desperate when he heard of his disappearance, and pictured the child lying in some deep abyss, wildly crying for help from his second father.

Glenarvan could barely restrain his tears. "My friends! We must look for him. We must look until we find him! We cannot leave him to his fate. Every valley, precipice, and abyss must be searched thoroughly. I will be tied with a rope, and go down myself. I insist upon it, you understand; I insist upon it! Heaven grant Robert may still be alive! If we lose the boy, how could we ever dare to meet the father? What right have we to save the captain at the cost of his son's life?"

Glenarvan's companions listened to him in silence. They knew that he was looking to them for reassurance that Robert would be found alive, but none of them felt any hope of it.

"Well, you heard me," said Glenarvan. "What do you have to say? Do you mean to tell me that you have no hope — not the slightest?"

Again there was silence, until MacNabbs asked "Can any of you remember when Robert disappeared?"

No one could say.

"At least," said the major, "can one of you tell me who the child was beside during our descent of the Cordilleras?"

"Beside me," said Wilson.

"Very well. How long did you see him near you? Try to remember."

"All that I can recollect is that Robert Grant was still by my side, holding fast to a tuft of lichen, less than two minutes before the shock which finished our descent."

"Less than two minutes? Are you certain? I dare say a minute seemed a very long time to you. Are you sure you are not making a mistake?"

"I don't think I am. No; it was less than two minutes."

"Good!" said MacNabbs. "And was Robert to your right or your left?"

"On my left. I remember his poncho whipping past my face."

"And where were you, with respect to the rest of us?"

"On the left, too."

"So Robert must have disappeared on this side," said the major, turning toward the mountain and pointing toward his right. "And considering the time that has elapsed since his disappearance, that the spot where he fell is about two miles up. That is where we must search, dividing the different zones among us, and that's where we'll find him."

Not another word was spoken. The six men commenced their search, keeping constantly to the line they had made in their descent, examining closely every fissure, and going into the very depths of the abysses, choked up though they partly were with fragments of the plateau; and more than one came out again with their clothes torn to rags, and feet and hands bleeding. For long hours they scrupulously searched all this portion of the Andes, with the exception of a few inaccessible crags, without any thought of resting. But it was all in vain. It seemed that the child had not only found his death on the mountain, but also been sealed forever in a stone tomb.

Glenarvan and his defeated companions met again at the bottom of the valley at about one o'clock. Glenarvan was completely crushed with grief. He scarcely spoke. The only words that escaped his lips amid his sighs were "I shall not leave! I shall not leave!"

Every one of the party understood his feelings, and shared them.

"Let us wait," said Paganel to the major and Tom Austin. "We will take a little rest, to restore our strength. We need it either way, whether to stay and search some more, or to continue our journey."

"Yes," said MacNabbs, "and we will stay, since Edward wishes to stay. He still has hope, but what is it he hopes for?"

"God knows!" said Tom Austin.

Paganel brushed away a tear. "Poor Robert!"

The valley was thickly wooded, and the major chose a clump of tall carob trees under which they made their temporary camp. All they had remaining were a few blankets, weapons, and a little dried meat and rice. Not far off there was a river, which supplied them with water, though it was still somewhat muddy after the disturbance of the avalanche. Mulrady soon had a fire lit on the grass, and a warm and comforting drink to offer his master. But Glenarvan refused to touch it, and lay stretched prostrate on his poncho.

So the day passed and night came on, calm and peaceful as the preceding had been. While his companions were lying motionless — though wide awake — Glenarvan once more ascended the slopes of the Cordilleras, listening intently in the hope that some cry for help would reach him. He ventured high and alone, sometimes placing his ear to the ground, straining to hear anything between the beats of his own heart. He called out in a desperate voice.

He wandered all night in the mountains. Sometimes the major followed him, and sometimes Paganel, ready to lend a helping hand among the slippery peaks and dangerous chasms into which his recklessness drew him. All his efforts were in vain, and the only response to his repeated cries of *"Robert! Robert!"* was an echo.

Day dawned, and it was necessary to drag Glenarvan back to the camp from the distant plateaus, in spite of himself. His despair was terrible. None would dare speak to him of departing from this fatal valley. Yet their provisions were exhausted, and the Argentinian guides and horses promised by the *catapez* to take them across the Pampas were not far off. Backtracking would be more difficult than going forward. Besides, the *Duncan* would be waiting in the Atlantic. These were strong reasons against any long delay; indeed it was best for all parties to continue the journey as soon as possible.

MacNabbs undertook the task of rousing Lord Glenarvan from his grief. For a long time he spoke without his friend seeming to hear him. At last Glenarvan shook his head, and said, almost inaudibly.

"Go?"

"Yes! Go."

"Another hour!"

"Yes, we'll search another hour," said the worthy major.

When the hour had passed, Glenarvan begged again for another hour. He sounded like a convict begging for a delay of his execution. They continued like this until noon. MacNabbs and the rest agreed that they could delay no longer. All of their lives depended on setting out at once.

"Yes, yes!" replied Glenarvan. "Let's go! Let's go!"

But he spoke without looking at MacNabbs. His gaze was fixed intently on a certain dark speck in the heavens.

"There! There!" Glenarvan extended an arm, pointing to the sky. "Look! *Look!"*

All eyes turned turned toward the sky in the direction indicated so imperiously. The dark speck was growing. It was a large bird hovering high above them.

"A condor," said Paganel.

"Yes, a condor," said Glenarvan. "Who knows? It is coming down. It is getting lower! Let us wait."

What did Glenarvan hope? Did his reason go astray? "Who knows?" he had said.

Paganel was correct. It was a condor, and getting closer every moment. This magnificent bird, once revered by the Incas, is the king of the southern Andes. It attains an extraordinary size and prodigious strength in those regions. It has often driven oxen into the depths of chasms. It attacks sheep, colts, and young calves browsing on the plains, and carries them off to inaccessible heights. It is not uncommon for it to hover twenty thousand feet above the ground, far beyond human reach, and it could discern the smallest objects on the ground beneath it. The strength of its vision astonished naturalists.

What had this condor discovered, then? Could it be the corpse of Robert Grant? "Who knows?" repeated Glenarvan, keeping his eyes fixed on the bird. The enormous creature was fast approaching, sometimes hovering, and sometimes plummeting like a stone. Presently it began to wheel around in wide circles, less than a hundred fathoms from the ground. They could see it distinctly. It had a wingspan of more than fifteen feet, and its powerful wings bore it along without beating, for it is the prerogative of large birds to fly with calm majesty, while insects have to beat their wings a thousand times a second.

The condor's spiral path was converging on an inaccessible crag

The major and Wilson had seized their rifles, but Glenarvan stopped them with a gesture. The condor's spiral path was converging on an inaccessible crag about a quarter of a mile up the side of the mountain. It wheeled round and round with dizzying speed, opening and closing its formidable claws, and shaking his cartilaginous crest.

"He's there, *there!"* yelled Glenarvan.

A sudden thought flashed across his mind.

"What if Robert's still alive?" he cried. "The bird! *Fire* my friends! *Fire!"*

But it was too late. The condor had dropped out of sight behind the crags. Only a second passed, a second that seemed an age, and the enormous bird reappeared,

flying slowly under the burden of a heavy load.

A cry of horror rose on all sides. It was a human body the condor had in his claws, dangling in the air, and apparently lifeless. It was Robert Grant. The bird had seized him by his clothes, and was already one hundred fifty feet in the air. It had caught sight of the searchers, and was flapping its wings violently, endeavouring to escape with its heavy prey.

The condor had seized Robert by his clothes

"Argh!" cried Glenarvan. "It would be better that Robert were dashed to pieces against the rocks, rather than be a—"

He did not finish his sentence, but seizing Wilson's rifle, took aim at the condor. His arms were trembling too badly, to draw a steady aim.

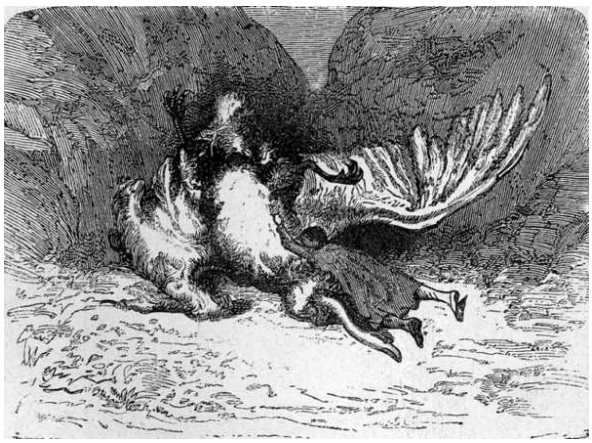
"Let me do it," said the major.

And with a calm eye, and sure hands and motionless body, he aimed at the bird, now three hundred feet above him in the air.

But the report of a gun resounded from the bottom of the valley before he had pulled the trigger. White smoke rose from between two masses of basalt, and the condor — shot in the head — began to fall, spinning, its great wings spread out like a parachute. It had not let go its prey, but gently sank down with it to the ground, about ten paces from the stream.

"We've got him, we've got him," shouted Glenarvan, and he rushed toward the condor without waiting to see where the providential shot had come from, followed by his companions.

When they reached the spot the bird was dead, and Robert's body was concealed beneath its broad wings. Glenarvan flung himself on the corpse of the boy, tore it from the condor's grasp, placed it flat on the grass, and knelt down and put his ear to his chest.



It had not let go of its prey

But a wilder cry of joy never broke from human lips than Glenarvan uttered the next moment, as he jumped to his feet.

"He's alive! He's *still alive!"*

The boy's clothes were stripped off in an instant, and his face bathed with cold water. He moved slightly, opened his eyes,

looked around and murmured, “Oh, my Lord! It’s you!” he said. “My father!”

Glenarvan could not reply. Emotion suffocated him. He knelt down weeping, beside the child so miraculously saved.

Chapter XV
Jacques Paganel's Spanish

ROBERT HAD NO SOONER ESCAPED ONE TERRIBLE DANGER THAN HE RAN THE RISK OF another scarcely less formidable. He was almost crushed by the hugs of his friends, who were so overjoyed at the sight of him that, in spite of his weak state, none of them would be satisfied without giving him an embrace. However, it seems that good rough hugging does not hurt sick people; at any rate it did not hurt Robert, but quite the contrary.

But when the first joy of Robert's deliverance was past, the next thought was for the deliverer. Of course it was the major who looked around first. Fifty paces from the river a very tall man was standing motionless on the lowest crags at the foot of the mountain. He was resting the butt of his long gun on the ground.

He had broad shoulders, and long hair bound together with leather thongs. He was over six feet tall. His bronzed face was red between the eyes and mouth, black by the lower eyelids, and white on the forehead. Dressed in the manner of the Patagonians of the frontiers, he wore a splendid cloak, ornamented with scarlet arabesques, made of the underside skins of the guanaco, sewn together with rhea[fn1] tendons, and with the silky wool turned outward. Under this mantle was a garment of fox-skin, fastened around the waist and coming down to a point in front. A little bag hung from his belt, containing the colours he used for painting his face. His boots were made from ox hide, fastened around the ankles by crossed straps.

The Patagonian, Thalcave

This Patagonian had a splendid face, indicating real intelligence, despite the mixture of colours that decorated it. His waiting pose was full of dignity; indeed, to see him standing, grave and motionless on his pedestal of rocks, one might have taken him for a statue of self control.

As soon as the major saw him, he pointed him out to Glenarvan, who ran to him. The Patagonian came two steps forward to meet him, and Glenarvan caught hold of his hand and pressed it in his own. It was impossible to mistake the meaning of the action, for the face of the Scottish lord so beamed with gratitude that no words were

needed. The stranger bowed slightly in return, and said a few words that neither Glenarvan nor the major could understand.

Seeing their lack of comprehension, the Patagonian spoke again in another language. But this second idiom was no more intelligible than the first. Certain words, however, caught Glenarvan's ear as sounding like Spanish, of which he knew a few phrases.

Español?" he asked.

The Patagonian nodded in reply, a movement of the head which has an affirmative significance among all people.

"That's good!" said the major. "Our friend Paganel will be the very man for him. It is lucky for us that he took it into his head to learn Spanish."

Paganel was called. He came at once, and saluted the stranger with all the grace of a Frenchman. But his compliments were lost on the Patagonian, for he did not understand a single syllable. The learned geographer was made aware of the situation.

"Perfect," he said. He opened his mouth wide to better enunciate the words.

"Vos sois um homen de bem!."[fn2] The native listened, but made no reply.

"He doesn't understand," said the geographer.

"Perhaps you haven't the right accent," said the major.

"That's just it! *Diable d'accent!"*

Once more Paganel repeated his compliment, but with no better success.

"I'll change the phrase," he said, and in slow, deliberate tones he went on, *"Sem duvida, um patagâo."*[fn3]

Still no response.

"Dizeime!"[fn4] said Paganel.

But no answer came.

"Vos compriendeis?"[fn5] shouted Paganel, at the very top of his voice, as if he would burst his throat.

Evidently the Indian did not understand, for he replied in Spanish,

"No comprendo."[fn6]

It was Paganel's turn now to be amazed. He pushed his spectacles right down over his nose, as if greatly irritated, and said "I'll be hanged if I can make out one word of his infernal patois. It is Araucanían, that's certain!"

"No," said Glenarvan. "He certainly answered in Spanish." And turning to the Patagonian, he repeated the word, *"Español?"*

"Si, si!"[fn7] replied the Indian.

Paganel's surprise became absolute stupefaction. The major and Glenarvan looked at each other out of the corners of their eyes.

"Ah, my learned friend." A half smile was drawn to MacNabbs' lips. "Is this another of your misadventures? You seem to have quite a monopoly of them."

"What!" said Paganel, pricking up his ear.

"Yes, it's clear enough the man speaks Spanish."

"Him!"

"Yes, he certainly speaks Spanish. Perhaps it is some other language you have been studying all this time instead of—"

But Paganel would not allow him to proceed. He squared his shoulders, and said stiffly "You go a little too far, Major."

"Well, how is it that you don't understand him then?"

"I do not understand him, because the man speaks badly," said the learned geographer, who was beginning to grow impatient.

"That is to say, he speaks badly, because you can't understand him," returned the major calmly.

"Come, come, MacNabbs," said Glenarvan. "Your supposition is quite inadmissible. However absent minded our friend Paganel is, we can not assume that his distraction went so far as learning one language for another!"

"Then, my dear Edward, or rather you, my brave Paganel, explain to me what is going on here."

"I explain nothing." said Paganel. "Here is the book I use daily, to practice the difficulties of the Spanish language. Examine it for yourself, Major, and see if I am mistaken!"

That said, Paganel fumbled in his many pockets. After a few minutes of searching, he drew out a volume in very bad condition, and presented it with an assured air. The major took the book and looked at it.

"And what's the name of this book?" asked the major.

"It is *The Lusiades*,[fn8] an admirable epic, which—"

"The Lusiades!" exclaimed Glenarvan.

"Yes, my friend, *The Lusiades* of the great Camões, neither more nor less."

"Camões!" repeated Glenarvan. "But Paganel, my unfortunate fellow, Camões was Portuguese! It is Portuguese you have been studying for the last six weeks!"

"Camões! *Lusiades!* Portuguese!" Paganel could not say more. His eyes flickered beneath his glasses, while a Homeric burst of laughter sounded in his ears from his companions around him.

The Patagonian did not stare; he waited patiently for an explanation of an incident absolutely incomprehensible to him.

"I'm a fool! An idiot!" said Paganel. "Is it really true? You are not joking with me? Is that what I have actually been doing? Why, it is a second confusion of tongues, like Babel. Ah, my friends, my friends, what is to become of me? To start for India and arrive in Chile! To learn Spanish and talk Portuguese! Why, if I go on like this, some day I shall be throwing myself out of the window instead of my cigar!"

To hear Paganel bemoan his misadventures, and see his comical discomfiture, would have made anyone laugh. Besides, he set the example himself. "Laugh away,

my friends; laugh as loud as you like; you can't laugh at me half as much as I laugh at myself!" And he uttered the greatest laugh to ever come out of a scientist's mouth.

"But, I say," said the major, after a minute, "this doesn't alter the fact that we have no interpreter."

"Oh, don't distress yourself about that," said Paganel, "Portuguese and Spanish are so much alike that I made a mistake; but this very resemblance will be a great help toward rectifying it. In a very short time I shall be able to thank the Patagonian in the language he speaks so well."

Paganel was right. He soon managed to exchange a few words with the stranger, and even found out that his name was Thalcave, a word that meant "The Thunderer" in Araucanían. This nickname had, no doubt, come from his skill in handling firearms.

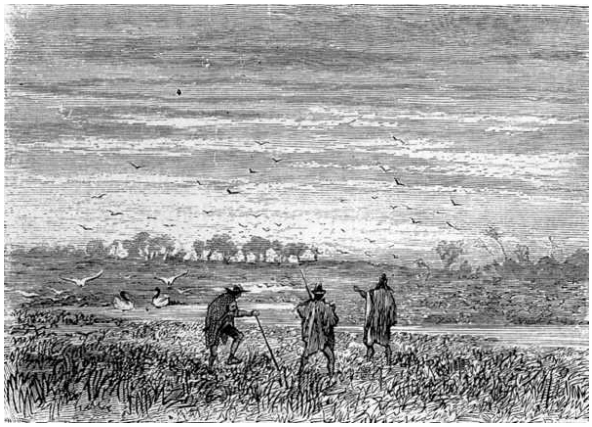
But what rejoiced Glenarvan most was to learn that he was a guide by occupation, and, moreover, a guide across the Pampas. To his mind, the meeting with him was so providential, that he could not doubt now of the success of their enterprise. The deliverance of Captain Grant seemed an accomplished fact.

When the party went back to Robert, the boy held out his arms to the Patagonian, who silently laid his hand on his head, and proceeded to examine him with the greatest care, gently feeling each of his aching limbs. Then he went down to the river and gathered a few handfuls of wild celery, which grew on the banks, with which he rubbed the patient's body. Under this massage, done with infinite delicacy, the child felt his strength return, and it was obvious that a few hours of rest would be enough to set him right.

It was decided that the rest of the day and the following night would be spent at the camp. Two important questions had to be settled: where to get food, and transport. Provisions and mules were both lacking. Fortunately, they had Thalcave. This guide, accustomed to taking travellers along the Patagonian frontiers, and one of the most intelligent *baqueanos* in the country, undertook to supply Glenarvan with all that was missing from his little troop. He offered to take him to a *tolderia* of Indians, four miles off at most, where he could get everything they needed. This proposition was partly made by gestures, and partly by a few Spanish words which Paganel managed to make out. His offer was accepted, and Glenarvan and his learned friend started off with him at once.

They walked at a good pace for an hour and a half, and had to make great strides to keep up with the giant Thalcave. The path lay through a beautiful, fertile region, abounding in rich pastures where a hundred thousand cattle might have fed comfortably. Large ponds, connected by an intricate labyrinth of streams, amply watered these plains and produced their greenness. Black-headed swans whirled capriciously in the water, disputing possession with the numerous rheas which gambolled over the *llanos*. The brilliantly plumed and feathered tribes came in a marvellous variety and made a deafening noise. The isacus — a graceful sort of dove

with grey feathers streaked with white — and the yellow cardinals were flitting about in the trees like living flowers. Overhead, pigeons, sparrows, chingolos, jilgueros, and monjitas were chasing each other around the sky, rending the air with their shrieks.



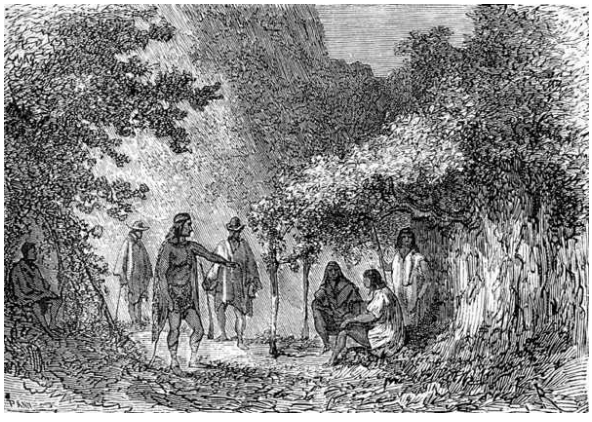
Overhead, hundreds of birds were chasing each other around the sky, rending the air with their shrieks

Jacques Paganel walked from wonder to wonder, and he had nearly exhausted his vocabulary of adjectives in his loud exclamations, to the astonishment of the Patagonian, who thought it quite natural that there were birds in the air, swans on the ponds, and grass in the meadows. The learned geographer was so lost in delight, that it seemed to him that they had hardly started before they came in sight of the Indian camp.

The *tolderia* occupied a narrow valley between the foothills of the Andes. About thirty nomadic Indians were living there in huts made of branches, pasturing immense herds of cows, sheep, oxen, and horses. They went from one pasture to another, always finding a well-spread table for their four-footed guests.

These nomads were a hybrid type of Araucans, Pehuenches, and Aucas. These Ando-Peruvians, had olive skin, medium stature and massive form, with a low forehead, almost circular face, thin lips, high cheek-bones, effeminate features, and cold countenance. They would not have offered to the eyes of an anthropologist the character of the pure races. In short, they were uninteresting natives. However, it was their herds Glenarvan wanted, not themselves. As long as he could get beef and horses, he asked for nothing else.

Thalcave did the bargaining. It did not take long. In exchange for seven little Argentinian horses, all harnessed; a hundred pounds of *charqui*, or dried meat; some measures of rice; and leather bottles for water; the Indians agreed to take twenty ounces of gold[fn9] as they could not get wine or rum, which they would have preferred — though they were perfectly acquainted with the value of gold. Glenarvan wished to purchase an eighth horse for the Patagonian, but he gave him to understand that it was not necessary.



Thalcave did the bargaining

When the bargain was done, Glenarvan took leave of his new “suppliers,” as Paganel put it, and returned to the camp in less than half an hour. His arrival was hailed with acclamations by the whole party, or rather the provisions and horses

were. They were all hungry, and ate heartily. Robert took a little food with the rest. He was fast recovering strength.

The close of the day was spent in rest, and conversation. They spoke a little bit about everything: their dear loved ones back on the *Duncan*, Captain John Mangles and his crew. And they spoke of Harry Grant, who was perhaps not as far away.

Paganel never left the Indian's side. It was not that he was so glad to see a real Patagonian beside whom he looked like a dwarf: a Patagonian who might have almost rivalled the Emperor Maximii, and that Congo negro seen by the learned Van der Brock, both eight feet tall. He was studying the language without a book, this time. He let himself get carried away bombarding the grave Indian with Spanish phrases. He could be heard uttering resounding words, making full use of his throat, tongue, and jaws.

"If I have an unusual accent," he said to the major, "it won't be my fault. But if someone had told me that it would be a Patagonian who would teach me Spanish one day, I wouldn't have believed him!"

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fn1. Verne has "ostrich" here, but those birds aren't found in South America. — DAS

fn2. You are a brave man!

fn3. A Patagonian, no doubt.

fn4. Answer me!

fn5. Do you understand?

fn6. I do not understand.

fn7. Yes, yes!

fn8. The Lusiades by Luís Vaz de Camões is an epic poem celebrating the discovery of a sea route around Africa to India by Vasco de Gama. — DAS

fn9. 1,630 francs. (325 dollars. — DAS)

Chapter XVI
Rio Colorado

Next day, the 22nd of October, at eight o'clock in the morning, Thalcave gave the signal for them to depart. Between the 22nd and 42nd degrees the Argentinian ground slopes eastward, and all the searchers had to do was to follow the gentle incline down to the sea.

When the Patagonian had refused Glenarvan's offer of a horse, he had supposed that it was because Thalcave preferred to walk, as some guides do, but this turned out not to be the case.

When they were ready to set out, the Patagonian gave a peculiar hissing whistle and a magnificent Argentinian bay mare[fn1] came bounding out of a close by grove. The animal was a perfect beauty. Proud, brave, and spirited; her lively head tossed, her nostrils flared, her eyes were bright; she had wide legs, good withers, a high chest, and long pasterns: all the qualities that make for strength and flexibility in a horse. The major, a connoisseur of horses, admired this specimen of the Pampean breed without reservation, and considered that, in many respects, it greatly resembled an English hunter. This splendid creature was named "Thaouka," which means "bird" in Patagonian, and she was well named.

When Thalcave was in the saddle, his horse leaped beneath him. The Patagonian was a consummate rider, magnificent to see. His *recado* saddle had two of the hunting weapons commonly used on the Argentinian plains mounted to it: the bolas and the lasso. The bolas consists of three balls fastened together by a leather strap attached to the front of the *recado*. The Indians will often fling it a hundred paces or more at an animal or enemy they are pursuing, and with such precision that they wrap around their legs and knock them down in an instant. It is a formidable weapon that they handle with surpassing skill. The lasso on the other hand, is always retained in the hand. It is simply a rope, thirty feet long, made of tightly twisted leather, with a slip knot at the end which passes through an iron ring. This noose was thrown with the right hand, while the left holds the rope; the other end of the rope is fastened to the saddle. A long rifle with a shoulder strap completed the weapons of the Patagonian.

Thalcave, without noticing the admiration produced by his natural grace, his ease, and his proud carelessness, took the head of the troop. They set off, sometimes going at a gallop, sometimes a walk, for the trot seemed to be unknown to these horses. Robert proved to be a bold rider, and completely reassured Glenarvan as to his ability to keep his seat.

The Pampas begin at the very foot of the Cordilleras. They can be divided into three sections. The first extends from the chain of the Andes and stretches 250 miles, covered with low trees and bushes. The second 450 miles is clothed with magnificent

grasslands, and stops about 180 miles from Buenos Aires. The third part of the Pampas stretches from this point to the sea, where the searchers' footsteps would tred over immense prairies of alfalfa and thistles.

Dust-devils of the medanos

On leaving the gorges of the Cordilleras, Glenarvan and his band first encountered plains of sand dunes, called *medanos*, lying in ridges like waves on the sea, and moving with the wind where not secured by the roots of plants. The sand was so extremely fine that the slightest breeze picked up the light particles, and sent them flying in clouds that rose in dust-devils of considerable height. It was a spectacle which caused both pleasure and pain for the eyes. Nothing could be more extraordinary than to see these whirlwinds wandering over the plain: colliding and mingling with each other, or falling and rising in wild confusion. On the other hand, nothing could be more disagreeable than the dust which was thrown off these innumerable *medanos*, which was so fine that it even found its way through closed eyelids.

This phenomenon lasted the greater part of the day, driven by a strong north wind. Nevertheless, they made good progress, and by six o'clock the Cordilleras lay a full forty miles behind them, their dark outlines almost lost in the evening mists.

They were all somewhat fatigued with the journey, and glad enough to halt for the night on the banks of the Rio Neuquén, a troubled torrent flowing between high red cliffs. The Neuquén is called Ramid, or Comoe by certain geographers and its source was known only to the Indians.

That night, and the next morning passed without any noteworthy incidents. They rode well and fast. The firm ground and moderate temperature made for trouble-free progress. The afternoon grew warmer, the sun's rays became scorching, and when evening came a bar of clouds streaked the southwestern horizon: a symptom of a change in the weather. The Patagonian pointed it out to the geographer.

"Yes, I know," said Paganel. He turned to his companions. "See, a change of weather is coming! We are going to have a taste of *pampero*."

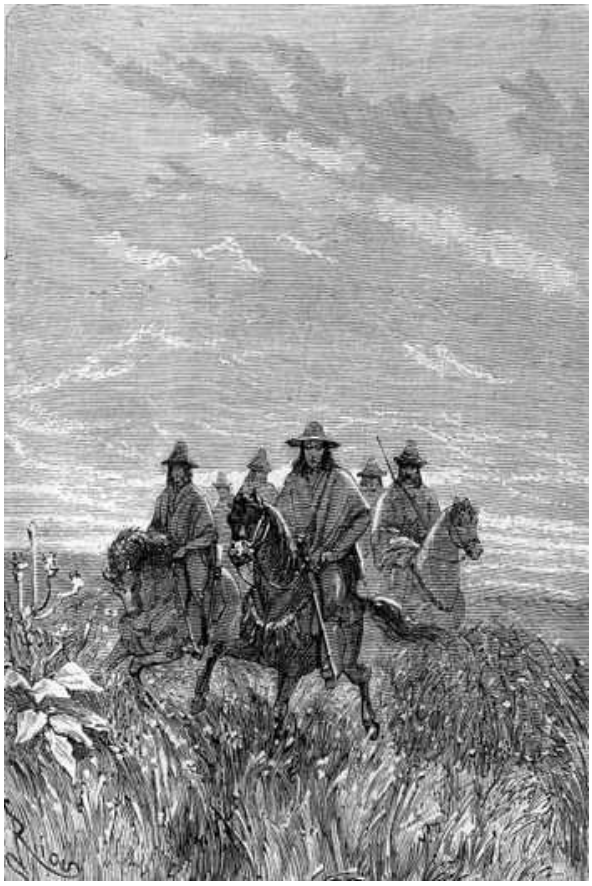
He explained that this *pampero* is very common in the Argentinian plains. It is an extremely dry southwest wind.

Thalcave was right, for the *pampero* blew violently all night, making things very uncomfortable for men sheltered only by their ponchos. The horses lay on the ground, and the men stretched themselves beside them in a close group. Glenarvan was afraid they would be delayed if this hurricane continued, but Paganel reassured him, after consulting his barometer.

"The *pampero* generally brings a storm which lasts three days, and may be always foretold by the depression of the mercury," he said. "But when the barometer rises — and it is — all we should expect is a few violent blasts. So you can make your mind easy, my good friend; by sunrise the sky will be quite clear again."

"You talk like a book, Paganel," said Glenarvan.

"And I am one; and what's more, you are welcome to browse through me whenever you like."



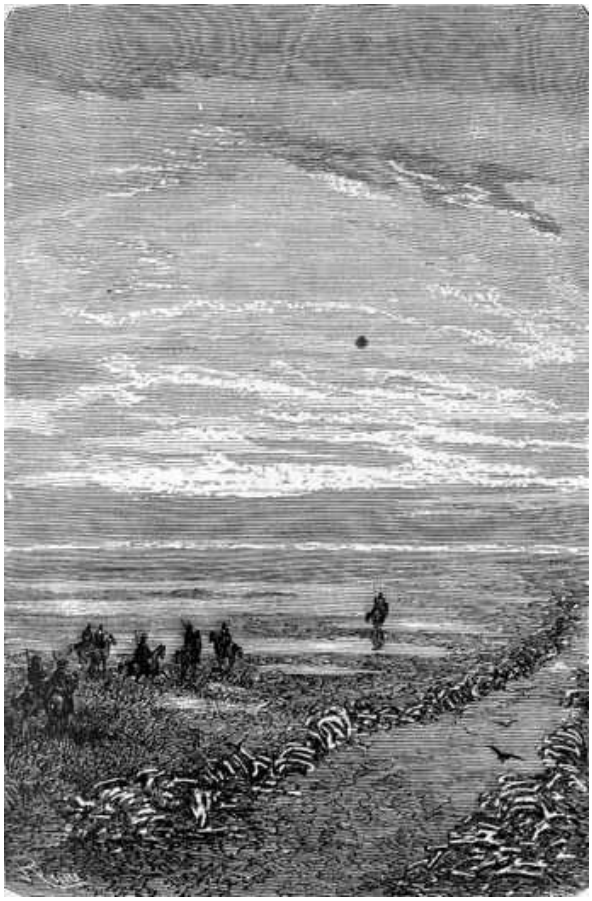
They rode quickly over the firm ground

The book was right. At one o'clock in the morning the wind calmed, and the weary men fell asleep. They awoke at daybreak, refreshed and invigorated. Paganel stretched and cracked his joints with a joyous noise like a puppy.

It was the 24th of October, and the tenth day since they had left Talcahuano. They were still ninety-three miles[fn2] from the point where the Rio Colorado crosses the 37th parallel, about three days' journey. Glenarvan kept a sharp lookout for any Indians, hoping to question them about Captain Grant through Thalcave, as Paganel was beginning to be able to communicate well enough with him. But the track they were following was little used by the natives. The Pampas roads between the Argentinian Republic and the Cordilleras were to the north of them. They also didn't come across any wandering Indians or sedentary tribes living under the law of the *caciques*. If by chance some nomadic horseman came in sight in the distance, he fled quickly, not caring to talk with strangers. Such a troop must have seemed suspicious to anyone who ventured in the plain. Small bandit bands would consider a group of eight well armed and mounted men too dangerous to attempt to rob, and any lone honest traveller in these deserted lands would see them as potential bandits, so it was impossible to approach either honest men, or bandits. Glenarvan also would have preferred being at the head of a band of *rastreadores*[fn3] if any conversation might begin with rifle shots.

However much, in the interests of his search, Glenarvan might have regretted the absence of Indians, an incident soon occurred which amply justified his interpretation of the document.

Several times the expedition's route cut across other trails of the Pampas, among them the road from Carmen to Mendoza. The road was demarcated by the bones of domestic animals: mules, horses, sheep and oxen, that bordered it with their remains disintegrating under the beaks of birds of prey, and bleached by the sun. There were thousands of them, and no doubt more than a few human skeletons confusing their dust with the dust of the humblest animals.



The road from Carmen to Mendoza

Until then, Thalcave had made no observations on the route strictly followed by the party. He understood that the path they followed would not bring them in contact with any town, village, or settlement of the Argentinian Pampas. Every morning they set out straight toward the rising sun, travelled through the day without deviating from that line, and every evening the sun set directly to their west. It must have struck Thalcave that instead of being the guide he was the guided. If he was astonished by this, his natural reserve kept him from commenting on it, but he stopped his horse on reaching this road.

"The Carmen road," he said to Paganel.

"Yes, my brave Patagonian," replied Paganel in his best Spanish. "the route from Carmen to Mendoza."

"We are not going to take it?"

"No," replied Paganel.

"Where are we going then?"

"Always to the east."

"That's going nowhere."

"Who knows?"

Thalcave was silent, and gazed at the scientist with an air of profound surprise. He had no suspicion that Paganel was joking, for he was always serious, and it didn't occur to him that others weren't.

"You are not going to Carmen, then?" he added, after a moment's pause.

"No."

"Nor to Mendoza?"

"No, nor to Mendoza."

Glenarvan came up to ask why they had stopped, and what Paganel and Thalcave were discussing.

“He wanted to know whether we were going to Carmen or Mendoza, and he is astonished at my negative reply to both questions.”

“Well, our route must seem odd to him.”

“I think so. He says we’re not going anywhere.”

“Well, Paganel, could you not explain to him the object of our expedition, and why we are always going east.”

“That would be a difficult matter,” said Paganel, “for an Indian knows nothing about degrees, and the finding of the document would appear to him a mere fantastic story.”

“Is it the story he would not understand, or the storyteller?” asked MacNabbs, quietly.

“Ah, MacNabbs, I see you still have little faith in my Spanish.”

“Well, try it, my good friend.”

“So I will.”

Paganel returned to the Patagonian and began his narrative, frequently interrupted by the lack of words, by the difficulty of translating certain peculiarities, and by explaining to a half-ignorant savage details which were very difficult for him to understand. It was a curious sight. He gesticulated, he articulated, he struggled in a hundred ways, and big drops of sweat cascaded down his forehead onto his chest. When his tongue failed, his arms were called to aid. Paganel got down on the ground and traced a map on the sand, showing where the lines of latitude and longitude cross and where the two oceans were, where the Carmen road ran. Never was a teacher in such a quandary. Thalcave watched his antics calmly, without showing whether he understood or not. The geographer’s lesson lasted more than half an hour. When he came to the end of it, Paganel fell silent, mopped his face — which was dripping with sweat — and looked at the Patagonian.

“Does he understand?” asked Glenarvan.

“We will see,” said Paganel. “But if he doesn’t, I give up.”

Thalcave did not move. He did not speak. His eyes remained fixed on the lines drawn on the sand, now being erased by the wind.

“Well?” Paganel asked him.

Thalcave did not seem to hear him. Paganel could already see the ironic smile forming on the major’s lips, and was about to recommence his geographical illustrations, when the Indian stopped him by a gesture.

“Looking for a prisoner?” he said.

“Yes,” replied Paganel.

“And precisely on that line between the sun that sets, and the sun that rises?” added Thalcave, specifying by an Indian-style comparison the route from west to east.

“Yes, yes, that’s it.”

"And it is your God," continued the guide, "that has sent you the secret of this prisoner on the waves of the vast sea?"

"God himself."

"His will be done, then," said Thalcave, solemnly. "We will march to the east, and if necessary, to the sun."

Paganel, triumphing in his pupil, immediately translated Thalcave's replies to his companions.

"What an intelligent race!" he said. "All my explanations would have been lost on nineteen in every twenty of the peasants in my own country."

Glenarvan urged Paganel to ask the Patagonian if he had heard of any foreigners who had fallen into the hands of the Pampas Indians.

Paganel made the request, and awaited an answer.

"Maybe," said the Patagonian.

At this word, Thalcave found himself surrounded by the seven searchers, questioning him with eager looks.

Paganel was so excited he could hardly find words, and resumed his interrogation. He gazed at the grave Indian as if he could read the reply before it was spoken.

Each Spanish word spoken by Thalcave was instantly translated, so that the whole party seemed to hear him speak in their mother tongue.

"And what about the prisoner?" asked Paganel.

"He was a foreigner."

"You have seen him?"

"No, but I have heard the Indians speak of him. He was a brave man. He had the heart of a bull."

"The heart of a bull!" said Paganel. "Ah, this magnificent Patagonian language. You understand him, my friends, he means a courageous man."

"My father!" exclaimed Robert Grant. "How do you say 'It is my father.' in Spanish?"

"*Es mio padre*," replied the geographer.

Immediately taking Thalcave's hands in his own, the boy said, in a soft voice:

"*Es mio padre*."

"*Suo padre*," [fn4] replied the Patagonian, his face lighting up.

He took the child in his arms, lifted him up on his horse, and gazed at him with peculiar sympathy. His intelligent face was full of quiet feeling.

But Paganel still had many unanswered questions. "This prisoner, where was he? What was he doing? When did you hear of him?" All these questions poured out of him at once.

The answers were quick in coming, and Paganel learned that the European was a slave in one of the Indian tribes that roamed the country between the Colorado and the Rio Negro.

"But where was the last place he was in?"

"With the *Cacique* Calfoucoura."

"In the line we have been following?"

"Yes."

"And who is this *Cacique*?"

"The chief of the Poyuches Indians, a man with two tongues and two hearts."

"That's to say false in speech and false in action," said Paganel, after he had translated this beautiful figure of the Patagonian language.

"And can we rescue our friend?" he added.

"Perhaps, if he is still in the hands of the Indians."

"And when did you last hear of him?"

"A long while ago; the sun has brought two summers since then to the Pampas."

Glenarvan's joy could not be described. This reply agreed exactly with the date of the document. But one question still remained for him to put to Thalcave.

"You spoke of a prisoner," said Paganel. "But were there not three?"

"I do not know," said Thalcave.

"And you know nothing of his present situation?"

"Nothing."

This ended the conversation. It was possible that the three men had become separated long ago. But what was known from the information given by the Patagonian was that the Indians spoke of a European who had fallen into their power. The date of his captivity, the place he was supposed to be, all the way to the Patagonian phrase used to express his courage, obviously applied to Captain Harry Grant.

The next day, the 25th of October, the searchers resumed their eastward journey with a fresh determination. The plain, always monotonous, formed one of those endless spaces which are called *travesias* in the local language. The clay soil was scoured smooth by the wind; not a stone — not even a pebble — rose above the level except in some arid and dry ravines, or on the edge of artificial pools dug by the Indians. Low forests, with black crowns pierced here and there by white carob trees — whose pods contained a sweet, pleasant and refreshing pulp — appeared at long intervals. Sparse patches of terebinths, *chanares*, wild brooms, and all kinds of thorny trees whose thinness betrayed the infertility of the soil became more common.

The 26th was a long, tiring day. The searchers were determined to win the Rio Colorado. The horses, excited by their horsemen, made such an effort that by evening they reached the beautiful Pampean river at 69° 45′ of longitude. Its Indian name, the Cobu-Leubu, means "great river," and after a long journey, it will empty into the Atlantic. There, at its mouth, a curious peculiarity occurs, for the volume of water in the river diminishes as it approaching the sea, either by soaking into the ground, or by evaporation, and the cause of this phenomenon is not yet determined.

Arriving at the Rio Colorado, Paganel's first ambition was to swim "geographically" in its waters coloured by a reddish clay. He was surprised to find them so deep, still in flood from the melting mountain snow under the first summer sun. The river was too wide for the horses to swim across it. Fortunately, a few hundred yards upstream was a wicker bridge supported by leather straps and hanging in the Indian fashion. The little troop was able to cross the river and camp on the left bank.

Paganel's first ambition was to swim in its waters

Before falling asleep, Paganel took an exact measurement of the location of the Rio Colorado, and he marked it on his map with particular care, as a consolation for not finding the course of the Yarou-Dzangbo-Tchou, which flowed without him in the mountains of Tibet.

The next two days, the 27th and 28th of October, passed without incident. The land was monotonous, and sterile. Never was a landscape less varied, never more insignificant. The soil became very wet. It was necessary to pass *cañadas*, a sort of flooded bottomland, and *esteros*, permanent lagoons clogged with aquatic weeds. In the evening, the horses stopped at the edge of a large lake with highly mineralized waters: the Ure-Lanquem, named "bitter lake" by the Indians, who in 1862 were witnessing cruel retaliation by Argentinian troops. They camped in the usual manner, and the night would have been good but for the presence of alouatta monkeys[fn5] and wild dogs. These noisy animals — no doubt in their honour, but certainly to the annoyance of European ears — performed one of those natural symphonies which would not have been disowned by a composer of the future.

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fn1. A bit farther on Google will use "her" when referring to Thaouka, so I stuck "mare" in here. Even farther on I figured out that Google had made one of its mistakes, but decided to keep this change, and will continue referring to Thaouka as female. — DAS

fn2. 150 kilometres.

fn3. Raiders of the plain.

fn4. Your father.

fn5. Howler monkey.

Chapter XVII
The Pampas

The Argentinian Pampas extend from the 34th to the 40th degree of southern latitude. The word *pampa*, of Araucanían origin, means "grass plain", and justly applies to the whole region. The mimosas growing on the western part, and the substantial grasslands on the eastern, give those plains a peculiar appearance. The vegetation is rooted in a layer of soil covering sandy red or yellow clay. The geologist would find rich treasures in the tertiary strata here, for it is full of antediluvian bones which the Indians attribute to some extinct large armadillo species that lived in a past age, and been buried beneath layers of vegetable remains.

The South American Pampas are a geographical region similar to the African savannahs, or Siberian steppes. Its climate has more extremes of heat and cold than that of the province of Buenos Aires, being more continental. For, according to the explanation given by Paganel, the heat absorbed by the ocean in the summer is released during the winter, giving islands a more uniform temperature than the interior of continents.[fn1] Because of this the climate of the western Pampas does not have the consistency that it has on the coasts, thanks to the proximity of the Atlantic. It is subject to sudden excesses, and rapid changes which constantly drive the thermometer from one extreme to the other. In autumn, during the months of April and May, torrential rains are frequent, but at this time of the year the weather was very dry and the temperature very warm.

They set off at dawn. Except for the road, itself, the soil of the region was held in place by shrubs and bushes. There were no *medanos*, nor the sand of which they were formed, nor the dust for the wind to suspend in the air. The horses went on at a good pace through the thick *paja-brava*, the pampas grass *par excellence*, so high and thick that the Indians find shelter in it from storms. The shallow basins were becoming rarer. These marshes were lined with willows, and *Gynerium argenteum*, a tall grass which thrived in the presence of fresh water. Here the horses drank their fill, taking the opportunity when it came. Thalcave went first to beat the bushes and frighten away the *cholinas*, a dangerous species of viper, whose bite will kill an ox in less than an hour. The agile Thaouka leapt over the undergrowth and helped her master clear a passage for the other horses.

They travelled quickly and easily over these boring and flat plains. No change occurred in the nature of the meadow; not a stone, nor pebble was seen for a hundred miles. It was the most monotonous landscape any of them had ever encountered, and it seemed to go on, and on. There was no change to the scenery, nor to anything found in it. You had to be a Paganel, one of those enthusiastic scientists who see wonders where there is nothing, to take interest in the details of this road. About

what there was to excite him he could not explain. A bush, at most! A blade of grass, maybe. These sufficed to excite his inexhaustible enthusiasm, and to to give him something to teach Robert, who liked to listen to him.

On October 29th, the plain unfolded before the searchers with its infinite uniformity. About two o'clock, they came upon the remnants of a herd of oxen, their bones heaped up and bleached. The remains were not spread out in a winding line, such as might be left by animals at the end of their strength and falling gradually on the path. Nobody knew how to explain this collection of skeletons in a relatively small space, neither Paganel, nor any of the others. He questioned Thalcave, who was able to answer him.

A *"Pas possible!"* from the scholar, and an emphatic affirmative sign from the Patagonian intrigued their companions.

"What is it?" they asked.

"The fire of Heaven," replied the geographer.

"What? Lightning could have produced such a disaster?" said Tom Austin. "A herd of five hundred heads lying on the ground?"

"Thalcave affirms it, and Thalcave is a reliable witness. I believe it, moreover, because the storms of the Pampas are known to all for their fury. I hope we don't encounter any!"

"It's hot," said Wilson.

"The thermometer," said Paganel, "must mark thirty degrees in the shade.[fn2]

"It does not surprise me," said Glenarvan; "I feel the heat penetrating me. I hope this temperature will not hold."

"Oh, no!" said Paganel. "We must not count on a change of weather, since the horizon is free of all clouds."

"Never mind," replied Glenarvan, "for our horses are not much affected by the heat. You're not too hot, boy?" he added, addressing Robert.

"No, my Lord," replied the little fellow. "I like heat, it's a good thing."

"Especially in the winter," the major pointed out, blowing smoke from his cigar into the sky.

That evening, they stopped at an abandoned *rancho*, a wattle and daub hut roofed with thatch. This hut was beside an enclosure of half-rotten posts which sufficed to protect the horses during the night against attacks from foxes. Not that they had anything to fear from these animals, but the malignant beasts gnawed their halters, and the horses would take advantage of that to escape.

There was a hole dug a few steps from the *rancho* that served as a kitchen and contained cold ashes from a fire. Inside, there was a bench, a leather pallet, a pot, a spit, and a maté kettle. Maté is a hot drink consumed in South America. It's Indian tea. It consists of an infusion of fire-dried leaves, and is sucked up like American

drinks, through a straw. At Paganel's request, Thalcave prepared a few cups of this beverage, which was a very good accompaniment to their usual rations and was declared excellent.

They stopped at an abandoned *rancho*

The next day, October 30th, the sun rose in a fiery haze and poured its warming rays on the ground. The temperature rose quickly, and the plain offered no shelter. They resumed their eastward trek in spite of this. Several times they came across immense herds which, not having the strength to graze under this oppressive heat, remained lying lazily on the ground. These herds were guarded by dogs which were accustomed to suckle the sheep when thirst prompted them. They watched, without supervision, these numerous herds of oxen, cows, and bulls. These animals had a mild humour, and do not have that instinctive horror of red which distinguishes their European cousins.

"It probably comes from grazing the grass of a republic!" said Paganel, delighted with his joke … a little too French perhaps.

Toward the middle of the day they couldn't help but notice some changes occurring in the Pampas. Grasses became rarer. They gave way to meagre burdocks and gigantic thistles, nine feet high, which would have delighted all of the donkeys of the Earth. Sparse plants sprouted here and there in the dry soil: stunted bushes and other thorny dark green shrubs. The clay of the grasslands had previously held enough moisture to maintain the thick and luxurious carpet of grass across the meadows, but now this carpet was becoming worn and torn in many places, exposing the underlying weft, and the spreading distress of the soil. These symptoms of increasing drought could not be ignored, and Thalcave pointed them out.

"I'm not sorry for this change," said Austin. "All this grass, always grass; it becomes sickening in the long run."

"Yes, but always grass, means always water," said the major.

"Oh, we are not short," said Wilson, "and we will find some river on our way."

If Paganel had heard this, he would not have failed to say that rivers were rare between Rio Colorado and the sierras of the Argentinian province; but at this moment he was explaining to Glenarvan a fact which had just caught his attention.

The atmosphere had seemed to be infused with a smell of smoke for some time. However, no fire was visible on the horizon; no smoke betrayed a distant fire. Glenarvan could not therefore attribute a natural cause to this phenomenon. Soon the smell of burning grass became so strong that it astonished all the searchers, except Paganel and Thalcave. The geographer was, as always, quick to share his knowledge.

“We do not see the fire,” he said, “and yet we smell the smoke. Now, there’s no smoke without fire, and the proverb is as true in America as in Europe. So there is a fire somewhere. But these Pampas are so flat that nothing hinders the wind, and what we perceive is the smell of grasslands that burn at a distance of nearly seventy-five miles.[fn3]

“Seventy-five miles?” said the unconvinced major.

“Or more,” said Paganel. “These conflagrations can spread quickly, and often cover vast areas.”

“Who sets fire to the meadows?” asked Robert.

“Sometimes lightning, when the grass is parched by heat; sometimes the Indians.”

“Why?”

“They claim — I do not know how well founded this claim is — that the pampas grasses grow better after a fire. It is a means of revitalizing the soil with the ashes. For my part, I believe that these fires are intended to destroy billions of ticks: parasitic insects that particularly inconvenience herds.”

“But this aggressive technique must cost the lives of some of the cattle that roam the plain,” said the major.

“Yes, it burns a few; but what does that matter out of the multitudes?”

“I’m not worried about them,” said MacNabbs. “It’s their business, but it might be hard on travellers crossing the Pampas. What if they are surprised and enveloped by the flames?”

“Just so!” said Paganel, with an air of visible satisfaction. “It happens sometimes, and, for my part, I would not be sorry to see such a spectacle.”

“This is our learned man,” said Glenarvan. “He would follow science to the point of being burnt alive.”

“No, my dear Glenarvan, but I have read my Cooper, and Leatherstockings has taught us the means of stopping the spread of flames by tearing the grass around you within a radius of a few fathoms. Nothing is simpler. I do not fear the approach of a fire. I wish for it!”

But Paganel’s desires were not to be realized, and if he was half roasted it was only in the heat of the sun’s rays which poured down with an unbearable intensity. The horses were panting under the influence of this tropical temperature. There was no shadow to hope for unless it came from some rare cloud veiling the burning disc; the shadow then ran on the level ground, and the horsemen — pushing their horses — tried to keep themselves in the shade which the westerly winds drove before them. But the horses would soon be left behind, and the unveiled star showered a new rain of fire on the parched ground of the Pampas.

When Wilson had said that their supply of water would not fail, he hadn’t counted on the unquenchable thirst that consumed his companions during that day. When he added that they would meet some river on the road, he had gone too far. In

fact there were no rivers, for the flatness of the terrain offered them no favourable bed. The artificial pools dug by the Indians were also dried up. Seeing the symptoms of drought increase from mile to mile, Paganel made these observations to Thalcave, and asked him where he expected to find water.

"At *Laguna* Epecuén[fn4]," replied the Indian.

"And when shall we get there?"

"Tomorrow evening."

When the Argentinians travel in the Pampas they generally dig wells, and find water a few feet below the surface. But the searchers could not fall back on this resource, not having the necessary tools. They were therefore obliged to husband the small provision of water they still had left, and deal it out in rations so that no one became too thirsty, even if they couldn't quench their thirst completely.

They halted that evening after travelling thirty miles and eagerly looked forward to a good night's rest to compensate for the tiring day. But their slumbers were invaded by swarms of mosquitoes, and gnats which gave them no peace. They came with a change of the wind which had shifted to the north. These accursed insects generally disappeared with a south or southwest breeze.

Even these petty ills of life could not ruffle the major's equanimity, but Paganel was indignant at this teasing of fate. He damned the insects desperately, and deplored the lack of some acid lotion which would have eased the itching of their bites. The major did his best to console him by reminding him of the fact that they had only to put up with two species of insect, among the 300,000 naturalists count. Paganel would not be soothed, and awoke the next morning in a very bad temper.

Paganel was quite willing to start at daybreak, despite the unrestful night, for they had to get to *Laguna* Epecuén before sundown. The horses were tired and dying for water, and though their riders had stinted themselves for their sakes, still their ration was insufficient. The drought grew deeper, and the heat no less intolerable under the dusty breath of the north wind, a Pampas *simoon*.

There was a brief interruption this day to the monotony of the journey. Mulrady, who was in front of the others, rode hastily back to report the approach of a troop of Indians. The news was received with very different feelings by Glenarvan and Thalcave. Glenarvan was glad of the chance of gleaning some information about the *Britannia* shipwreck, while Thalcave was not very happy to find the nomadic prairie Indians in his path. He considered them plunderers and thieves, and only sought to avoid them. Following his orders, the little troop massed, and prepared their weapons.

The nomads soon came in sight, and the Patagonian was reassured at finding they were only ten in number. They came within a hundred yards, and stopped. This was near enough to observe them distinctly. They were natives of the Pampean race, which had been almost entirely swept away in 1833 by General Rosas. Tall in stature,

with arched forehead and olive complexion, they were dressed in skins of guanacos or skunks, and carried twenty foot lances, knives, slings, bolas, and lassos, and, by their dexterity in the management of their horses, showed themselves to be skilful riders.

The nomads were ten in number

They appeared to have stopped for the purpose of holding a council with each other, for they shouted and gesticulated at a great rate. Glenarvan determined to go up to them; but he had not crossed two fathoms before the whole band wheeled around, and disappeared with incredible speed.

"The cowards!" exclaimed Paganel.

"They scampered off too quick for honest folks," said MacNabbs.

"Who are these Indians, Thalcave?" asked Paganel.

"Gauchos."

"Gauchos!" said Paganel. He turned to his companions. "We need not have been so much on our guard; there was nothing to fear."

"How is that?" asked MacNabbs.

"Because the Gauchos are harmless peasants."

"You believe that, Paganel?"

"Certainly I do. They took us for robbers, and fled."

"I rather think they did not dare to attack us," replied Glenarvan, much annoyed at not being able to enter into some sort of communication with those Indians, whatever they were.

"That's my opinion too," said the major. "If I am not mistaken, instead of being harmless, the Gauchos are formidable out-and-out bandits."

"The idea!" exclaimed Paganel, and forthwith commenced a lively discussion of this ethnological thesis — so lively that the major became excited, and, quite contrary to his usual suavity, said bluntly:

"I believe you are wrong, Paganel."

"Wrong?" replied Paganel.

"Yes. Thalcave took them for robbers, and he knows what he is talking about."

"Well, Thalcave was mistaken this time," retorted Paganel, somewhat sharply. "The Gauchos are agriculturists and shepherds, and nothing else, as I have stated in a pamphlet on the natives of the Pampas, written by me, which has attracted some notice."

"Well, you have committed an error, that's all, Monsieur Paganel."

"What, Mr. MacNabbs? You tell me I have committed an error?"

"A distraction, if you like, which you can put among the errata in the next edition."

Paganel, highly incensed at his geographical knowledge being brought in question, and even jested about, allowed his ill-humour to get the better of him.

"Know, sir," he said, "that my books have no need of such errata!"

"Indeed! Well, on this occasion they have, at any rate," replied MacNabbs, quite as obstinate as his opponent.

"Sir, I think you are very annoying today."

"And I think you are very crabby."

The disagreement was in danger of growing far out of proportion to its merit. Glenarvan thought it was high time to intervene.

"Come, now, there is no doubt that one of you is very annoying and the other is very crabby, and I must say I am surprised at both of you."

The Patagonian, without understanding the cause, could see that the two friends were quarrelling. He began to smile.

"It's the north wind," he said quietly.

"The north wind?" exclaimed Paganel. "What's the north wind got to do with it?"

"Ah, it is just that," said Glenarvan. "It's the north wind that has put you in a bad temper. I have heard that, in South America, the wind greatly irritates the nervous system."

"By St. Patrick, Edward, you are right," said the major, laughing heartily.

But Paganel, his temper roused, would not give up the contest, and turned upon Glenarvan, resenting this jesting intervention.

"And so, my Lord, my nervous system is irritated?" he said.

"Yes, Paganel; it is the north wind — a wind which causes many a crime in the Pampas, as the *tramontane* does in the Campagna of Rome."

"Crimes!" returned the geographer. "Do I look like a man who would commit crimes?"

"That's not what I said."

"Are you afraid that I want to assassinate you?"

"Well," replied Glenarvan, bursting into an uncontrollable fit of laughter. "I wasn't previously. Fortunately, the north wind lasts only one day!"

Everyone joined in Glenarvan's laughter. Paganel, still in a pique, went on ahead, alone. A quarter of an hour later his normal good mood returned, and he didn't think about it again.

At eight o'clock in the evening, Thalcave, who was considerably in advance of the rest, saw in the distance the much-desired *laguna*. A quarter of an hour later, the little troop descended the banks of *Laguna* Epecuén, but a grievous disappointment awaited them — the *laguna* was dried up.

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fn1. The winters of Iceland are therefore milder than those of Lombardy.

fn2. 86° Fahrenheit. — DAS

fn3. Thirty leagues. (120 kilometres. — DAS)

fn4. Verne has Lake Salinas, but that lake is several degrees north of our searcher's path, and *Laguna* Epecuén matches his location and description almost perfectly. — DAS)

Chapter XVIII
In Search of Water

Laguna Epecuén lies at the end of the string of lagoons connecting the Sierra de la Ventana with Guamini. In the past, numerous expeditions had come there from Buenos Aires to collect the salt deposited on its banks, as the waters contain great quantities of sodium chloride deposited when the water was evaporated by the fiery heat of the sun.

When Thalcave spoke of the *laguna* as supplying drinkable water he was thinking of the *rios* of fresh water which run into it at many places. Those streams, however, were all dried up, like the *laguna*. The burning sun had drunk everything, to the consternation of the searchers.

Some action had to be taken immediately, for what little water still remained in their bottles was tainted, and could not be used to quench their thirst. Hunger and fatigue were forgotten in the face of this driving need. A sort of leather tent, called a *roukah*, which had been abandoned by the natives afforded the party a temporary resting-place, and the weary horses stretched themselves along the muddy banks and tried to browse on the marine plants and dry reeds they found there — as nauseous tasting as they must have been.

As soon as the whole party were ensconced in the *roukah*, Paganel asked Thalcave what he thought was best to be done. A rapid conversation followed, a few words of which were intelligible to Glenarvan. Thalcave spoke calmly, but the lively Frenchman gesticulated enough for both. After a little, Thalcave sat silently and folded his arms.

"What does he say?" asked Glenarvan. "I fancied he was advising us to separate."

"Yes, into two parties," said Paganel. "Those of us whose horses are so done in with fatigue and thirst that they can scarcely put one foot in front of the other are to continue on the road of the 37th parallel as best they can, while the others —whose steeds are fresher — are to push on in advance toward the river Guamini, which flows into Lake San Lucas about thirty-one miles off.[fn1] If there is enough water in the river, they are to wait there until their companions reach them; but should it be dried up, they will hasten back and spare them a useless journey."

"And what will we do then?" asked Austin.

"Then we shall have to make up our minds to go seventy-five miles south, as far as the ramparts of the Sierra Ventana, where rivers abound."

"It is wise counsel," said Glenarvan, "and we will act upon it immediately. My horse is in tolerable good trim, and I volunteer to accompany Thalcave."

"Oh, my Lord, take me!" said Robert, as if it were a question of some pleasure party.

"But would you be up for it, my boy?"

“Oh, I have a fine horse, which just wants to have a gallop. Please, my Lord, take me.”

“Come then, my boy,” said Glenarvan, delighted not to leave Robert behind. “If we three don’t manage to find fresh water somewhere, we must be very stupid.”

“And what about me?” asked Paganel.

“Oh, my dear Paganel, you must stay with the reserve corps,” said the major. “You are too well acquainted with the 37th parallel and the river Guamini and the whole Pampas for us to let you go. Neither Mulrady, nor Wilson, nor myself would be able to rejoin Thalcave at the given rendezvous, but we will put ourselves under the banner of the brave Jacques Paganel with perfect confidence.”

“I resign myself,” said the geographer, much flattered at being given such responsibility.

“But no distractions,” added the major. “Don’t you take us to the wrong place — to the borders of the Pacific, for instance.”

“It would serve you right, insufferable Major,” laughed Paganel. “But how will you manage to understand what Thalcave says, Glenarvan?”

“I don’t suppose that we’ll have much to talk about,” said Glenarvan. “Besides, I know a few Spanish words. In a pinch, I think we can understand each other.”

“Then go, my good friend,” said Paganel.

“We’ll have supper first,” said Glenarvan, “and then sleep, if we can, until it is time to go.”

The supper was not very reviving without drink of any kind, and they tried to make up for the lack of it by a good sleep. But Paganel dreamed of water all night, of torrents and cascades, and rivers and ponds, and streams and brooks, and full carafes. It was a complete nightmare.

Thalcave, Glenarvan, and Robert saddled their mounts at six o’clock the next morning. Their last ration of water was given to the horses, and drunk with more avidity than satisfaction, for it was filthy, disgusting stuff. The three horsemen climbed into their saddles.

“Goodbye,” said the major, Austin, Wilson and Mulrady.

“And whatever you do, try not to come back!” called Paganel after them.

Soon, Thalcave, Glenarvan and Robert lost sight of the detachment entrusted to the wisdom of the geographer, not without a certain heart-ache.

The *desierto de las Salinas* — which they had to traverse — is a clay plain covered with stunted shrubs no higher than ten feet, and small mimosas which the Indians call *curra-mammel;* and *jumes*, a bushy shrub, rich in soda. Here and there large pans were covered with salt which sparkled in the sunlight with astonishing brilliancy. These *barreros*[fn2] might easily have been taken for sheets of ice, had not the intense heat forbidden the illusion. The contrast these dazzling white sheets presented to the dry, burned-up ground gave the desert a most peculiar character.

Eighty miles south,[fn3] the Sierra de la Ventana — to which the possible drying up of the Guamini might force searchers to descend — presented a different aspect. This country, explored in 1835 by Captain FitzRoy who then commanded the *Beagle*'s expedition, is of superb fertility. The best pastures of Indian territory grow there with unparalleled vigour. The north-west slope of the mountain range is covered with lush grass, and descends into rich mixed forests. There grow the *algarrobo*, a sort of carob tree whose dried fruit — reduced to flour — is used to make a bread that is highly esteemed by the Indians; the white *quebracho* with its long, flexible branches that weep like the European willow; the red *quebracho* with an indestructible wood; the *naudubay*, which can be ignited with extreme ease, and often causes terrible fires; the *viraro*, whose violet flowers are pyramid shaped; and finally the *timbo*, which spreads its immense parasol eighty feet in the air, and under which whole herds can shelter against the sun's rays. The Argentinians have often tried to colonize this rich country, without succeeding in overcoming the hostility of the Indians.

Of course it was to be believed that abundant rivers descended from the rumps of the mountains to supply the water necessary for so much fertility, and, indeed, the greatest droughts never evaporated these rivers. Unfortunately, to reach them would require a march of 130 kilometres south; and this was why Thalcave thought it best to go first to Guamini, as it was not only much nearer, but also on the direct line of their quest.

The three horses galloped with enthusiasm, as if instinctively knowing where their masters led them. Thaouka especially displayed a courage that neither fatigue nor hunger could damp. She bounded like a bird over the dried-up *cañadas* and the *curra-mammel* bushes; her loud, joyous neighing seeming to bode success to the search. The horses of Glenarvan and Robert — though not so light-footed — felt the spur of her example, and followed her bravely. Thalcave, motionless in the saddle, inspired his companions as much as Thaouka did her four-footed brethren. Thalcave often turned his head to consider Robert Grant.

Seeing the young boy, firm and well seated, with supple back, shoulders relaxed, legs falling naturally, knees fixed to the saddle, he showed his satisfaction with an encouraging cry. In truth, Robert Grant had become an excellent horseman and deserved the compliments of the Indian.

"Bravo! Robert," said Glenarvan. "Thalcave is evidently congratulating you, my boy, and paying you compliments."

"What for, my Lord?"

"For your good horsemanship."

"I'm standing firmly, that's all," said Robert, blushing with pleasure at such an encomium.

"That is the main thing, Robert," said Glenarvan, "But you are too modest. I tell you that some day you will turn out an accomplished horseman."

"What would papa say to that?" said Robert, laughing. "He wants me to be a sailor."

"The one doesn't prevent the other. Even if all cavaliers won't make good sailors, there is no reason why all sailors should not make good cavaliers. To keep one's footing on the yards teaches a man balance, and to hold on firm. Both are skills needed for horsemanship. As for knowing how to gather one's horse, to execute oblique or circular movements, that comes by itself, for nothing is more natural."

"Poor father," said Robert. "*Ah*, what graces he will return to you, my Lord, when you have saved him!"

"You love him very much, Robert?"

"Yes, my Lord, dearly. He was so good to me and my sister. We were his only thought. And whenever he came home from his voyages, we were sure of some souvenir from all the countries he had visited; and, better still, of loving words and hugs. *Ah* if you knew him you would love him, too. Mary is most like him. He has a soft voice, like hers. That's strange for a sailor, isn't it?"

"Yes, Robert, very strange."

"I see him still," the boy went on, as if speaking to himself. "Good, brave papa. He put me to sleep on his knee, crooning an old Scottish ballad about the lochs of our country. The song sometimes comes back to me, but very confused like. To Mary, too. Ah, my Lord, how we loved him. Well, I do think one needs to be little to love one's father like that."

"Yes. And to be grown up, my child, to venerate him," replied Glenarvan, deeply touched by the boy's genuine affection.

During this conversation the horses had been slackening speed, and were only walking now.

"We'll find him, won't we?" said Robert again, after a few minutes' silence.

"Yes, we'll find him," said Glenarvan. "Thalcave has set us on the track, and I have great confidence in him."

"Thalcave is a brave Indian, isn't he?" said the boy.

"Certainly."

"Do you know something, my Lord?"

"Tell me, and I will tell you."

"There are only good people with you. Lady Helena, whom I love so, and the major, with his calm manner, and Captain Mangles, and Monsieur Paganel, and all the sailors on the *Duncan*. How courageous and devoted they are."

"Yes, my boy, I know that," replied Glenarvan.

"And do you know that you are the best of all?"

"No, most certainly I don't know that."

"Well, it is time you did, my Lord," said the boy, who grasped the Lord's hand and lifted it to his lips.

Glenarvan shook his head, but said no more as a gesture from Thalcave made them spur their horses on and hurry forward. It was necessary not to waste time for the sake of those who remained behind.

They resumed their rapid pace, but it was soon evident that, with the exception of Thaouka, the wearied animals could not go quicker than a walking pace. At noon they were obliged to let them rest for an hour. They could not go on at all, and refused to eat the tufts of *alfafares*, a kind of lean alfalfa roasted by the sun's rays.

Glenarvan became worried. The symptoms of infertility did not diminish, and the lack of water could have disastrous consequences. Thalcave said nothing, thinking probably, that it would be time enough to despair if the Guamini should be dried up — if, indeed, his heart could ever despair.

Robert grasped the Lord's hand and lifted it to his lips

Spur and whip both had to be employed to induce the poor animals to resume the route, and then they only crept along, for their strength was gone.

Thaouka, indeed, could have galloped swiftly enough, and reached the *rio* in a few hours. She must have thought of it, but Thalcave would not leave his companions behind, alone in the midst of a desert, so he forced Thaouka to slow to the pace of the other horses.

It was hard work, however, to get the animal to consent to walk quietly. She kicked, and reared, and neighed violently, and was subdued at last more by her master's voice than hand. Thalcave talked to the horse, and Thaouka — even if she didn't answer — understood him at least. It must be believed that the Patagonian gave her excellent reasons for after having "discussed," the matter for some time Thaouka yielded to his arguments and obeyed — though she still champed the bit.

But if Thaouka understood Thalcave, Thalcave had not less understood Thaouka. The intelligent animal, served by superior senses, felt humidity in the air and drank it in with frenzy, moving and making a noise with her tongue, as if taking deep draughts of some cool refreshing liquid. The Patagonian could not mistake her now — water was not far off.

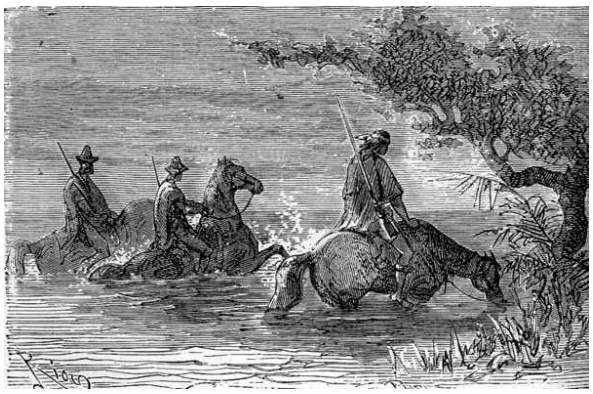
The two other horses seemed to catch their comrade's meaning, and inspired by her example, made a last effort, and galloped forward after the Indian.

About three o'clock a bright line appeared in a fold of the ground, and seemed to tremble in the sunlight.

"Water!" exclaimed Glenarvan.

"Yes! Yes! It's water!" shouted Robert.

They no longer had to urge their horses on. The poor creatures carried them irresistibly forward with revived strength. In a few minutes they had reached the Rio de Guamini, and plunged up to their chests in the beneficent waters.



The horses plunged up to their chests in the water

Their masters plunged in too, in spite of themselves, and took an involuntary bath, of which they did not think to complain.

"Oh, that's good!" said Robert, taking a deep draught in the open air.

"Drink moderately, my boy," said Glenarvan; but he did not practice what he preached.

Thalcave drank quietly, without hurrying himself, taking small gulps, but "as long as a lasso," as the Patagonians say. He seemed as if he were never going to finish, and there was some danger of his swallowing up the whole river.

"Well, our friends won't be disappointed when they get here," said Glenarvan, after he had drunk his fill. "They will be sure of finding clear, cool water — that is, if Thalcave leaves any for them."

"But couldn't we go to meet them?" asked Robert. "It would spare them several hours' suffering and anxiety."

"You're right my boy; but how could we carry them this water? The leather bottles were left with Wilson. No; it is better for us to wait for them as we agreed. They can't be here until about the middle of the night, so the best thing we can do is to get a good bed and a good supper ready for them."

Thalcave had not waited for Glenarvan's proposition to to look for a campsite. He had been fortunate enough to discover a *ramada* on the banks of the *rio*: a sort of enclosure which had served as a fold for flocks that was shut in on three sides. It was an excellent place to spend the night, provided that you had no fear of sleeping out under the stars, and none of Thalcave's companions had any objections to that. So they took possession at once, and stretched themselves out on the ground in the bright sunshine, to dry their dripping clothes.

"Well, now we've secured a lodging, we must think of supper," said Glenarvan. "Our friends must not have reason to complain of the couriers they sent ahead, and I don't propose to disappoint them. It strikes me that an hour's shooting won't be wasted time. Are you ready, Robert?"

"Yes, my Lord," replied the boy, standing up, rifle in hand.

It was clear why Glenarvan had this idea. The banks of the Guamini seemed to be the rendezvous of all the game of the surrounding plains. The *tinamous*, a type of Pampas partridge; black jellies; a species of plover named *teru-teru*; yellow rays; and water fowl with beautiful green plumage rose in coveys.

A *ramada* stood on the banks of the *rio*

At first, they couldn't see any sort of four footed game, but Thalcave indicated the tall grasses and thick brush lining the river, and made it clear that they were hidden there. The hunters were only a few paces away from the most game-rich country in the world.

Disdaining the feathered tribes when more substantial game was at hand, the hunters' first shots were fired into the underwood. Instantly there rose hundreds of roebucks and guanacos, like those that had swept over them that terrible night on the Cordilleras, but the timid creatures were so frightened that they were all out of range in an instant. The hunters were obliged to content themselves with slower game, which still left nothing to be desired from an alimentary point of view. A dozen *tinamous* and rays were quickly brought down, and Glenarvan skilfully killed a *tay-tetre*, or peccary: an American wild pig, the flesh of which is excellent eating.

In less than half an hour the hunters had all the game they required. Robert had killed a curious animal belonging to the order *Edentata*: an armadillo, covered with a hard bony shell in movable pieces, and measuring a foot and a half long. It was very fat and Thalcave said it would make an excellent dish. Robert was very proud of his success. As for Thalcave, he gave his companions the show of hunting a rhea, a South American relative of the ostrich, remarkable for its extreme swiftness.

There could be no slow stalk of such a quick animal, and the Indian did not attempt it. He urged Thaouka to a gallop to reach the rhea as quickly as possible. In a chase, if the first attack failed, the bird would soon tire out both horse and rider by involving them in a corkscrew pursuit. As soon as Thalcave closed the distance, he flung his bolas with such a powerful hand, and so skilfully, that he caught the bird around the legs and immobilized it immediately. In a few seconds it lay flat on the ground.

The Indian had not made his capture for the mere pleasure and glory of such a novel chase. The flesh of the rhea is highly esteemed, and Thalcave felt bound to contribute his share to the common repast.

They returned to the *ramada*, bringing back the string of partridges, the rhea, the peccary, and the armadillo. The rhea and the peccary were skinned at once, and cut

into thin slices to prepare them for cooking. As for the armadillo, it carried its rotisserie with it, and it was placed in its own shell over the glowing embers.

The three hunters contented themselves with the *tinamous* for their supper. The *piece de resistance* was reserved for their friends. They washed down their meal with clear, fresh water which was pronounced superior to all the ports of the world, even to the famous *usquebaugh*[fn4], so honoured in the Highlands of Scotland.

The horses had not been overlooked. A large quantity of dry fodder was discovered lying heaped up in the *ramada*, and this supplied them amply with both food and bedding.

When all was ready the three companions wrapped themselves in their ponchos, and stretched themselves on a quilt of *alfafares*: the usual bed of hunters on the Pampas.

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fn1. Fifty kilometres.

fn2. Land impregnated with salt.

fn3. Thirty-two leagues. (130 kilometres. — DAS)

The numbers in the *Hetzel* edition don't add up in this section, converting eighty miles to "more than a hundred leagues." I've corrected the conversion. — DAS

fn4. Fermented barley brandy. (Whisky. — DAS)

Chapter XIX
The Red Wolves

NIGHT CAME, A NEW MOON NIGHT DURING WHICH THE ORB OF NIGHT WAS INVISIBLE TO ALL the inhabitants of the Earth. The dim light of the stars was all that illumined the plain. On the horizon, the zodiacal stars were extinguished in a dark haze. The waters of the Guamini ran silently, like a sheet of oil over a surface of marble. Birds, quadrupeds, and reptiles were resting motionless after the fatigues of the day, and the silence of the desert brooded over the far-spreading Pampas.

Glenarvan, Robert, and Thalcave had followed the common example, and lay in profound slumber on their soft couch of *alfafares*. The worn-out horses lay on the ground, except Thaouka, who slept standing, proud in repose as in action, and ready to launch at the slightest sign from her master. Absolute silence reigned within the enclosure, over which the dying embers of the fire shed a fitful light.

The Indian's sleep did not last long, for at about ten o'clock he woke, sat up, and turned his ear toward the plain; listening intently with half-closed eyes, trying to catch some nearly imperceptible sound. An uneasy look began to appear on his usually impassive face. Had he caught scent of some party of Indian marauders, or of jaguars, water tigers, or other dreadful beasts that haunt the neighbourhood of rivers? This last hypotheses seemed most likely, for he threw a rapid glance on the combustible materials heaped up in the enclosure, and his anxiety deepened. All this dry litter of *alfafares* would soon burn out and could only ward off the attacks of wild beasts for a short time.

There was nothing to be done in the circumstances but wait, and wait he did — in a half-recumbent posture, his head leaning on his hands, and his elbows on his knees — like a man roused suddenly from his night's sleep.

An hour passed, and anyone except Thalcave would have lain down again on his couch, reassured by the silence around him. But where a stranger would have suspected nothing, the sharpened senses of the Indian detected the approach of danger.

While he listened and watched, Thaouka gave a low neigh, and stretched her nostrils toward the entrance of the *ramada*. Thalcave straightened up.

"Thaouka scents an enemy." He stood and went to the opening, to make a careful survey of the plains.

Silence still reigned, but not tranquillity. Thalcave glimpsed shadows moving noiselessly over the tufts of *curra-mammel*. Here and there luminous spots appeared — dying out and rekindling constantly, in all directions — like fantastic lights dancing over the surface of an immense lagoon. An inexperienced eye might have mistaken them for fireflies,[fn1] which shine at night in many parts of the Pampas, but

Thalcave was not deceived. He knew the enemies he had to deal with. He cocked his rifle and took up his post in front of the fence.

He did not wait long, for a strange cry, a confusion of barking and howling, broke over the Pampas, followed next instant by the report of the rifle, which made the uproar a hundred times worse.

Glenarvan and Robert, suddenly awake, jumped to their feet.

"What is it?" asked Robert.

"Indians?" asked Glenarvan.

"No," said Thalcave. "*Aguarás*."

"*Aguarás?*" asked Robert, looking inquiringly at Glenarvan.

"Yes," replied Glenarvan. "The red wolves of the Pampas."

They seized their weapons at once, and stationed themselves beside the Patagonian who pointed toward the plain whence arose a concert of howling.

Robert drew back involuntarily.

"You are not afraid of wolves, my boy?" said Glenarvan.

"No, my Lord," said the lad in a firm tone. "And moreover, beside you I am afraid of nothing."

"So much the better. These *aguarás* are not very formidable, and if it were not for their number I would not even care."

"What does it matter?" said Robert. "We are all well armed; let them come."

"We'll certainly give them a warm reception."

Glenarvan said this to reassure the boy, but this legion of carnivorous animals in the night filled him with a secret terror. There might be hundreds of them, and what could three men do, as well armed as they were, against such a multitude?

As soon as Thalcave said the word *aguará*, Glenarvan knew that he meant the red wolf, for this is the name given to it by the Pampas Indians. This voracious animal, called by naturalists the *Canis jubatus*,[fn2] is shaped like a large dog, with the head of a fox. Its coat is a cinnamon red, and a black mane runs down its back. It is a strong, nimble animal, generally inhabiting marshy places, pursuing aquatic animals by swimming, prowling about by night and sleeping during the day. Its attacks are particularly dreaded at the *estancias*, or sheep stations, where it often wreaks considerable havoc. A lone *aguará* is not much to be feared, but a large pack was a different matter. It was better to have to deal with a jaguar or cougar that you could face straight on.

Both from the noise of the howling and the multitude of shadows leaping about, Glenarvan had a pretty good idea of the number of the wolves, and he knew they had scented a good meal of human flesh, or horse flesh, and none of them would go back to their dens without a share. It was certainly a very alarming situation to be in.

The circle of wolves was gradually drawing closer. The awakened horses displayed signs of growing terror, with the exception of Thaouka, who stamped her

foot and tried to break loose and get out. Her master could only calm her by keeping up a low, continuous whistle.

Glenarvan and Robert had placed themselves so as to defend the opening of the *ramada*. They were just about to fire into the nearest ranks of the wolves when Thalcave lowered their weapons.

"What does Thalcave mean?" asked Robert.

"He forbids our firing."

"Why?"

"Perhaps he thinks it is not the right time."

This was not the Indian's motive. He had more urgent reason, and Glenarvan understood it when Thalcave lifted his powder magazine and showed that it was almost empty.

"What's wrong?" asked Robert.

"We must conserve our ammunition. Today's shooting has cost us dear, and we are short of powder and shot. We do not have twenty shots left."

The boy made no reply. "Are you afraid, Robert?"

"No, my Lord."

"Good boy."

A fresh report resounded that instant. Thalcave had made short work of one audacious assailant, and the infuriated pack retreated to a hundred paces from the enclosure.

On a sign from the Indian, Glenarvan took his place while Thalcave went back into the enclosure and gathered up all the dried grass and *alfafares* — and other combustibles he could rake together — and piled them by the entrance. Into this he flung one of the still-glowing embers from their fire, and soon a bright curtain of flames shot up into the dark night. Through its rents, it was now possible for Glenarvan to estimate the size of the pack they faced. It was larger than his worst fears, and the barrier of fire cutting them off from their prey only seemed to enrage them more. Several of them pushed forward to the fire itself, and didn't retreat until it had burned their legs.

From time to time another shot had to be fired — notwithstanding the fire — to keep off the howling pack, and in the course of an hour fifteen dead animals lay stretched on the prairie.

The situation of the besieged was, relatively speaking, less dangerous now. As long as the powder lasted and the barrier of fire stood at the entrance to *ramada*, there was no fear of being overrun. But what was to be done afterward, when both means of defence failed at once?

Glenarvan's heart swelled as he looked at Robert. He forgot himself in thinking of this poor child, as he saw him showing a courage so far above his years. Robert was pale, but he kept his gun steady, and stood firmly, ready to meet the attacks of the infuriated wolves.

However, after Glenarvan had calmly considered their situation, he resolved to put an end to it.

"In an hour," he said, "we shall have no more shot, powder nor fire. It will never do to wait until then before we settle on what to do."

Accordingly, he went up to Thalcave, and tried to talk to him by the help of the few Spanish words his memory could muster, though their conversation was often interrupted by one or the other having to fire a shot.

It was no easy task for the two men to understand each other, but — most fortunately — Glenarvan knew a great deal of the peculiarities of the red wolf; otherwise he could never have interpreted the Indian's words and gestures.

A quarter of an hour still passed before he could pass on Thalcave's answer about their desperate situation to Robert.

"What does he say?"

"He says that we must hold out until daybreak, whatever the cost. The *aguará* only goes out at night. In the morning they will return to their lairs. It is a cowardly beast that loves the darkness and dreads the light: an owl on four feet."

"Very well, let us defend ourselves, then, until morning."

"Yes, my boy, and with a knife, when we can no longer do it with guns."

Already Thalcave had set an example, for whenever a wolf came too near the burning pile the long arm of the Patagonian dashed through the flames and came out again reddened with blood.

But very soon this means of defence would be at an end. Thalcave flung their last armful of fuel into the fire toward two o'clock in the morning, and only five shots remained to their guns.

Glenarvan threw a sorrowful glance round him. He thought of the lad standing there, and of his companions. and those left behind whom he loved so dearly. Robert was silent. Perhaps the danger seemed less imminent to his imagination. But Glenarvan thought for him, and pictured to himself the horrible prospect, now inevitable, of being eaten alive! Quite overcome by his emotion, he took the child in his arms, and hugged him convulsively to his breast, and pressed his lips on his forehead while tears he could not restrain streamed down his cheeks.

Robert looked up into his face with a smile, and said "I am not frightened."

"No, my child. No! And you are right. In two hours daybreak will come, and we shall be saved."

At that moment, two wolves attempted to leap their dying fire. Thalcave struck them down with the butt of his rifle. "*Bravo*, Thalcave! my brave Patagonian! *Bravo!*"

But the fire was fast dying out, and the denouement of the bloody drama was approaching. The flames got lower and lower. Once more the shadows of night fell on the prairie, and the glaring eyes of the wolves glowed like phosphorescent balls in the darkness. In a few more minutes the whole pack would be in the enclosure.

Thalcave fired his rifle for the last time, killing one more enormous monster, and then folded his arms. His head bowed over his chest, and he meditated silently. Was he planning some daring, impossible, foolish attempt to repulse the infuriated horde? Glenarvan did not dare ask.

Thalcave struck them down with the butt of his rifle

At this moment a change occurred in the attack of the wolves. The deafening howls suddenly ceased: they seemed to be going away. Gloomy silence spread over the prairie.

"They're going!" said Robert.

But Thalcave, guessing his meaning, shook his head. He knew they would never relinquish their sure prey until daybreak made them go back to their dark dens.

Still, their tactics had obviously changed. The *aguarás* no longer attempted to force the entrance, but their new maneuvers only heightened the danger. They had given up on the frontal assault on the *ramada*, and were now trying to get in on the opposite side.

They heard their claws attacking the mouldering wood, and already formidable paws and hungry, savage jaws had found their way between the posts. The terrified horses broke loose from their halters and ran about the enclosure, mad with fear. Glenarvan put his arms around the young lad, and resolved to defend him as long as his life held out. Possibly he might have made a useless attempt at flight when his eye fell on Thalcave.

The Indian had been stalking about the *ramada* like a stag, when he suddenly stopped short, and going up to his horse, who was trembling with impatience, began to saddle him with the most scrupulous care, without forgetting a single strap or buckle. He seemed no longer to concern himself in the least about the wolves outside, though their yells had redoubled in intensity. A dark suspicion crossed Glenarvan's mind as he watched him.

"He is going to desert us," he exclaimed at last, as he saw him seize the reins, as if preparing to mount.

"Him? *Never!"* said Robert.

And indeed, the Indian was not going to abandon his friends. He was going to attempt to save them by sacrificing himself.

Thaouka was ready, and stood champing her bit. She reared up, and her splendid eyes flashed fire; she understood her master.

But just as the Patagonian caught hold of the horse's mane, Glenarvan seized his arm with a convulsive grip.

"You are going away?" he asked, pointing to the open prairie.

"Yes," replied the Indian, understanding his gesture. Then he said a few words in Spanish, which meant: "Thaouka; good horse; quick; will draw all the wolves away after her."

"Oh, Thalcave," exclaimed Glenarvan.

"Quick, quick!" replied the Indian, while Glenarvan said, in a broken, agitated voice to Robert:

"Robert, my child, do you hear him? He wants to sacrifice himself for us. He wants to rush away over the Pampas, and divert the wolves from us by drawing them to himself."

"Friend Thalcave!" Robert, threw himself at the feet of the Patagonian. "Friend Thalcave, don't leave us!"

"No," said Glenarvan, "he shall not leave us."

And turning toward the Indian, he said, pointing to the frightened horses, "Let us go together."

"No," replied Thalcave, catching his meaning. "Bad horses. Frightened. Thaouka, good horse."

"So be it, then!" returned Glenarvan. "Thalcave will not leave you, Robert. He has shown me what I must do. It is for me to go, and for him to stay by you."

Then seizing Thaouka's bridle, he said, "I am going, Thalcave, not you."

"No," replied the Patagonian quietly.

"I say to you," exclaimed Glenarvan, snatching the bridle out of his hands. "It will be me! Save this boy, Thalcave! I entrust him to you."

Glenarvan was so excited that he mixed up English words with his Spanish. But what mattered the language at such a terrible moment? A gesture was enough. The two men understood each other.

However, Thalcave would not give in, and the discussion continued, though every second's delay increased the danger. Already the piles of the *ramada* were giving way to the teeth and claws of the wolves.

Neither Glenarvan nor Thalcave appeared inclined to yield. The Indian had dragged his companion toward the entrance of the *ramada*, and showed him the prairie, making him understand that for now it was clear of the wolves. But not a moment was to be lost, for should this maneuver not succeed, it would only render the situation of those left behind more desperate. And that he knew his horse well enough to be able to trust her wonderful lightness and swiftness to save them all. But Glenarvan was blind and obstinate, and determined to sacrifice himself to all hazards when suddenly he felt himself violently pushed back. Thaouka pranced up, and reared herself bolt upright on her hind legs, and made a bound over the barrier of fire, while a clear, young voice called out:

"God save you, my Lord!"

And Glenarvan and Thalcave barely had time to catch sight of Robert, who — clinging to the mane of Thaouka — disappeared into the darkness.

"Robert! Oh you unfortunate boy," cried Glenarvan.

But even Thalcave did not catch the words, for his voice was drowned in the frightful uproar made by the wolves, who had dashed off at a tremendous speed in pursuit of the horse.

Thalcave and Glenarvan rushed out of the *ramada*. Already the plain had resumed its tranquillity, and all that could be seen of the red wolves was a moving line undulating far away in the distant darkness.

Glenarvan fell to the ground, and clasped his hands despairingly. He looked up at Thalcave.

"Thaouka, good horse." Thalcave smiled with his accustomed calmness. "Brave boy. He will save himself!"

"And if he falls?" said Glenarvan.

"He will not fall."

The red wolves launched in pursuit of the horse.

In spite of Thalcave's confidence, poor Glenarvan spent the rest of the night in tortured anxiety. He seemed quite oblivious now to the danger that had disappeared with the wolf pack. He wanted to chase after Robert, but the Indian stopped him by making him understand the impossibility of their horses overtaking Thaouka, and also that boy and horse had outdistanced the wolves long since, and that it would be useless going to look for them until daylight.

Morning began to dawn at four o'clock. A pale glimmer appeared on the horizon, and pearly drops of dew lay thick on the plain and on the tall grass, already stirred by the breath of day.

The time to leave had come.

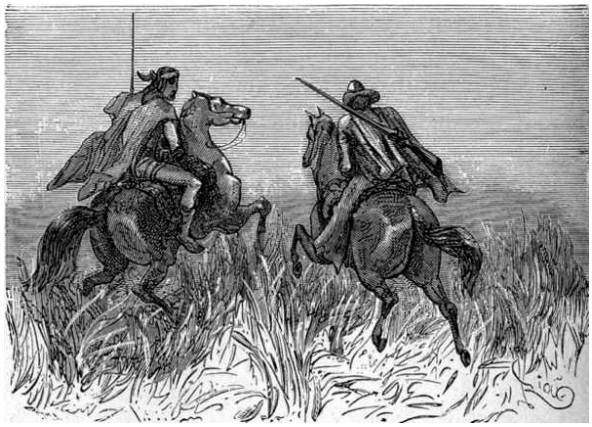
"Now!" said Thalcave. "Come."

Glenarvan made no reply, but took Robert's horse and sprang into the saddle. The next minute both men were galloping at full speed toward the west, in the line in which their companions ought to be advancing.

They dashed along at a prodigious rate for a full hour, dreading every minute to come across the mangled corpse of Robert. Glenarvan had torn the flanks of his horse with his spurs in his mad haste, when at last gun-shots were heard in the distance at regular intervals, as if fired as a signal.

"It's them!" exclaimed Glenarvan;

He and Thalcave urged on their steeds to a still quicker pace, until in a few minutes more they came up to the little detachment conducted by Paganel. A cry broke from Glenarvan's lips, for Robert was there, alive and well, still mounted on the superb Thaouka, who neighed loudly with delight at the sight of her master.


Glenarvan and Thalcave urged their steeds on

"Oh, my child! My child!" cried Glenarvan, with indescribable tenderness in his tone.

Both he and Robert leaped to the ground, and flung themselves into each other's arms. Then the Indian hugged the brave boy in his arms.

"He is alive; he is alive," repeated Glenarvan again and again.

"Yes," replied Robert, "thanks to Thaouka."

This great recognition of his favourite's services was wholly unexpected by the Indian, who was talking to her that minute, caressing and speaking to her, as if human blood flowed in the veins of the proud creature.

Turning to Paganel, he pointed to Robert, and said, "A brave!" and employing the Indian metaphor, he added "His spurs did not tremble!"

But Glenarvan put his arms around the boy and said, "Why wouldn't you let me or Thalcave run the risk of this last chance of deliverance, my son?"

"My Lord," replied the boy in tones of gratitude. "Wasn't it my place to do it? Thalcave has saved my life already, and you — you are going to save my father."

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fn1. Phosphorescent insects.

fn2. Now known as *Chrysocyon brachyurus*, the mane wolf. — DAS

Chapter XX
The Argentinian Plains

After the first joy of the meeting was over, Paganel, Austin, Wilson, and Mulrady — all those who had been left behind, except perhaps for Major MacNabbs — were only conscious of one feeling: they were dying of thirst. Most fortunately for them, the Guamini ran not far off, and at about seven in the morning the little troop reached the enclosure on its banks. The area was strewn with the dead wolves, and judging from their numbers it was evident how violent the attack must have been, and how desperate the resistance.

As soon as the searchers had drunk their fill, they began to demolish the breakfast prepared in the *ramada*, and did ample justice to the extraordinary viands. The rhea fillets were pronounced first-rate, and the armadillo — roasted in its carapace — was delicious.

"To eat moderately," said Paganel, "would be an ingratitude to Providence. We must eat too much."

And he ate too much, but did not hurt himself, thanks to the clear water of the Guamini which seemed to greatly aid in digestion.

Glenarvan, however, was not going to imitate Hannibal at Capua,[fn1] and at ten o'clock that morning gave the signal to depart. The leather bottles were filled with water, and the day's march commenced. The horses were so well rested that they were quite fresh again, and kept up a canter almost constantly. The country was not so dry now, and consequently more fertile, but it was still a desert. No incident occurred of any importance during the 2nd and 3rd of November, and in the evening the searchers — already recovering from the severities of their journey — reached the boundary of the Pampas, and camped for the night on the frontiers of the province of Buenos Aires. They had left Talcahuano Bay on October 14th, twenty-two days ago, and they had come 450 miles.[fn2] Almost two thirds of their journey was happily behind them.

Next morning they crossed the line which by convention separates the Argentinian plains from the Pampas. It was here that Thalcave hoped to meet the *caciques*, in whose hands he did not doubt to find Harry Grant and his men in slavery.

Of the fourteen provinces composing the Argentinian Republic, that of Buenos Aires is at once the largest and the most populous. It borders the Indian territories of the south between the 64th and 65th degrees. Its territory is surprisingly fertile. A particularly salubrious climate reigns on this plain covered with grasses and leguminous trees, which extends almost perfectly flat to the foot of the Tandil and Tapalquem mountain ranges.

There was a marked change in the temperature since leaving the Guamini, to the great relief of the searchers. The average temperature didn't exceed 17° centigrade,[fn3] thanks to the cold, violent winds from Patagonia, which constantly churn the atmospheric waves. Horses and men were glad enough of this, after what they had suffered from the heat and drought, and they advanced with fresh zeal and confidence. But contrary to what Thalcave had said, the whole district appeared uninhabited, or rather abandoned.

Their route often led past or went right through small lagoons, sometimes of fresh water, sometimes of brackish. On the banks and in the shelter of bushes light wrens skipped, and happy larks sang, in company with the *tangaras* which rival the colours of the brilliant humming birds. These pretty birds fluttered gaily without paying any attention to the starlings that paraded on the banks with their epaulets and red breasts. *Annubis* nests swung to and fro on the thorny bushes like a creole hammock in the breeze. Magnificent flamingos stalked the shore like soldiers marching in regular order, and spread out their fire coloured wings. Thousands of their cone shaped nests, about a foot high, formed a complete town. The flamingos did not disturb themselves in the least at the approach of the searchers, but this did not suit Paganel.

"For a long time," he said to the major, "I have wanted to see a flamingo flying."

"Good!" said the major.

"Now, since I find the occasion, I shall take advantage of it."

"Enjoy yourself, Paganel."

"Come with me, Major, and you too, Robert. I want witnesses."

And Paganel, letting the rest of the band go on, led Robert and the major to the troop of birds.

As soon as they were near enough, Paganel fired a shotgun, only loaded with powder for he would not shed the blood of a bird uselessly. The shot made the whole assemblage take wing, while Paganel watched them attentively through his spectacles.

"Well, did you see them fly?" he asked the major.

"Certainly I did. I could not help seeing them, unless I had been blind."

"Good. And did you think they resembled feathered arrows when they were flying?"

"Not in the least."

"Not a bit," added Robert.

"I was sure of it," said the scientist, with a satisfied air. "And yet the very proudest of modest men, my illustrious countryman, Chateaubriand, made the inaccurate comparison between flamingos and arrows. Oh, Robert, comparison is the most dangerous figure in rhetoric that I know. Mind you avoid it all your life, and only employ it in a last extremity."

"Are you satisfied with your experiment?" asked MacNabbs.

"Delighted."

"And so am I. But we had better push on now, for your illustrious Chateaubriand has put us a mile behind."

The shot made the whole flock of flamingos take wing

On rejoining their companions, Paganel found Glenarvan busily engaged in conversation with the Indian whom he did not seem to understand. Thalcave often stopped to observe the horizon, each time with a puzzled expression on his face. Glenarvan had been unable to determine the cause without his usual interpreter. As soon as he saw the scientist return, he called to him.

"Come along, friend Paganel. Thalcave and I can't understand each other at all."

After a few minute's talk with the Patagonian, the interpreter turned back to Glenarvan. "Thalcave is quite astonished by a fact which he finds truly bizarre."

"What?"

"That there are no Indians, nor even traces of any to be seen in these plains, for they are generally thick with companies of them, either driving along cattle stolen from the *estancias*, or going to the Andes to sell their *zorillo* rugs and braided leather whips."

"And what does Thalcave think is the reason?"

"He does not know; he is astonished, and that is all."

"But what Indian people did he reckon on meeting in this part of the Pampas?"

"Just the very ones who had the foreign prisoners in their hands, the natives under the rule of the *Caciques* Calfoucoura, Catriel, or Yanchetruz."

"Who are these *caciques*?"

"Band leaders who were all-powerful thirty years ago, before they were driven beyond the sierras. Since then they have submitted as much as an Indian can submit, and they scour the plains of the Pampas and the province of Buenos Aires. I quite share Thalcave's surprise at not discovering any traces of them in regions which they usually infest as *salteadores*." [fn4]

"And what must we do then?"

"I'll go and ask him," replied Paganel.

After a brief conversation he returned.

"This is his advice, which seems sound to me. He says we had better continue our route to the east as far as Fort Independence, and if we don't get news of Captain Grant there we shall hear, at any rate, what has become of the Indians of the Argentinian plains."

"Is Fort Independence far away?" asked Glenarvan.

"No, it is in the Sierra Tandil, about sixty miles."

"And when shall we arrive?"

"The day after tomorrow, in the evening."

Glenarvan was quite disconcerted by this circumstance. Not to find any Indians, where there were generally too many, was so unusual that there must be some serious cause for it. But worse still if Harry Grant were a prisoner in the hands of any of those tribes. Had he been dragged away with them to the north or south? This doubt left Glenarvan uneasy. He felt that — cost what it might — they must not lose his track, and therefore decided to follow the advice of Thalcave, and go to the village of Tandil. There, at least, they would find someone to talk to.

About four o'clock in the evening a hill, which seemed a mountain in so flat a country, was sighted in the distance. This was Sierra Tapalquem, at the foot of which the searchers camped that night.

The passage of this mountain the next day was the easiest thing in the world. They followed sandy ripples up gently sloping terrain. Such a mountain could not be taken seriously by people who had crossed the Andes, and the horses barely reduced their speed. They passed the deserted fort of Tapalquem — the first of the chain of forts which defended the southern frontiers from Indian marauders — at noon. But to the increasing surprise of Thalcave, they did not come across even the shadow of an Indian. However, about the middle of the day three flying horsemen — well mounted and well armed — came in sight, gazed at them for an instant, and then sped away with incredible speed. Glenarvan was furious.

"Gauchos," said the Patagonian, designating them by the name which had caused such a fiery discussion between the major and Paganel.

"Ah! The Gauchos," said MacNabbs. "Well, Paganel, the north wind is not blowing today. What do you think of those fellows yonder?"

"I think they look like regular bandits."

"And how far is it from looking to being, my good geographer?"

"Only just a step, my dear Major."

Paganel's admission was received with a general laugh, which did not in the least disconcert him. He went on talking about the Indians however, and made this curious observation:

"I have read somewhere," he said, "that the Arabs have a peculiar expression of ferocity in their mouths, while humane expression is in the eye. Well, in the wild

American, it's the complete opposite. These people have a particularly nasty eye." No physiognomist by profession could have better characterized the Indian race.

But desolate as the country appeared, Thalcave was on his guard against surprises, and gave orders to his party to form themselves in a close platoon. It was a useless precaution, however, for that same evening, they camped for the night in an immense *tolderia*, where the *Cacique* Catriel ordinarily gathered his bands of natives which they not only found perfectly empty, but which the Patagonian declared — after he had examined it all around — must have been uninhabited for a long time.

The first *estancias*[fn5] of the Sierra Tandil came in sight the next day. Thalcave resolved not to stop at any of them, but to go straight on to Fort Independence where he particularly wished to inquire on the peculiar situation of this abandoned country.

The trees, so rare since the Cordillera, reappeared; most were planted after the arrival of the Europeans on the American territory. There were azedarachs, peach trees, poplars, willows, and acacias, which grew quickly and well by themselves. They usually surrounded the *corrales*: large, fenced cattle enclosures. There, thousands of oxen, sheep, cows, and horses — branded with their owner's mark — were grazing and fattening, while large, vigilant, and numerous dogs watched over them. The slightly saline soil at the foot of the mountains was well suited to herds and produces excellent forage: well suited for the establishment of the *estancias*, which are directed by a majordomo and a foreman, with a team of four peons for a thousand head of cattle.

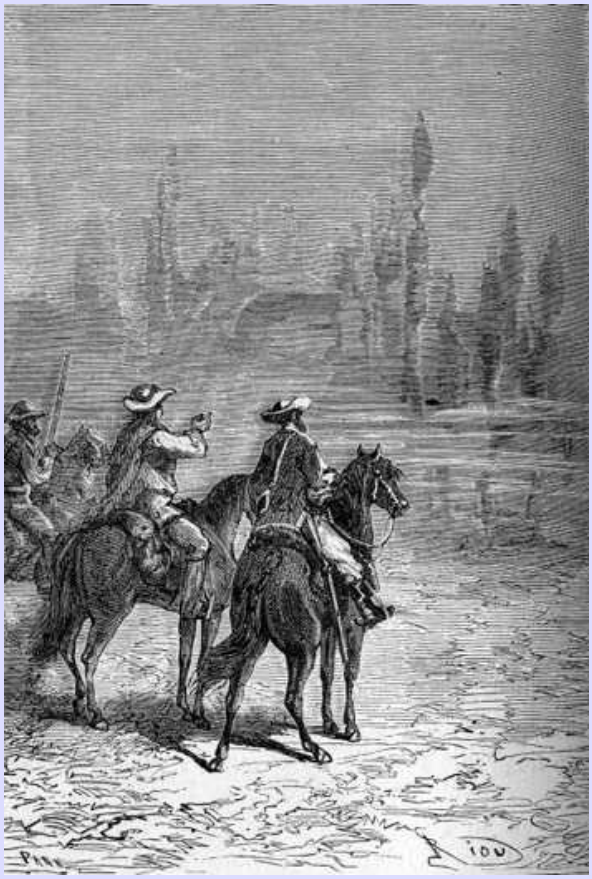
These people lead the life of the great shepherds of the Bible. Their flocks are as numerous — perhaps more numerous — than those which filled the plains of Mesopotamia. But here the family is wanting the Shepherd, and the great *estancers* of the Pampas are rude cattle merchants, nothing like the patriarchs of biblical times.

This is what Paganel explained very well to his companions, and on this subject he engaged in an interesting anthropological discussion on the comparison of races. He even managed to entice the major into the discussion.

Paganel also had occasion to observe the curious effect of mirages very common in these flat plains: the *estancias*, from afar, resembled large islands. The poplars and willows surrounding them seemed to be reflected in clear water, which receded before the footsteps of searchers, but the illusion was so perfect that the eye could not get used to it.

During the day of November 6th, they passed several *estancias*, and also one or two *saladeros*. It is here that the cattle, after having been fattened in the midst of succulent pastures, are brought to be butchered. The *saladero*, as its name suggests, is the place where meat is salted. This repugnant work begins at the end of spring. The *"saladeros"* will collect animals from a corral. They seize them with a lasso, which they handle skilfully, and lead them to the *saladero*. There, oxen, bulls, cows, and sheep are slaughtered in the hundreds, skinned, and dried. Often the bulls do not let

themselves be taken without a fight. The flayer then becomes a bullfighter, and this dangerous craft, he does with alacrity and — it must be said — an unusual ferocity. In short, this butchery presents a dreadful spectacle.



Paganel had occasion to observe mirages

Nothing is as repulsive as the surroundings of a *saladero*. These horrible enclosures are surrounded by a fetid stench. The ferocious cries of flayers, sinister barking of dogs, and prolonged screams of dying animals emanate from them, while the *urubus* and *auras* — great vultures of the Argentinian plains — come from thousands of miles around to compete with the butchers for the still stirring debris of their victims. But at the moment the *saladeros* were silent, peaceful and uninhabited. The season for these immense killings had not yet come.

Thalcave pressed the march; he wished to arrive at Fort Independence that evening. The horses, excited by their masters and following the example of Thaouka, galloped through the tall grasses of the plain. They passed several farms, crenellated and defended by deep moats; the main house had a terrace from the top of which the inhabitants can shoot the bandits of the plain with military precision. Glenarvan might have found the information he was seeking at one of these, but the surest way was to arrive at the village of Tandil. They did not stop. They crossed the Rio de los Huesos, and a few miles farther on, the Chapaleofu. Soon the first grassy slopes of the Sierra Tandil came under their horses' hooves, and an hour later the village appeared at the bottom of a narrow gorge, dominated by the crenellated walls of Fort Independence.

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fn1. According to Livy, rather than capitalizing on his victory at Cannae by following it up with an immediate attack on a demoralized Rome, Hannibal retired to the city of Capua to celebrate his victory, and thus squandered his chance to win the Second Punic War. Modern historians tend to discount this theory — DAS

fn2. About 180 leagues. (720 kilometres. — DAS)

fn3. 63° Fahrenheit. — DAS

fn4. Bandits.

fn5. The great cattle stations of the Argentinian plain.

Chapter XXI
Fort Independence

The Sierra Tandil rises a thousand feet above sea level. It is a primordial chain — that is to say, it came prior to all organic and metamorphic creation. Its texture and composition have gradually changed under the influence of internal heat. It is formed of semi-circular ridges of gneiss hills, covered with fine short grass. The district of Tandil, to which it has given its name, includes all the south of the Province of Buenos Aires, and terminates in a river which conveys north all the *rios* that are born on its slopes.

This district contains about four thousand inhabitants, and its chief town is the village of Tandil, situated at the foot of the northern ridge of the sierra under the protection of Fort Independence. It is favourably positioned on the stream of Chapaleofu. Of special interest to Paganel, this village was populated by French Basques and Italians. It was France that founded the first European settlements in this lower part of the Plata. In 1828, Fort Independence — intended to protect the country against the repeated invasions of the Indians — was built by the Frenchman Parachappe. Alcide d'Orbigny, best known for his study and description of all the southern countries of South America, accompanied him on this undertaking.

Tandil occupied a strategic location. Large ox carts, called *galeras*, built for the plains roads can travel between the village and Buenos Aires in twelve days. This allows for active commerce. The village sends the city the cattle of its *estancias*, the saltings of its *saladeros*, and various products of the Indians such as cotton and wool fabrics, leatherwork, and other things. Tandil consists of a number of fairly comfortable houses, schools to educate its people of this world, and churches to educate them of the next.

Paganel, after imparting this information to his companions, added that information could not be lacking in the village. The fort, moreover, was always occupied by a detachment of national troops. Glenarvan put their horses in the stable of a *fonda* of rather good appearance, then he, Paganel, MacNabbs, and Robert — under the direction of Thalcave — proceeded to Fort Independence.

After making a short ascent up the sierra they reached the postern gate, carelessly guarded by an Argentinian sentinel. They passed through without difficulty, which indicated either extreme negligence or extreme confidence.

Some soldiers were exercising on the parade ground of the fort. The oldest of these soldiers was twenty, and the youngest seven. As a matter of fact, it was a dozen children and young boys who were drilling, very nicely. Their uniform consisted of a striped shirt tied at the waist with a leather belt, without trousers, breeches, or Scottish kilt. The mildness of the weather made this uniform quite practical, and Paganel had a good opinion of a government that wasn't stingy with stripes. Each of

these young boys carried a percussion rifle and a sabre: the sword too long and the rifle too heavy for the little ones. All had swarthy faces, and a certain family resemblance. The corporal instructor looked like them, too. It must have been, and indeed it was, twelve brothers parading under the orders of the thirteenth.

Paganel was not surprised. He knew his Argentinian statistics, and knew that the average number of children exceeds nine per household. But what greatly surprised him was to see these children perform the principal movements of loading their rifles with perfect precision, twelve times. Often the corporal's commands were even in the native language of the learned geographer.

It was a dozen children and young boys who were drilling

"That is exceptional," he said.

But Glenarvan had not come to Fort Independence to watch toddlers do military exercises, let alone to deal with their nationality or origin. He did not give Paganel time to be surprised any more, and he begged him to ask for the head of the garrison. Paganel complied, and one of the Argentinian soldiers went to a small barracks building.

A few minutes later the Commandant appeared in person. He was a vigorous man about fifty years old, of military bearing, with greyish hair and an imperious eye — as far as one could see through the clouds of tobacco smoke which escaped from his short pipe. His walk reminded Paganel of the old noncommissioned officers of his own country.

Thalcave, addressing the Commandant, introduced him to Lord Glenarvan and his companions. While Thalcave was speaking, the commander kept staring at Paganel in a rather embarrassing manner. The scientist could not understand what the soldier meant by it, and was just about to question him, when the commander came forward, and without ceremony, seized both his hands, and said in a joyful voice, in the geographer's own language:

"Un Français?"

"Oui! Un Français!" said Paganel.

"Ah! Enchanté! Bienvenu! Bienvenu!" The Commandant shook Paganel's hand with alarming vigour. *"Suis Français aussi,"* he added.

"Is he a friend of yours, Paganel?" asked the major.

"Parbleu!" said Paganel, somewhat proudly. "I have friends in all five regions of the world!"

After he had succeeded in disengaging his hand — though not without difficulty — from the living vice in which it was held, a lively conversation ensued. Glenarvan would gladly have put in a word about the business at hand, but the soldier related his entire history, and was not in a mood to stop until he was done. It was plain to see that this good man must have left France many years back for his mother tongue had grown unfamiliar, and if he had not forgotten the words he certainly did not remember how to put them together. His speech was more like the creole of a French colony. Indeed, they were quick to learn that the commander of Fort Independence was a French sergeant, an old comrade of Parachappe.

"Ah! Enchanté! Bienvenu! Bienvenu!" The Commandant shook Paganel's hand with alarming vigour. *"Suis Français aussi,"* he added.

He had not left the fort since it had been built in 1828, and he now commanded it with the consent of the Argentinian government. He was a man about fifty years of age, a Basque, and his name was Manuel Ipharaguerre, so he was almost a Spaniard. He was naturalized a year after his arrival in the country, took service in the Argentinian army, and married an Indian girl who was now nursing twin, six month old babies — two boys, be it understood, for the good wife of the sergeant would have never thought of presenting her husband with girls. Manuel could not conceive of any state but a military one, and he hoped in due time, with the help of God, to offer the Republic a whole company of young soldiers.

"Did you see them? Charming! Good soldiers are José, Juan, and Miquele! Pepe, seven year old Pepe, can handle a gun!"

Pepe, hearing himself complimented, brought his two little feet together, and presented arms with perfect grace.

"He'll get on!" added the sergeant. "He'll be Colonel Major or Brigadier General some day!"

Sergeant Manuel seemed so enchanted that it would have been useless to express a contrary opinion, either to the profession of arms or the probable future of his children. He was happy, and as Goethe says, "Nothing that makes us happy is an illusion."

All this talk took up a quarter of an hour, to the great astonishment of Thalcave. The Indian could not understand how so many words could come out of one throat. No one interrupted the Commandant, but as a sergeant — even a French sergeant — had stop talking at some point, Manuel finally fell silent; but not without obliging his guests to follow him to his house and be presented to Madame Ipharaguerre, who was indeed "a good woman."

Then, and not until then, did he ask his guests what gave him the honour of their visit. Now or never was the moment to explain, and Paganel — seizing the chance at once — began an account of their journey across the Pampas, and ended by asking why the Indians had abandoned the country.

"Ah! … nobody!" said the sergeant, shrugging his shoulders. "Really! … No one! … and us, arms crossed … nothing to do!"

"But why?"

"War."

"War?"

"Yes, civil war— "

"Civil war?" asked Paganel, dropping into the same sort of creole as the sergeant.

"Yes, war between the Paraguayans and Buenos Aires," replied the sergeant.

"Well?"

"Well, Indians all in the north, in the rear of General Flores. Indian looters, loot"

"But where are the *caciques*?"

"*Caciques* are with them."

"What! Catriel?"

"No Catriel."

"And Calfoucoura?"

"Point Calfoucoura."

"And Yanchetruz?"

"More Yanchetruz."

The reply was reported to Thalcave, who shook his head and gave an approving look. The Patagonian was either unaware of, or had forgotten that civil war was decimating the two parts of the republic — a war which would ultimately lead to the intervention of Brazil. The Indians have everything to gain by these internecine strifes, and would not lose such fine opportunities for plunder. There was no doubt the sergeant was right in assigning the war in the north as the cause of the forsaken appearance of the plains.

But this circumstance upset all of Glenarvan's plans, for if Harry Grant was a prisoner in the hands of the *caciques*, he must have been dragged north with them. How and where would they ever find him if that were the case? Should they attempt a perilous and almost useless journey to the northern border of the Pampas? It was a serious question which would need to be well debated.

However, there was an important question that could still be asked of the sergeant; and it was the major who thought of it while the others looked at each other in silence.

"Has the sergeant heard whether any Europeans were being held prisoners in the hands of the *caciques*?"

Manuel looked thoughtful for a few minutes, like a man trying to ransack his memory.

"Yes," he said finally.

"Ah!" said Glenarvan, catching at the fresh hope.

They all eagerly crowded around the sergeant. "Tell us, tell us!" they said eagerly.

"A few years ago," replied Manuel. "Yes … that's it … European prisoners … but never seen…"

"A few years," said Glenarvan. "You are mistaken. The date of the sinking is precise. The *Britannia* was wrecked in June, 1863,[fn1] two years ago."

"Oh, more than that, my Lord."

"Impossible!" said Paganel.

"If really! It was when Pepe's birth. It was two men."

"No, three!" said Glenarvan.

"Two!" replied the sergeant, in a positive tone.

"Two?" echoed Glenarvan, very surprised. "Two Englishmen?"

"No, no. Who speaks of English? No … a Frenchman and an Italian."

"An Italian who was massacred by the Poyuches?" exclaimed Paganel.

"Yes! And I have since learned … Frenchman saved."

"Saved!" cried young Robert, hanging on the sergeant's every word.

"Yes, saved from the hands of the Indians," said Manuel.

Paganel struck his forehead with an air of desperation. "*Ah!* I understand! It is all clear now; everything is explained."

"But what is it?" asked Glenarvan, as worried as impatient.

"My friends," replied Paganel, taking both Robert's hands in his own, "we must resign ourselves to a grave disappointment. We have been on a wrong track. The prisoner mentioned is not Captain Grant at all, but one of my own countrymen, and his companion — Marco Vazello — who was murdered by the Poyuches. The Frenchman was dragged across the Pampas several times by the cruel Indians. Often as far as the shores of the Colorado, but he managed at length to make his escape, and return to France. Instead of following the track of Harry Grant, we have fallen on that of young Guinnard."[fn2]

A profound silence greeted this statement. The error was palpable. The details given by the sergeant: the nationality of the prisoner, the murder of his companion, his escape from the hands of the Indians, all evidenced the fact.

Glenarvan looked at Thalcave with a crestfallen face.

The Indian, turning to the sergeant, asked "Have you ever heard of three captive Englishmen?"

"Never," replied Manuel. "We would have known of them at Tandil, I am sure. No, it cannot be."

Glenarvan, after this answer, had nothing more to do at Fort Independence. He and his friends withdrew after thanking the sergeant, and exchanging a few handshakes with him.

Glenarvan was distraught at this complete reversal of his hopes, and Robert walked silently beside him with his eyes full of tears. Glenarvan could not find a word of comfort to say to him. Paganel gesticulated and talked to himself. The major never opened his mouth, nor Thalcave, whose Indian self esteem seemed quite wounded by having lost his way on a false trail. No one, however, thought of reproaching him for such an excusable error.

They went back to the *fonda*.

Supper was a gloomy affair. Not one of these courageous men regretted the trials they had so heedlessly endured, nor the dangers they had run, but they all felt that their hope of success was gone. Was there any chance of coming across Captain Grant between the Sierra Tandil and the sea? No. Sergeant Manuel must certainly have heard if any prisoners had fallen into the hands of the Indians on the Atlantic coast. Any event of this nature would have attracted the notice of the Indians who trade between Tandil and Carmen, at the mouth of the Rio Negro. The traders of the Argentinian plain traffic in gossip as much as goods. All would know of it if such a thing had happened. The only thing to do now was to get to the planned rendezvous with the *Duncan* at Point Medano, as quickly as possible.

Paganel asked Glenarvan to let him have the document again, to see if he could discover how they had been led astray. He re-read it with poorly hidden anger, trying to extract some new meaning out of it.

"Yet nothing can be clearer," said Glenarvan. "It gives the date of the shipwreck, and the manner, and the place of the captivity in the most categorical manner."

"No, it does not!" Paganel struck the table with his fist. "A hundred times, no! Since Harry Grant is not in the Pampas, he is not in America. But this document must say where he is, and it will say it, my friends, or my name is not Jacques Paganel!"

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fn1. I've changed the date of the shipwreck, as previously noted.

fn2. Auguste Guinnard was, in fact, a prisoner of the Poyuches Indians for three years, from 1856 to 1859. He endured terrible trials with extreme courage, and finally managed to escape by crossing the Andes at the Upsallata Pass. He saw France again in 1861, and is now one of the colleagues of the Honourable Paganel at the *Geographic Society*.

Chapter XXII
The Flood

A DISTANCE OF 150 MILES SEPARATES FORT INDEPENDENCE FROM THE SHORES OF THE Atlantic.[fn1] Unless there were unforeseen delays, which were unlikely, Glenarvan would rejoin the *Duncan* in four days. But to come back without Captain Grant, after having failed so completely in his search was something he was loath to do. He gave no orders for departure the next day. The major took it upon himself to have the horses saddled, renew their provisions, and make other preparations for departure. Thanks to his action the little troop descended the grassy slopes of Sierra Tandil the next morning at eight o'clock.

Glenarvan, with Robert at his side, galloped along without saying a word. His bold, determined nature made it impossible to take this failure calmly. His heart throbbed as if it would burst, and his head was burning. Paganel — annoyed by the difficulty — returned to the words of the document, trying to discover some new meaning. Thalcave was perfectly silent, and left Thaouka to lead the way. The major — always confident — remained solid at his post, like a man on whom discouragement takes no hold. Tom Austin and his two sailors shared the dejection of their master. A timid rabbit happened to run across their path, and the superstitious Scots looked at each other in dismay.

"A bad omen," said Wilson.

"Yes, in the Highlands," said Mulrady.

"What's bad in the Highlands is not better here," said Wilson sententiously.

By noon they had crossed the Sierra Tandil, and descended into the undulating plains stretching to the sea. At each step clear *rios* watered this fertile land, and lost themselves among the tall grasses. The ground had once more become completely level, like the ocean after a storm. The last mountains of the Argentinian Pampas were behind them, and a long carpet of greenery unrolled itself over the monotonous meadow. It was easy to see the fertility of this land in the rich abundance of its pastures, and their somber greenness.

The weather had been fine until then, but today the sky presented anything but a reassuring appearance. The heavy vapours generated by the high temperature of the preceding days hung in thick clouds which promised to empty themselves in torrents of rain. Moreover, the vicinity of the Atlantic — and the prevailing west wind — made the climate of this country particularly humid.

That day, at least, the clouds did not burst, and in the evening — after a brisk gallop of forty miles — the horses stopped on the brink of a deep *cañadas*, an immense natural trench filled with water. No shelter was near, and ponchos had to serve both for tents and coverlets as each man lay down and fell asleep beneath the threatening sky; but the rains still did not come.

As the plain lowered the next day, the presence of underground water became still more noticeable. Moisture oozed from every pore of the ground. Soon, large ponds — some just beginning to form, and some already deep — lay across the road to the east. As long as they had only to deal with *lagunas* — well circumscribed stretches of water unencumbered with aquatic plants — the horses could get through well enough, but when they encountered shifting sloughs called *penganos*, it was harder work. Tall grass clogged them, and it wasn't possible to recognize the hazard until you were already in it.

These bogs had already proved fatal to more than one living thing, for Robert — who had gone forward by half a mile — came rushing back at full gallop.

"Monsieur Paganel, Monsieur Paganel!" he called. "A forest of horns!"

"What!" exclaimed the geographer; "you have found a forest of horns?"

"Yes, yes, or at least a grove."

"A grove!" Paganel, shrugged his shoulders. "My boy, you are dreaming."

"I am not dreaming, and you will see for yourself," said Robert. "This is a strange country. They sow horns, and they sprout up like wheat. I wish I could get some of the seed."

"The boy is quite serious," said the major.

"Yes, Major, and you will soon see clearly."

Robert was not mistaken, for presently they found themselves in front of an immense field of horns, regularly planted and stretching far out of sight. It was a complete copse, low and close packed, but strange.

"Well?" said Robert.

"This is peculiar," said Paganel, and he turned around to question Thalcave on the subject.

"The horns come out of the ground," said Thalcave, "but the oxen are down below."

"What?" exclaimed Paganel. "Is there a whole herd that has mired in this mud?"

"Yes," said the Patagonian.

In fact an immense herd had died under this soil, which had been liquified by the vibration of its passage. Hundreds of oxen had just perished, side by side, drowned in the vast pothole. This event — which sometimes occurs in the plains of Argentina — could not be ignored by the Indian, and it was a warning to be taken seriously. The immense hecatomb — which would have satisfied the most exacting gods of antiquity— was circled around, and an hour later the field of horns was left two miles behind.

Thalcave was somewhat anxiously observing a state of things which appeared unusual to him. He frequently stopped and raised himself on his stirrups and looked around. His great height gave him a commanding view of the whole horizon, but perceiving nothing that could enlighten him, he quickly resumed his seat and went on. About a mile further he stopped again, and leaving the straight route, made a

circuit of some miles north and south, and then returned and fell back in his place at the head of the troop, without saying a syllable as to what he hoped or feared. This strange behaviour — repeated several times — intrigued Paganel, and worried Glenarvan. At last, at Glenarvan's request, he asked the Indian about it.

Thalcave replied that he was astonished to see the plains so saturated with water. Never — to his knowledge — since he had followed the calling of guide, had he found the ground in this waterlogged condition. Even in the rainy season, the Argentinian plains had always been passable.

"But what is the source of all this water?" said Paganel.

"I do not know, and when I do…"

"Do the *rios* of the Sierra, swollen by heavy rain, never overflow their banks?"

"Sometimes."

"And now, maybe?"

"Perhaps."

Paganel was obliged to be content with this unsatisfactory reply, and went back to Glenarvan to report the result of his conversation.

"And what does Thalcave advise us to do?" said Glenarvan.

"What should we do?" he asked him.

"Go on quickly," said Thalcave.

This was easier said than done. The horses rapidly tired, treading over ground that gave way and oozed water at every step. This part of the plain could be likened to an immense bottom, where the invading waters were quickly accumulating. A flood would immediately transform this basin into a lake. It was important to cross these lands without delay.

They quickened their pace, but could not go fast enough to escape the water which rolled in great sheets at their feet. About two o'clock the clouds burst, and cascades of tropical rain poured down upon the plain. There was no way to escape this deluge, and it was better to receive it stoically. Their ponchos were dripping; their hats overflowed like a roof whose gutters are engorged; the fringe of the *recados* seemed made of liquid nets. The horse's hooves struck up torrents from the ground, and the horsemen — splashed by their mounts — rode in a double shower which came at once from the earth and the sky.

In this drenched, cold, and worn out state, they came to a miserable *rancho* at evening. Only desperate people could call it a shelter, and only travellers at bay would even think of entering it; but Glenarvan and his companions had no choice, and were glad enough to burrow in this wretched hovel, though it would have been despised by even a poor Indian of the Pampas. A miserable fire of grass was kindled, which gave out more smoke than heat, and was very difficult to keep alight, as the torrents of rain which dashed against the outside of the ruined cabin found their way within and fell down in large drops from the roof. The fire would have been extinguished twenty times over if Mulrady and Wilson had not kept off the water.

The supper was a dull meal, and neither appetizing nor reviving. Only the major seemed to eat with any relish. The impassive MacNabbs rose above all circumstances. Paganel, Frenchman as he was, tried to joke, but the attempt was a failure.

"My jests are damp," he said. "They miss-fire."

The only consolation in such circumstances was to sleep, and accordingly each one lay down and endeavoured to find a temporary forgetfulness of his discomforts and fatigues in slumber. The night was stormy, and the planks of the *rancho* creaked before the blasts as if every instant they would give way. The poor horses outside — exposed to all the inclemency of the weather — were making piteous moans, and their masters were suffering quite as much inside the ruined hut. Sleep overpowered them at last. Robert was the first to close his eyes and lean his head against Glenarvan's shoulder, and soon all the rest were soundly sleeping under the protection of God.

It seems that God made a good guard, because the night ended without accident. No one stirred until Thaouka woke them by tapping vigorously against the *rancho* with her hoof. She knew it was time to start, and at a push could give the signal as well as her master. They owed the faithful creature too much to disobey her, and set off immediately.

The rain had abated, but floods of water still covered the saturated ground. Puddles, marshes, and ponds overflowed and formed immense *banados* of untrustworthy depth. Paganel, on consulting his map, came to the conclusion that the *rios* Grande and Vivarota, into which the water from the plains generally runs, must have merged into one bed several miles wide.

Extreme haste was imperative, for all their lives depended on it. Should the inundation increase, where could they find refuge? Not a single elevated point was visible on the whole circle of the horizon, and on such level plains water would sweep along with fearful rapidity.

The horses were spurred on to the utmost and Thaouka led the way, bounding over the water as if it was her natural element. Certainly she might justly have been called a sea-horse: better than many of the aquatic animals who bear that name.

Suddenly, about ten o'clock, Thaouka gave signs of violent agitation. She kept turning around toward the wide plains of the south, neighing continually, and snorting with wide open nostrils. She reared violently, and Thalcave had some difficulty in keeping his seat. The foam from her mouth was tinged with blood from the action of the bit, pulled tightly by her master's strong hand, and yet the fiery animal would not be still. Had she been free, her master knew she would have fled away northward as fast as her legs would have carried her.

"What is the matter with Thaouka?" asked Paganel. "Is she bitten by the leeches? They are very voracious in the Argentinian streams."

"No," replied the Indian.

"Is she frightened at something, then?"

"Yes, she scents danger."

"What?"

"I do not know."

If the eye did not yet reveal the danger that Thaouka felt, the ear, at least, could already be aware of it. A low murmur, like the sound of a rising tide, was heard beyond the limits of the horizon. The wind was gusty and wet with mist. The birds, fleeing some unknown phenomenon, traversed the air. The horses, submerged to mid-leg, felt the first thrusts of the current. Soon a tremendous noise arose: a roaring, neighing, and bleating half a mile south, and huge herds appeared. A falling, rising, rushing, incoherent mixture of frightened animals fleeing with a frightful speed. It was scarcely possible to distinguish them amidst the liquid eddies raised in their course. One hundred of the largest of whales could not have pushed up more violent waves in the ocean.

A falling, rising, rushing, incoherent mixture of frightened animals, fleeing with a frightful speed

"Anda, anda!"[fn2] shouted Thalcave, in a voice like thunder.

"What is it, then?" asked Paganel.

"Flood! Flood!" said Thalcave, spurring his horse, which he launched northward.

"Flooding!" cried Paganel, flying with his companions after Thaouka.

It was past time, for about five miles south an immense flood bore was advancing over the plain, and changing the whole country into an ocean. The tall grass disappeared before it as if cut down by a scythe. Tufts of mimosas, torn off by the current were pushed ahead of the wave, advancing with irresistible power. There had been a breach in the *barrancas* of the great rivers of Pampasia, and the waters of Rio Colorado to the north and Rio Negro to the south met now in a common bed.

The wave was speeding on with the rapidity of a race-horse, and the searchers fled before it like a cloud before a storm-wind. They looked in vain for some refuge. The sky and the water were confused on the horizon. The terrified horses galloped so wildly along that the riders could hardly keep their saddles. Glenarvan often looked back, and saw the water overtaking them.

"Anda, anda!" shouted Thalcave.

They spurred the poor horses on until blood ran from their lacerated sides, and traced the water in long red threads. They stumbled over crevasses in the ground, or

got entangled in the hidden grass below the water. They fell, and were pulled up, only to fall again and again, and be pulled up again and again. The level of the water was rising. Long ripples announced the onslaught of the bore, which raised its foaming head less than two miles behind them.

This ultimate struggle with the most terrible of elements lasted for a quarter of an hour. The fugitives could not tell how far they had gone, but, judging by their speed, the distance must have been considerable. The poor horses were chest high in water now, and could only advance with extreme difficulty. Glenarvan, Paganel, Austin, all thought themselves doomed to the horrible death of those poor souls lost at sea. The horses were swiftly getting out of their depth, and six feet of water would be enough to drown them.

It is necessary to give up painting the poignant anxieties of these eight men, overtaken by the rising flood. They felt helpless to fight against this cataclysm of nature, superior to human efforts. Their salvation was no longer in their hands.

Five minutes later, and the horses were swimming; the current alone carried them along with tremendous force, and with a swiftness equal to their fastest gallop. They must have been moving at fully twenty miles an hour.

All hope of delivery seemed impossible, when the major suddenly called out.

"A tree!"

"A tree?" exclaimed Glenarvan.

"There, *there!"* Thalcave pointed to a species of gigantic walnut, which raised its solitary head above the waters a mile to the north.

His companions needed no urging now; this tree, so unexpectedly discovered, must be reached at all costs. The horses very likely might not be able to get to it, but the men at least might be saved. The current was bearing them right to it.

Just at that moment, Tom Austin's horse gave a smothered neigh and disappeared. His master, freeing his feet from the stirrups, began to swim vigorously.

"Hang on to my saddle," called Glenarvan.

"Thank you, Your Honour, but I have good stout arms."

"How's your horse, Robert?" asked Glenarvan, turning to young Grant.

"Very well, my Lord! He swims like a fish."

The monstrous wave, forty feet high, swept over them

"Look out!" shouted the major, in a stentorian voice.

The warning was scarcely spoken before the enormous bore arrived. A monstrous wave, forty feet high, swept over the fugitives with a terrible noise. Men and animals all disappeared in a whirl of foam. A liquid mass, weighing several millions of tons, engulfed them in its seething waters.

When the bore had passed, the men reappeared on the surface, and counted each other rapidly; but all the horses, except Thaouka — who still bore her master — had disappeared forever.

"Courage, courage," repeated Glenarvan, supporting Paganel with one arm, and swimming with the other.

"I can manage! I can manage!" said the worthy scholar. "I am even not sorry—"

But no one ever knew what he was not sorry about, for the poor man was obliged to swallow down the rest of his sentence with half a pint of muddy water. The major advanced quietly, making regular strokes worthy of a life guard. The sailors took to the water like porpoises while Robert clung to Thaouka's mane, and was carried along with her. The noble animal swam superbly, instinctively making straight for the tree.

The tree was only forty yards off, and in a few minutes the whole party had safely reached it. If not for this refuge they must all have perished in the flood.

The water had risen to the top of the trunk, just to where the parent branches forked out. It was easy to cling to it. Thalcave abandoned his horse, and climbed into the tree, carrying Robert with him. Then his mighty arms helped pull all the exhausted swimmers to safety.

But Thaouka was being rapidly carried away by the current. She turned her intelligent face toward her master, and shaking her long mane, neighed to call him.

"Are you going to forsake her, Thalcave?" asked Paganel.

"Me?" cried the Indian.

He plunged down into the tumultuous waters, and came up again twenty yards off. A few instants afterward his arms were around Thaouka's neck, and master and steed were drifting together toward the misty horizon to the north.

Thaouka was being rapidly carried away by the current

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fn1. About 60 leagues. (240 kilometres. — DAS)

fn2. Quick! Quick!

Chapter XXIII
Leading the Lives of Birds

THE TREE IN WHICH GLENARVAN AND HIS COMPANIONS HAD JUST FOUND REFUGE RESEMBLED a walnut, having the same glossy foliage and rounded form. In reality, however, it was the *ombú*, which grows solitarily on the Argentinian plains. The enormous and twisted trunk of this tree is planted firmly in the soil, not only by its great roots, but still more by its vigorous shoots, which fasten it down in the most tenacious manner. This was how it stood proof against the shock of the flood.

This *ombú* was one hundred feet tall, and its shadow covered a circumference of sixty fathoms. Its immense canopy rested on three great boughs which trifurcated from the top of the six foot wide trunk. Two of these rose almost perpendicularly and supported an immense parasol of foliage, the branches of which were so crossed and intertwined and entangled — as if by the hand of a basket maker — that they formed an impenetrable shade. The third branch stretched out horizontally above the roaring waters, into which its lower leaves dipped. The tree made an island of green in the midst of the surrounding ocean. Space was not lacking in the interior of this gigantic tree, for there were great gaps in the foliage — perfect glades — with air in abundance, and freshness everywhere. To see the innumerable branches rising to the clouds, parasitic lianas running from bough to bough and attaching them together, while the sunlight glinted here and there among the leaves, one might have called it a complete forest instead of a solitary tree sheltering them all.

A myriad of the feathered tribes fled away into the topmost branches on the arrival of the fugitives, protesting this flagrant usurpation of their domicile with their outcries. These birds, who themselves had taken refuge in the solitary *ombú*, were there by the hundreds: blackbirds, starlings, isacas, *jilgueros*[fn1], and especially the *picaflors*[fn2] of most resplendent colours. When they flew away it seemed as though a gust of wind had stripped the tree of its flowers.

Such was the asylum offered to Glenarvan's little band. Young Grant and the agile Wilson were scarcely perched on the tree before they had climbed to the upper branches and put their heads through the leafy dome to get a view of the vast horizon. The ocean made by the inundation surrounded them on all sides, and, far as the eye could reach, seemed to have no limits. Not a single tree was visible on the liquid plain; the *ombú* stood alone amid the rolling waters, and trembled in them. In the distance, drifting from south to north, carried along by the impetuous torrent, they saw trees torn up by the roots, twisted branches, roofs torn from destroyed *ranchos*, planks of sheds stolen by the deluge from *estancias*, carcasses of drowned animals, blood-stained skins, and on one shaking tree a whole family of jaguars, howling and clutching hold of their frail raft. Still farther away, a black spot — almost invisible already — caught Wilson's eye. It was Thalcave and his faithful Thaouka.

"Thalcave, Thalcave!" shouted Robert, waving his arms at the courageous Patagonian.

"He will save himself, Mr. Robert," said Wilson. "We must go down to His Honour."

In a moment they had descended through three storeys of boughs and landed safely on the top of the trunk, where they found Glenarvan, Paganel, the major, Austin, and Mulrady sitting either astride or in some position they found more comfortable. Wilson gave his report on their visit to the summit of the *ombú*, and all shared his opinion with respect to Thalcave. The only question was whether it was Thalcave who would save Thaouka, or Thaouka who would save Thalcave.

Their own situation was much more alarming than his. The tree would likely be able to resist the current, but the waters might rise higher and higher until the topmost branches were covered, for the basin of this part of the plain made a deep reservoir. Glenarvan's first concern, consequently, had been to make notches by which to track the progress of the flood. For the present it was stationary, having apparently reached its height. This was reassuring.

"And now what are we going to do?" asked Glenarvan.

"Make our nest, *parbleu!"* said Paganel

"Make our nest?" asked Robert.

"Certainly, my boy, and live the life of birds, since we can't that of fishes."

"All very well, but who will fill our bills for us?" asked Glenarvan.

"Me," said the major.

All eyes turned toward him immediately, and there he sat in a natural arm-chair formed of two elastic boughs, holding out his *alforjas*: damp, but still intact.

"Oh, MacNabbs, that's just like you," said Glenarvan. "You keep your head, while everyone around you is losing theirs."

"As soon as it was decided that we were not going to be drowned, I had no intention of dying of hunger."

"I should have thought of it, too," said Paganel, "but I am so *distrait*."

"And what is in the *alforjas?"* asked Tom Austin.

"Food enough to last seven men for two days," said MacNabbs.

"And I hope the flood will have gone down in twenty-four hours," said Glenarvan.

"Or that we shall have found some other way of regaining *terra firma*," added Paganel.

"Our first business then, is to have breakfast," said Glenarvan.

"After drying ourselves, though," said the major.

"And where's the fire?" asked Wilson.

"We must make it," replied Paganel.

"Where?"

"On the top of the trunk, *parbleu*."

"And what with?"

"With the dead wood we cut off the tree."

"But how will you light it?" asked Glenarvan. "Our tinder looks like a wet sponge."

"We can dispense with it," replied Paganel. "We only need a little dry moss and a ray of sunshine, and the lens of my telescope, and you'll see what a fire I'll get to dry myself by. Who will go and cut wood in the forest?"

"I will," said Robert.

And off he scampered like a young cat into the depths of the foliage, followed by his friend Wilson. Paganel set to work to find dry moss, and had soon gathered sufficient. He procured a ray of sunshine — which was easy, for the sun was shining brightly — and focused with his lens, the moss was easily kindled. This he laid on a bed of damp leaves, at the trifurcation of the large branches, forming a natural hearth from which there was little fear of the fire spreading.

Robert and Wilson had reappeared, each with an armful of dry wood, which they threw on the smouldering moss. In order to ensure a proper draught, Paganel stood over the hearth with his long legs straddled out in the Arab manner. Then stooping down and raising himself with a rapid motion, he made a violent current of air with his poncho which made the wood take fire, and soon a bright flame roared in the improvised brazier.

After drying themselves — each in his own fashion — and hanging their ponchos on the tree where they swung to and fro in the breeze, they ate breakfast, carefully rationing out the provisions for the morrow had to be thought of. The immense basin might not empty as quickly as Glenarvan hoped, and the supply was very limited. The *ombú* produced no fruit. Fortunately, it would likely abound in fresh eggs, thanks to the numerous nests stowed away among the leaves, not to mention their feathered proprietors. These resources were by no means to be disdained.

They dried themselves, and hung their ponchos in the breeze

The next business was to install themselves as comfortably as they could, in prospect of a long stay.

"As the kitchen and dining-room are on the ground floor," said Paganel, "we must sleep on the first floor. The house is large, and as the rent is not dear, we must not cramp ourselves for room. I can see natural cradles up there in which once safely tucked up

we shall sleep as if we were in the best beds in the world. We have nothing to fear. Besides, we will watch, and we are numerous enough to repulse a fleet of Indians or wild animals."

"We only need fire-arms," said Austin.

"I have my revolvers," said Glenarvan.

"And I have mine," said Robert.

"But what good are they?" asked Tom Austin, "unless Monsieur Paganel can find some way of making powder."

"We already have it," said MacNabbs, exhibiting a powder magazine in a perfect condition.

"Where did you get that, major?" asked Paganel.

"Thalcave. He thought we might need it, and gave it to me before he plunged into the water to save Thaouka."

"Generous, brave Indian!" said Glenarvan.

"Yes," said Tom Austin, "if all the Patagonians are cut from the same cloth, I must compliment Patagonia."

"Do not forget the horse," said Paganel. "She is part and parcel of the Patagonian, and I'm much mistaken if we don't see them again, the one on the other's back."

"How far are we from the Atlantic?" asked the major.

"About forty miles at the most," said Paganel. "And now, friends, since everyone is free to choose their actions, I beg to take leave of you. I am going to choose an observatory for myself up there, and by the help of my telescope let you know how things are going on in the world."

The scientist was dismissed to his selected work, and hoisted himself up skilfully from bough to bough until he disappeared into the thick foliage. His companions began to arrange the night quarters, and prepare their beds. This didn't take long as they had no blankets to spread, nor furniture to arrange, and very soon they resumed their seats around the fire to talk.

They didn't talk about their current situation, for which there was nothing more to do than to endure it patiently. They returned to the inexhaustible theme of Captain Grant. They would return on board the *Duncan* in three days, should the water subside. But Harry Grant and his two sailors, those unfortunate castaways, would not be with them. Indeed, it even seemed after this failure, and this useless journey across America, that all chance of finding them was gone forever. Where could they commence a fresh quest? What grief Lady Helena and Mary Grant would feel on hearing there was no further hope.

"My poor sister!" said Robert. "It's all over, for us."

For the first time Glenarvan could not find any comfort to give him. What could he say to the lad? Had they not followed with rigorous accuracy the indicated latitude of the document?

"And yet," he said, "this 37th degree of latitude is not a mere figure. Whether it applies to the shipwreck or captivity of Harry Grant, it is no mere guess or supposition. We read it with our own eyes."

"All very true, Your Honour," said Tom Austin, "and yet our search has been unsuccessful."

"It is both irritating and depressing," said Glenarvan.

"Irritating and depressing, I'll grant you," said the major calmly, "but not hopeless. It is precisely because we have an incontestable figure provided for us that we should follow it up to the end."

"What do you mean?" asked Glenarvan. "What more can we do?"

"A very logical and simple thing, my dear Edward. Let's turn east, when we're aboard the *Duncan*, and follow the 37th parallel back to our starting point, if need be."

"Do you suppose that I have not thought of that, Mr. MacNabbs?" said Glenarvan. "Yes, a hundred times. But what chance is there of success? Isn't leaving the American continent going away from the very spot indicated by Harry Grant, from this very Patagonia so distinctly named in the document."

"And would you recommence your search in the Pampas, when you have the certainty that the shipwreck of the *Britannia* occurred on neither the Pacific, nor Atlantic coast?"

Glenarvan was silent.

"And however small the chance of finding Harry Grant by following up the given parallel, ought we not to try?"

"I don't say 'no'," said Glenarvan.

"And you, my friends," said the major to the sailors. "Do you share my opinion?"

"Entirely," said Tom Austin, while Mulrady and Wilson nodded.

"Listen to me, friends," said Glenarvan after a few moments of thought, "and listen well. Robert, this is a serious discussion. I will do my utmost to find Captain Grant; I am pledged to it, and will devote my whole life to the task if needs be. All Scotland would unite with me to save so devoted a son as he has been to her. I agree with you that we must follow the 37th parallel around the globe if necessary; however slight our chance of finding him, and I will do so. But that is not the question we have to settle. There is one much more important than that. Should we give up our search on the American continent?"

No one made any reply. Each one seemed afraid to pronounce the word.

"Well?" asked Glenarvan, addressing himself especially to the major.

"My dear Edward," said MacNabbs, "it would be incurring too great a responsibility for me to reply *hic et nunc*[fn3]. It is a question which requires reflection. I must know first, through which countries the 37th parallel of southern latitude passes?"

"That's Paganel's business," said Glenarvan.

"Let's ask him, then," said the major.

But the scholar was nowhere to be seen, hidden by the thick foliage of the *ombú*. It was necessary to hail him.

"Paganel, Paganel!" shouted Glenarvan.

"Ici!" answered a voice from above.

"Where are you?"

"In my tower."

"What are you doing there?"

"Examining the wide horizon."

"Could you come down for a minute?"

"Do you need me?"

"Yes."

"What for?"

"To know what countries are crossed by the 37th parallel."

"Nothing is easier," said Paganel. "I need not come down for that."

"Very well, tell us now."

"Listen, then. After leaving America the 37th parallel crosses the Atlantic Ocean."

"And then?"

"It encounters the Tristan da Cunha Islands."

"Yes."

"It passes two degrees below the Cape of Good Hope."

"And afterwards?"

"Runs across the Indian Ocean, and just touches Isle St. Pierre, in the Amsterdam group."

"Go on."

"It cuts Australia in the province of Victoria."

"And then."

"After leaving Australia it—"

This last sentence was not completed. Was the geographer hesitating, or didn't he know what to say?

No. A terrible cry resounded from the top of the tree. Glenarvan and his friends turned pale and looked at each other. What fresh catastrophe had happened now? Had the unfortunate Paganel fallen?

Already Wilson and Mulrady were rushing to his rescue when his long body appeared, tumbling down from branch to branch.

Was he alive? Was he dead? He made no attempt to catch himself. He was about to fall into the roaring waters when the major stopped him.

"Much obliged, MacNabbs," said Paganel.

"What is the matter with you?" said the major. "What came over you? Another of your 'distractions'?"

"Yes! Yes!" said Paganel, in a voice almost inarticulate with emotion. "Yes! A distraction, but this was something phenomenal."

“What was it?”

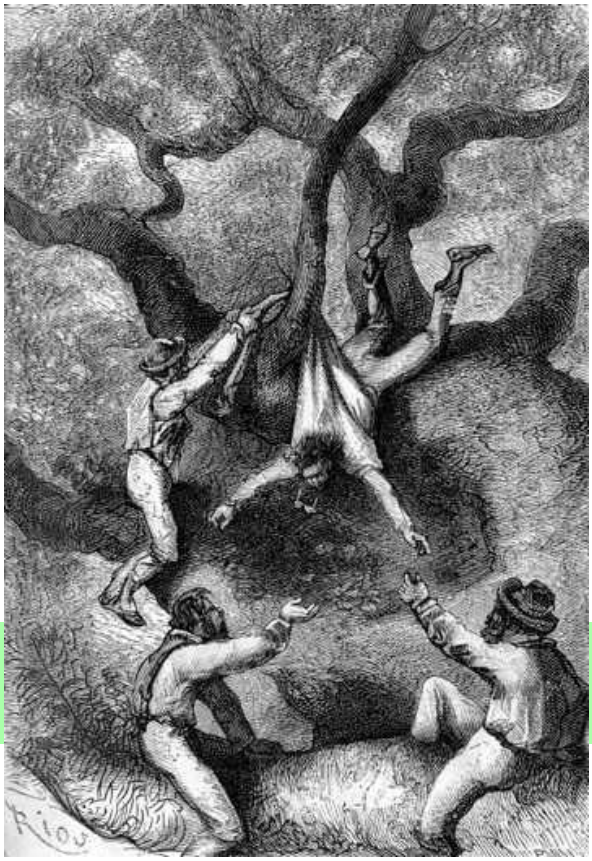
“We were wrong! We are wrong again! We are always wrong!”

“Explain yourself.”

“Glenarvan, major, Robert, my friends!” cried Paganel. “All you that hear me, we are looking for Captain Grant where he is not to be found.”

“What do you mean?” exclaimed Glenarvan.

“Captain Grant is not now, nor has he ever been, lost in America!”



Paganel appeared, tumbling down from branch to branch

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fn1. Goldfinches. — DAS

fn2. Hummingbirds. — DAS

fn3. Latin: here and now. — DAS

Chapter XXIV
Still Leading the Lives of Birds

PROFOUND ASTONISHMENT GREETED THESE UNEXPECTED WORDS. WHAT COULD THE geographer mean? Had he lost his mind? He spoke with such conviction, however, that all eyes turned toward Glenarvan, for Paganel's statement was a direct answer to the question he had so recently posed to them. But Glenarvan confined himself to shaking his head at the scientist's sudden assertion.

Paganel soon had better control over himself. *"Yes!"* he said with conviction. *"Yes!* We went astray in our research, and read into the document words that were *never there!"*

"Explain yourself, Paganel," said the major. "And more calmly, if you can."

"It's very simple, Major. As you were in error, I too was thrown into a false interpretation. Just a moment ago, at the top of this tree, answering your questions, and stopping on the word 'Australia', a lightning flash went through my brain and it came to me."

"What?" exclaimed Glenarvan. "Do you claim that Harry Grant—"

"I claim," said Paganel, "that the word 'austral' that occurs in the document is not a complete word, as we have thought so far, but just the root of the word *Australie*."

"Well, that would be strange," said the major.

"Strange?" Glenarvan shrugged his shoulders. "It is simply impossible."

"Impossible?" said Paganel. "That is a word we don't allow in France."

"How?" asked Glenarvan, in a tone of the most profound incredulity. "How do you dare to contend, with the document in your hand, that the shipwreck of the *Britannia* happened on the shores of Australia?"

"I am sure of it," replied Paganel.

"Well, Paganel," said Glenarvan, "that is a declaration which astonishes me a great deal, coming from the Secretary of the *Geographical Society*!"

"And why so?" said Paganel, poked in his vanity.

"Because, if you allow the word *Australie!* you must also allow the word *Indiens*, and Indians are never seen there."

Paganel was not the least surprised at this rejoinder. Doubtless he expected it, for he began to smile, and said:

"My dear Glenarvan, do not hasten to triumph. I am going to '*battre à plates coutures*'[fn1] as we Frenchmen say, and never was an Englishman more thoroughly defeated than you will be. It will be the revenge for Crécy and Agincourt."

"I wish nothing better. Take your revenge, Paganel."

"Listen, then. In the text of the document, there is neither mention of the Indians nor of Patagonia! The incomplete word 'indi' does not mean *Indiens*, but of course, *indigenes*, *natives!* Now, do you admit that there are 'natives' in Australia?"

“Bravo, Paganel!” said the major.

“Well, do you agree to my interpretation, my dear Lord?”

“Yes,” replied Glenarvan, “if you will prove to me that the fragment of a word ‘gonie’, does not refer to the country of the Patagonians.”

“Certainly it does not. It has nothing to do with Patagonia,” said Paganel. “Read it any way you please except that.”

“How?”

“*Cosmogonie, theogonie, agonie*.”

“*Agonie!*” said the major.

“I don’t care which,” said Paganel. “The word does not matter; I will not even try to find out its meaning. The main point is that ‘austral’ means *Australie*. It is so evident that we must have gone blindly on a wrong track not to have discovered the explanation at the very beginning. If I had found the document myself, and my judgment had not been misled by your interpretation, I should never have read it differently.”

A burst of hurrahs, and congratulations, and compliments followed Paganel’s words. Austin and the sailors, the major, and especially Robert were overjoyed at this new hope, and applauded him heartily. Even Glenarvan was almost prepared to give in.

“I only want to know one thing more, my dear Paganel,” he said, “and then I must bow to your perspicacity.”

“What is it?”

“How will you group the words together according to your new interpretation? How will the document read?”

“Easily enough answered. Here is the document.” Paganel took out the precious paper he had been studying so conscientiously for the last few days.

There was a profound silence, while the geographer collecting his thoughts, took his time to answer. His finger followed the broken lines on the document, while in a sure voice, and emphasizing certain words, he read:

> “‘*On June 7, 1863,*[fn2] *the three-master Britannia of Glasgow sank after … ’*
> Let’s say, if you like, ‘*two days, three days*’ or ‘*a long agony,*’ it does not matter, it’s totally irrelevant, ‘*on the shores of Australia. Heading to land, two sailors and Captain Grant will try to approach*’ or ‘*landed the continent where they will be*’ or ‘*are prisoners of cruel indigenes. They threw this document,*’ etc., etc.

“Is that clear?”

“Clear enough,” replied Glenarvan, “if the word ‘continent’ can be applied to Australia, which is only an island!”

“Rest assured, my dear Glenarvan; the best geographers have agreed to call the island ‘the Australian Continent’.”

"Then all I have to say now, my friends, is away to Australia!" said Glenarvan. "And may Heaven help us!"

"To Australia!" echoed his companions, with one voice.

"Do you know, Paganel," said Glenarvan, "that your being on board the *Duncan* is a providential event."

"All right. Look on me as an envoy of Providence, and let us not talk about it again."

Thus ended this conversation, which had such great consequences for their future. It completely changed the morale of the searchers. They had just seized the thread to lead them out of this labyrinth in which they had believed themselves forever lost. A new hope arose over the ruins of their collapsed plans. They could safely leave behind this American continent, and all their thoughts were already flying to Australia. They would not bring despair when they re-boarded the *Duncan*. Lady Helena, and Mary Grant would not have to mourn the irrevocable loss of Captain Grant! So they forgot the dangers of their situation to indulge in joy, and they had only one regret: that they were not able to leave immediately.

It was about four o'clock in the afternoon, and they determined to have supper at six. Paganel wished to prepare a splendid spread in honour of the occasion, but as their supplies were very scanty, he proposed to Robert that they should go and hunt in "the neighbouring forest." Robert clapped his hands at the idea, so they took Thalcave's powder magazine, cleaned and loaded the revolvers, and set off.

"Don't go too far," said the major, solemnly, to the two hunters.

After their departure, Glenarvan and MacNabbs went down to examine the state of the water by looking at the notches they had made on the tree, while Wilson and Mulrady replenished the fire.

Glenarvan saw no sign of the flood abating, but it seemed to have reached its maximum height. But the violence with which the water still rushed northward proved that the equilibrium of the Argentinian rivers was not yet restored. Glenarvan did not expect the waters to start to recede as long as the current kept running so strong.

While Glenarvan and his cousin were making these observations, the report of firearms resounded frequently above their heads, accompanied by shouts of joy almost as loud. Robert's soprano mixed with Paganel's bass. No one could say who was the most childish. The hunt was going well, and wonders in culinary art might be expected. When Glenarvan returned to the brazier, he congratulated Wilson on an excellent idea, which he had skilfully carried out. The brave fellow had managed to catch, with only a pin and a piece of string, several dozen small fish, as delicate as smelts, called *mojarras*, which were all jumping about in a fold of his poncho, ready to be converted into an exquisite dish.

The hunters came down from the *ombú* peaks. Paganel was cautiously carrying some black swallows' eggs, and a string of sparrows which he meant to serve up later

under the name ‘wimps’. Robert had skilfully brought down several pairs of *jilgueros*: small green and yellow birds which are excellent to eat, and greatly in demand in the Montevideo market. Paganel, who knew fifty-one ways of preparing eggs, was obliged for this once to be content with simply hardening them on the hot embers. Never the less, the meal was as varied as it was delicate. The dried beef, hard eggs, grilled *mojarras*, sparrows, and roast *jilgueros*, made one of those gala feasts whose memory is imperishable.

The hunt was going well

The conversation was very cheerful. Many compliments were paid Paganel on his twofold talents as hunter and cook, which the scholar accepted with the modesty which characterizes true merit. Then he turned the conversation to the peculiarities of the *ombú*, under whose canopy they had found shelter, and whose depths he declared were immense.

“Robert and I,” he added, jestingly, “thought ourselves hunting in the open forest. I was afraid, for a minute, we should lose ourselves, for I could not find the road. The sun was sinking below the horizon; I sought vainly for footmarks; I began to feel the sharp pangs of hunger, and the gloomy depths of the forest resounded already with the roar of wild beasts. No, not that; there are no wild beasts here, I am sorry to say.”

“What!” exclaimed Glenarvan, “you are sorry there are no wild beasts?”

“Certainly, I am.”

“And yet we should have every reason to dread their ferocity.”

“Their ferocity is non-existent, scientifically speaking,” said the learned geographer.

“Now come, Paganel,” said the major, “you’ll never make me admit the utility of wild beasts. What good are they?”

“Why, Major,” exclaimed Paganel, “for purposes of classification into orders, and families, and species, and sub-species.”

“A mighty advantage, certainly!” said MacNabbs, “I could dispense with all that. If I had been one of Noah’s companions at the time of the deluge, I should most assuredly have hindered the imprudent patriarch from putting in pairs of lions, and tigers, and panthers, and bears, and such animals, for they are as malevolent as they are useless.”

“You would have done that?” asked Paganel.

"Yes, I would."

"Well, you would have done wrong in a zoological point of view."

"But not in a humanitarian one," said the major.

"It is shocking! Why, for my part, on the contrary, I should have taken special care to preserve megatheriums and pterodactyls, and all the antediluvian species of which we are unfortunately deprived by his neglect."

"And I say that Noah did a very good thing when he abandoned them to their fate — that is, if they lived in his day."

"And I say he did a very bad thing," said Paganel, "and he has justly merited the malediction of scholars to the end of time!"

The rest of the party could not help laughing at hearing the two friends disputing over old Noah. Contrary to all his principles, the major — who all his life had never disputed with anyone — was always sparring with Paganel. The geographer seemed to have a peculiarly exciting effect on him.

Glenarvan, as usual the peacemaker, intervened in the debate. "Whether the loss of ferocious animals is to be regretted or not, in a scientific point of view, there is no help for it now; we must be content to do without them. Paganel can hardly expect to meet with wild beasts in this aerial forest."

"Why not?" asked the geographer.

"Wild beasts in a tree!" exclaimed Tom Austin.

"Yes, undoubtedly. The American tiger, the jaguar, takes refuge in the trees when it is too much pressed by hunters. It is quite possible that one of these animals, surprised by the inundation, might have climbed up into this *ombú*, and be hiding now among its thick foliage."

"You haven't met any of them, at any rate, I suppose?" asked the major.

"No," replied Paganel, "though we hunted all through the wood. It is unfortunate, for it would have been a splendid chase. There is no more ferocious carnivore than the jaguar. He can twist the neck of a horse with a single stroke of his paw. Once he has tasted human flesh he scents it greedily. He likes to eat an Indian best, and next to him a negro, then a mulatto, and last of all a white man."

"I am delighted to hear we come only forth," said MacNabbs.

"That only proves you are bland," said Paganel, with an air of disdain.

"I am delighted to be insipid."

"Well, it is humiliating enough," said the intractable Paganel. "The white man proclaims himself chief of the human race! It seems that this is not the opinion of the jaguars."

"Be that as it may, my brave Paganel," said Glenarvan, "seeing there are neither Indians, nor negroes, nor mulattoes among us, I am quite rejoiced at the absence of your beloved jaguars. Our situation is not so particularly agreeable."

"What? Not agreeable!" exclaimed Paganel, jumping at the word as likely to give a new turn to the conversation. "Are you complaining of your lot, Glenarvan?"

"I should think so, indeed," said Glenarvan. "Do you find these hard branches very luxurious?"

"I have never been more comfortable, even in my study. We live like the birds; we sing and fly about. I begin to believe men were intended to live in trees."

"But we lack wings," said the major.

"We'll make them some day."

"In the meantime," said Glenarvan, "with your leave, I prefer the gravel of a park, the floor of a house, or the deck of a ship, to this aerial dwelling."

"We must take things as they come, Glenarvan," said Paganel. "If good, so much the better; if bad, we'll make do. Ah, I see you are wishing you had all the comforts of Malcolm Castle."

"No, but—"

"I am quite certain Robert is perfectly happy," interrupted Paganel, eager to insure he had at least one ally.

"Yes, Mr. Paganel!" exclaimed Robert, in a joyous tone.

"It's his age," said Glenarvan.

"And mine, too," returned the geographer. "The fewer one's comforts, the fewer one's needs; and the fewer one's needs, the greater one's happiness."

"Now, now," said the major, "here is Paganel running a tilt against riches and gilt ceilings."

"No, MacNabbs," said the scholar, "I'm not; but if you like, I'll tell you a little Arabian story that comes into my mind, very apropos to our situation."

"Oh, do, do!" said Robert.

"And what is your story to prove, Paganel?" asked the major.

"Much of what all stories prove, my good companion."

"Not much then," said MacNabbs. "But go on, Scheherazade, and tell us one of those tales you tell so well."

"Once upon a time," said Paganel, "there was a son of the great Haroun-al-Raschid, who was unhappy, and went to consult an old Dervish. The old sage told him that happiness was a difficult thing to find in this world. 'However,' he added, 'I know an infallible means of procuring your happiness.' 'What is it?' asked the young Prince. 'It is to put the shirt of a happy man on your shoulders.' Whereupon the Prince embraced the old man, and set out at once to search for his talisman. He visited all the capital cities in the world. He tried on the shirts of kings, and emperors, and princes and nobles; but all in vain: he could not find a man among them that was happy. Then he put on the shirts of artists, and warriors, and merchants; but these were no better. By this time he had travelled a long way, without finding what he sought. At last he began to despair of success, and began sorrowfully retracing his steps back to his father's palace, when one day he saw in the country a brave ploughman — all happy and singing — who was pushing his plough. He thought, 'Surely this man is happy, if there is such a thing as happiness on Earth.' Forthwith he

accosted him, and said, ‘Are you happy?’ ‘Yes,’ was the reply. ‘There is nothing you desire?’ ‘Nothing.’ ‘You would not change your lot for that of a king?’ ‘Never!’ ‘Well, then, sell me your shirt.’ ‘My shirt? I don’t have one!’”

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fn1. French: beat you flat. — DAS
fn2. Updated date to 1863. — DAS

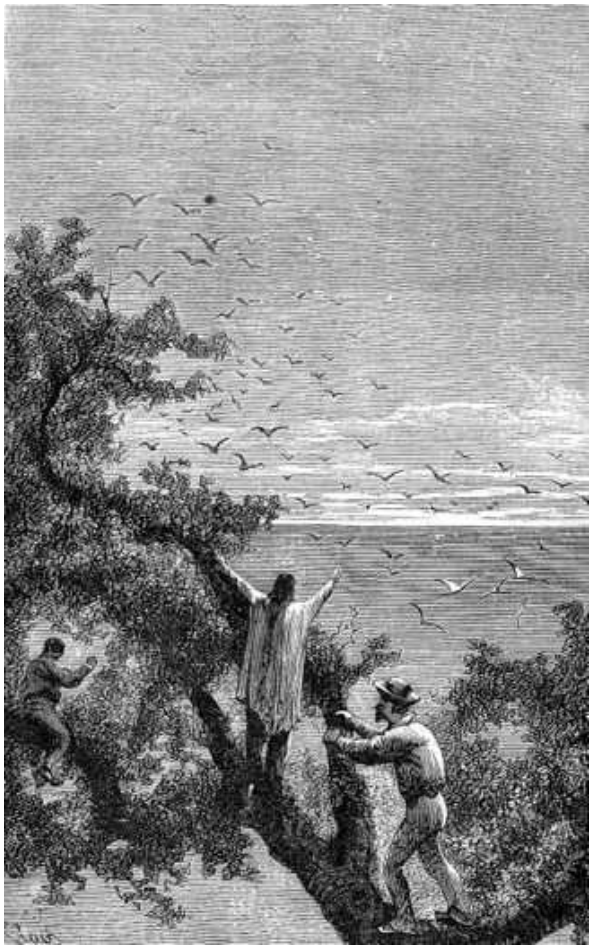
“Once upon a time…”

Chapter XXV
Between Fire and Water

Jacques Paganel's story was applauded by everyone, but it didn't change anyone's opinion. They were in agreement on one point: they had to make do with their tree, as they had neither a palace, nor a hut.

The evening had advanced while they talked. All that remained for them to close out this eventful day was to get a good sleep. The guests of the *ombú* were not only tired by the ordeal of the flood, but overwhelmed by the heat of the day which had been excessive. Their winged companions were already setting an example; the *jilgueros* — those nightingales of the Pampas — ceased their melodious roulades, and all the birds of the tree had disappeared into the thick foliage. It was best to imitate them.

Before retiring "to their nest," as Paganel had called it, he, Robert, and Glenarvan climbed up into his observatory to have one more inspection of the liquid plain. It was about nine o'clock; the sun had just set behind the sparkling mists of the western horizon. All this half of the celestial sphere, from the horizon to the zenith, was drowning in hot steam. The brilliant constellations of the southern hemisphere seemed veiled with light gauze, and were only partially visible. Nevertheless, they were distinct enough to be recognized, and Paganel pointed out the splendid stars of this circumpolar zone for the elucidation of Robert and Glenarvan. Among others, he showed them the Southern Cross, a group of four stars of first and second magnitude, arranged in rhombus that orbited around the pole; the Centaur, where you could find the closest star to the Earth, 8,000 billion leagues away;[fn1] the clouds of Magellan, two vast glowing nebulae, the largest of which covers an area two hundred times as large as the apparent size of the moon; then, finally, the "Coalsack," a dark nebula where there seemed to be no stars at all, obscuring part of the Milky Way.



The sun had just set behind the sparkling mists of the western horizon

To his great regret, Orion — which can be seen from both hemispheres — had not yet risen; but Paganel taught his two pupils a curious peculiarity of Patagonian

cosmography. In the eyes of the Indian poets, Orion represented an immense lasso and three bolas thrown by the hand of a hunter who traverses the celestial meadows. All these constellations, reflected in the mirror of the flood waters, were a beautiful sight, like a double sky surrounding them.

While Paganel discoursed on the stars, the eastern horizon was gradually assuming a most stormy aspect. A thick dark bar of cloud was rising higher and higher, and gradually extinguishing the stars. Before long half the sky was overspread. The cloud seemed to be advancing under its own power, for there was not a breath of wind. Absolute calm reigned in the atmosphere; not a leaf stirred on the tree; not a ripple disturbed the surface of the water. There seemed to be scarcely any air even, as though some vast pneumatic machine had rarefied it. High voltage electricity saturated the atmosphere, and every living thing felt it running along its nerves.

"We are going to have a storm," said Paganel.

"You're not afraid of thunder, are you, Robert?" asked Glenarvan.

"No, my Lord!"

"Good, the storm is not far off."

"And a violent one, too," added Paganel. "Judging by the look of things."

"It is not the storm that worries me," said Glenarvan, "so much as the torrents of rain that will accompany it. We shall be soaked to the skin. Whatever you may say, Paganel, a nest won't do for a man, and you will learn that soon, to your cost."

"With the help of philosophy, it will," replied Paganel.

"Philosophy will not keep you from getting drenched."

"No, but it will warm you."

"Well," said Glenarvan, "we had better go down to our friends, and advise them to wrap themselves up in their philosophy and their ponchos as tightly as possible, and above all, to lay in a stock of patience, for we shall need it before very long."

Glenarvan gave a last glance at the threatening sky. The clouds now covered it entirely; only a dim streak of light from the setting sun shone faintly in the west. A dark shadow lay on the water, and it could hardly be distinguished from the thick vapours above it. There was no sensation of light or sound. All around was darkness and silence.

"Let us go down," said Glenarvan. "The lightning will soon burst over us."

On returning to the bottom of the tree they found themselves, to their great surprise, in a sort of dim twilight produced by myriads of luminous specks which appeared buzzing confusedly over the surface of the water.

"Phosphorescence?" said Glenarvan.

"No, but phosphorescent insects," said Paganel. "A sort of glow-worm — living diamonds — which the ladies of Buenos Aires convert into magnificent ornaments."

"What!" exclaimed Robert. "Those sparks flying about are insects!"

"Yes, my boy."

Robert caught one in his hand, and found Paganel was right. It was a kind of large drone, an inch long, and the Indians call it "tuco-tuco." This curious specimen of the *Coleoptera* sheds its radiance from two spots in the front of its breast-plate, and the light is sufficient to read by. Holding his watch close to the insect, Paganel saw distinctly that the time was ten p.m.

On rejoining the major and his three sailors, Glenarvan warned them of the approaching storm, and advised them to secure themselves in their beds of branches as firmly as possible, for there was no doubt that after the first clap of thunder the wind would become unchained, and the *ombú* would be violently shaken. Though they could not defend themselves from the waters above, they might at least keep out of the rushing current beneath.

They wished one another "good-night," though without much hope for it, and then each one rolled himself in his poncho and lay down to sleep.

But the approach of a great phenomena of nature excites vague anxiety in the heart of every sentient being, even the strongest. The guests of the *ombú* felt agitated and oppressed, and not one of them could close his eyes. The first peal of thunder found them wide awake. They heard the first distant rumbling at about eleven o'clock. Glenarvan ventured to creep out of the sheltering foliage, and made his way to the extremity of the horizontal branch to take a look around.

The deep blackness of the night was already scarified with sharp bright lines which were reflected back by the water with unerring exactness. The clouds had rent in many parts, but noiselessly, like some soft fluffy fabric. After observing both the zenith and horizon, which were merged in equal darkness, Glenarvan returned to the centre of the trunk.

"Well, Glenarvan, what's your report?" asked Paganel.

"I say it is beginning in good earnest, and if it goes on so we shall have a terrible storm."

"So much the better," replied the enthusiastic Paganel. "I love a good show, since we can't run away from it."

"That's another of your theories that will burst," said the major.

"And one of my best, MacNabbs. I am of Glenarvan's opinion, that the storm will be superb. Just a minute ago, when I was trying to sleep, I recalled several facts to my memory that make me hope it will be, for we are in the region of great electrical tempests. For instance, I have read somewhere that in 1793, in this very province of Buenos Aires, lightning struck thirty-seven times during one single storm. My colleague, M. Martin de Moussy, counted fifty-five minutes of uninterrupted thunder."

"Watch in hand?" asked the major.

"Watch in hand," said Paganel. "There is one thing that worries me — not that worrying will change anything — and that is that the pinnacle of this plain is this very *ombú* where we are. A lightning rod would be very useful to us at present. For it

is this tree especially, among all that grow in the Pampas, that the lightning has a particular affection for. Besides, I need not tell you, friend, that learned men tell us never to take refuge under trees during a storm."

"Well," said the major, "It's a little late to change that."

"I must confess, Paganel," added Glenarvan, "that you might have chosen a better time for this reassuring information."

"Bah!" said Paganel. "Every moment is good for learning! Ha! Now it's beginning."

More violent bursts of thunder had interrupted this inopportune conversation. At first came the low *grave* rumbles like distant bass drums, but higher *moderato* snares soon joined in, accented with the crash of cymbals, to borrow a very apt comparison from music. The atmospheric strings added their strident accompaniment. The sky was on fire, and in this conflagration it was impossible to associate the reverberations of the thunder echoing across the sky to the electric flash of lightning that generated it.

The incessant flashes of lightning took various forms. Some darted down perpendicularly from the sky five or six times in the same place. Others would have thrilled the interest of any scholar, for though Arago[fn2] in his curious statistics only cites two examples of forked lightning, here it was visible hundreds of times. Some of the flashes branched out in a thousand different directions, making coralliform zigzags, and threw out wonderful trees of light.

Soon the whole sky from east to north was underlined by a brilliant band of phosphorescence. This fire gradually spread over the entire horizon, igniting the clouds like a mass of combustible matter which was mirrored in the waters beneath. It formed an immense globe of fire, with the *ombú* at its centre.

Glenarvan and his companions gazed silently at this terrifying spectacle. They could not make their voices heard, but the sheets of white light which enwrapped them every now and then revealed the face of one or another: sometimes the calm features of the major; sometimes the eager, curious glance of Paganel, or the energetic face of Glenarvan; and at other times the frightened face of Robert, and the untroubled looks of the sailors, illuminated suddenly with spectral light.

As yet, no rain had fallen, and the wind had not risen in the least. But soon the cataracts of the sky opened, and vertical stripes stretched like the threads of a weaver against the black background of the sky. These large drops of water, striking the surface of the lake, were reflected in thousands of sparks illuminated by the fire of lightning.

Was the rain the finale of the storm? Would Glenarvan and his companions escape with nothing more than a vigorous shower? No. At the height of the struggle of the aerial fires, a burning globe, the size of a fist and surrounded by black smoke, suddenly appeared at the extremity of the horizontal branch. This ball, after spinning round and round for a few seconds, burst like a bombshell, and with so much noise

that the explosion was distinctly audible above the general din. A sulphurous smoke filled the air, and complete silence reigned for a moment. It was broken by Tom Austin.

"The tree is on fire!" he shouted.

Tom was right. In a moment, as if some fireworks were being ignited, the fire ran along the west side of the *ombú*. The dead wood, nests of dried grass, and the spongy sapwood fed the hungry flames.

A burning globe, the size of a fist, appeared at the end of the horizontal branch

The wind rose, and fanned the flames. It was time to flee, and Glenarvan and his party hurried away to the eastern side of their refuge, which so far was untouched by the fire. They were all silent, troubled, and terrified as they watched branch after branch shrivel, and crack, and writhe in the flame like living serpents, and then drop into the swollen torrent, still red and gleaming as it was borne swiftly away on the rapid current. The flames sometimes rose to a prodigious height until they were lost in the conflagration of the atmosphere, and sometimes — beaten down by the hurricane — closely enveloped the *ombú* like a robe of Nessus. They were all terrified. A thick smoke suffocated them; an intolerable heat burned them; the fire gained on their side of the lower frame of the tree. Nothing could stop, or extinguish it! Finally, the situation was no longer tenable, and of the two deaths, it was necessary to choose the least cruel.

"Into the water!" yelled Glenarvan.

Wilson, who was nearest the flames, had already plunged into the lake, but next minute he screamed out in the most violent terror:

"Help! Help!"

Austin rushed to him, and with the assistance of the major, dragged him back up onto the tree.

"What's the matter?"

"Caimans! Caimans!" said Wilson.

The whole foot of the tree appeared to be surrounded by these formidable saurians. Their scales shimmered in the fire light; their tails vertically flattened, their heads like a spearhead, their eyes protruding, their jaws split as far as the back of the ear. The animals were instantly recognized by Paganel, as a ferocious species of alligator peculiar to America, called caimans in the Spanish territories. About ten of

them lashed the water with their powerful tails, and attacked the *ombú* with the long teeth of their lower jaw.

At this sight the hapless men felt lost. A frightful death was in store for them. They must either be devoured by the fire or by the caimans.

Even the major said, in a calm voice "This may well be the end for us."

There are circumstances in which men are powerless, when the unchained elements can only be combated by other elements. Glenarvan's haggard gaze shifted between the fire, and the water leagued against him, hardly knowing what deliverance to implore from Heaven.

The violence of the storm had abated, but a considerable quantity of vapours had accumulated in the atmosphere to which electricity was about to communicate immense force. In the south an enormous whirlwind, a cone of mists, was forming — the point at the bottom, and base at the top, which connected the turbulent water and the angry clouds. It soon began to move forward, spinning with terrifying speed, and sweeping up a column of lake water into its centre while its whirling motion made all the surrounding currents of air rush toward it.

A few seconds later the gigantic water-spout threw itself on the *ombú*, and caught it up in its whirl. The tree shook to its roots. Glenarvan could fancy the caimans' teeth were tearing it up from the soil for as he and his companions held on — each clinging firmly to the other — they felt the towering *ombú* give way, and fall. Its flaming branches plunged into the tumultuous water with a terrible hiss. It was over in an instant. Already the water-spout had passed, to carry on its destructive work elsewhere. And drawing its waters up as it went, it seemed to empty the lake in its passage.

The gigantic water-spout threw itself on the *ombú*

The *ombú* — lying in the water — began to drift rapidly along, impelled by wind and current. All the caimans had fled, except one that was crawling over the upturned roots, and coming toward the poor refugees with wide open jaws. But Mulrady, seizing hold of a branch that was half-burned off, struck the animal so hard that he broke its back. The caiman fell away into the eddies of the torrent.

Glenarvan and his companions — rescued from the voracious saurians — stationed themselves on the branches windward of the conflagration while the *ombú*

sailed along like a blazing fire-ship through the dark night, the flames spreading themselves like sails before the breath of the hurricane.

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fn1. Close. The Alpha Centauri system is 4.37 light years from Earth, which is 10,300 billion leagues. Proxima Centauri — which had not yet been discovered, and is not visible to the naked eye — is slightly closer, at 10,000 billion leagues. — DAS

fn2. François Arago, French physicist and astronomer who published a series of Meteorological essays in 1855, including one on the different classifications of lightning. He considered bifurcated lightning to be rare, and recounted only two reports of trifurcated lightning that he considered to be reliable. — DAS

Chapter XXVI
The Atlantic

FOR TWO HOURS THE *OMBÚ* NAVIGATED THE IMMENSE LAKE WITHOUT REACHING LAND. THE flames which had been devouring it were gradually extinguished. The main danger of their frightful passage had disappeared. The major went so far as to say that he should not be surprised if they were saved after all.

The direction of the current remained unchanged, always carrying them to the northeast. The profound darkness was parted now and then by an illuminating flash of lightning. Paganel searched in vain for some landmark on the horizon. The storm was nearly over. The rain had given way to light mists which a breath of wind dispersed. The heavy masses of cloud had separated, and now streaked the sky in long bands.

The *ombú* was carried quickly by the heedless current, as if some powerful locomotive engine was hidden in its trunk. It seemed possible that they might drift this way for days. However, at about three o'clock in the morning, the major noticed that the roots were beginning to graze the ground occasionally. Tom Austin began sounding the depth with a long branch, and it was getting shallower. Twenty minutes later, the *ombú* ran aground with a violent jolt.

"Land! Land!" shouted Paganel, in a ringing tone.

The tips of the charred limbs had struck a hillock, and never were sailors more glad of a grounding; the bank was like a harbour to them.

Already Robert and Wilson had leaped onto the dry land. They howled with joy when they heard a well-known whistle. The gallop of a horse resounded over the plain, and the tall form of Thalcave emerged from the darkness.

"Thalcave!" cried Robert, and the others joined in with one voice.

"Amigos!" said the Patagonian, who had been waiting for the searchers here in the same place where the current had landed him.

As he spoke he lifted up Robert in his arms, and hugged him to his breast, never imagining that Paganel was hanging on to him. A general and hearty hand-shaking followed, and everyone rejoiced at seeing their faithful guide again. Then the Patagonian led the way into the shed of a deserted *estancia* where there was a good, blazing fire to warm them, and a substantial meal of fine, juicy, slices of venison soon broiling, of which they did not leave a crumb. When their minds had calmed down a little and they were able to reflect, none of them could believe that they had escaped this adventure of so many different dangers: the flood, fire, and formidable caimans of the Argentinian rivers.

Thalcave, in a few words, gave Paganel an account of himself since they parted, entirely ascribing his deliverance to his intrepid horse. Then Paganel tried to make him understand their new interpretation of the document, and the consequent hopes

they were indulging. Whether the Indian actually understood his ingenious hypothesis was in question, but he saw that they were glad and confident, and that was enough for him.

"Amigos!" said the Patagonian

As can easily be imagined, after their compulsory rest on the *ombú*, the searchers did not want to delay getting back on the road. At eight o'clock they set off. No means of transport being procurable so far south, they were compelled to walk. However, it was not more than forty miles[fn1] that they had to go now, and Thaouka would not refuse to occasionally give a lift to a tired pedestrian, or two if need be. In thirty-six hours they might reach the shores of the Atlantic.

The low-lying tract of marshy ground, still under water, soon lay behind them as Thalcave led them upward to the higher plains. Here the Argentinian territory resumed its monotonous appearance. A few clumps of trees, planted by European hands, might chance to be visible among the pasturage, but quite as rarely as in the Tandil and Tapalquem Sierras. The native trees are only found on the edge of long prairies and about Cape Corrientes.

Next day, though still fifteen miles distant, the proximity of the ocean was felt. The *virazon*, a peculiar wind which blows regularly half of the day and night, bowed the tall grasses. The thin soil supported scattered woods, small arboreal mimosas, acacia bushes and bouquets of *curra-mabol*. They had to skirt around some saline lagoons that shimmered like broken glass, but made walking difficult. They pushed on as quickly as possible, hoping to reach Lake Salado on the shores of the ocean. The searchers were all rather tired when, at eight o'clock in the evening, they saw the sand dunes, twenty yards high, which skirt the coast. Soon the long murmur of breaking waves reached their ears.

"The ocean!" exclaimed Paganel.

"Yes, the ocean!" said Thalcave.

The exhausted men forgot their fatigue, and ran up the dunes with surprising agility.

But it was getting quite dark already, and their eager gaze could discover no traces of the *Duncan* on the gloomy expanse of water.

"But she is there, for all that," said Glenarvan, "waiting for us, and running along this coast."

"We shall see her tomorrow," said MacNabbs.

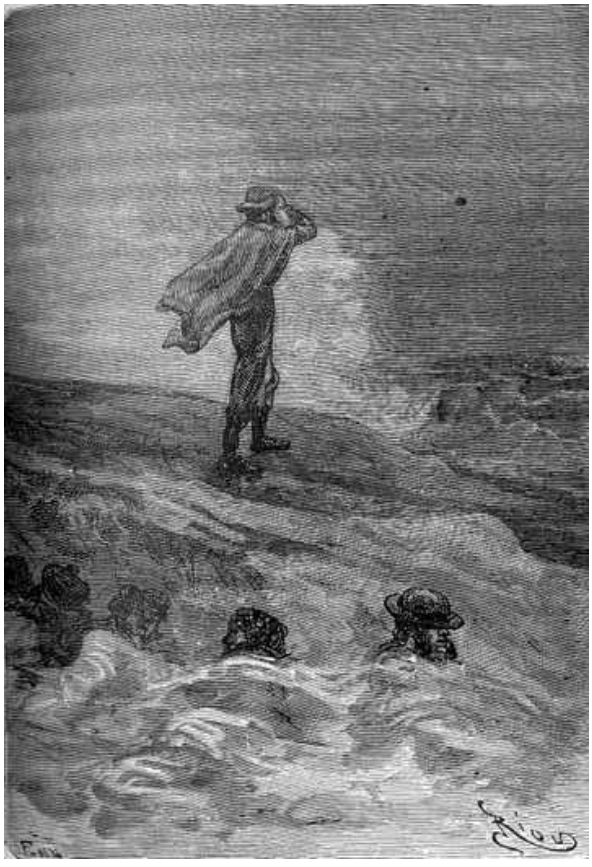
Tom Austin hailed the invisible yacht, but there was no response. The wind was very high and the sea rough. The clouds were scudding along from the west, and the spray of the waves dashed up even to the sand-hills. It was little wonder, then, if the *Duncan* was at the appointed rendezvous that her lookout could neither hear, nor make himself be heard. The coast offered no shelter. Neither bay, nor cove, nor port; not so much as a creek. It consisted of long sand-banks which ran out into the sea, and were more dangerous to a ship than rocky shoals. The sand-banks raised the waves into high rolling breakers that could dash any grounded ship to pieces.

It was natural, then, that the *Duncan* would keep far away from such a coast. John Mangles was too prudent a captain to get too near. Tom Austin was of the opinion that she would keep five miles out.

The major advised his impatient relative to resign himself to circumstances. Since there was no means of dispelling the darkness, what was the use of straining his eyes by vainly endeavouring to pierce through it.

The major organized the night's encampment sheltered by the dunes. They prepared and ate the last meal of their journey with their remaining provisions. Afterward, each — following the major's example — dug an improvised bed in a comfortable hole, and, bringing his huge sand blanket up to his chin, fell into a heavy sleep.

But Glenarvan kept watch. There was still a stiff breeze, and the ocean had not yet settled from the recent storm. The waves broke upon the beach with a noise like thunder. Glenarvan could not rest knowing the *Duncan* was so near him. It was unimaginable that she had not arrived at the appointed rendezvous. Glenarvan had left Talcahuano Bay on the 14th of October, and arrived on the shores of the Atlantic on the 12th of November. He had taken thirty days to cross Chile, the Cordilleras, the Pampas, and the Argentinian plains, giving the *Duncan* ample time to double Cape Horn, and arrive on the eastern coast. There was no conceivable delay that could have kept her away. Certainly the storm had been very violent, and its fury must have been terrible on such a vast battlefield as the Atlantic, but



Glenarvan kept watch

the yacht was a good ship, and the captain was a good sailor. She was bound to be there, and she would be there.

These reflections, however, did not calm Glenarvan. When the heart and reason are struggling, it is generally the heart that wins. The laird of Malcolm Castle felt all those he loved to be near in this darkness: his dear Helena, Mary Grant, and the crew of his *Duncan*. He wandered up and down the lonely strand. He gazed, and listened, and even fancied he caught occasional glimpses of a faint light.

"I am not mistaken," he said to himself; "I saw a ship's light, one of the lights on the *Duncan!* Oh! why can't I see in the dark?"

All at once the thought rushed across him that Paganel said he was a nyctalope, and could see at night. He went to go and wake him.

The scientist was sleeping as soundly as a mole in his hole when a strong arm pulled him up out of the sand.

"Qui va là?" he cried.

"It's me."

"Qui, vous?"[fn2]

"Glenarvan. Come, I need your eyes."

"My eyes?" Paganel tried to rub the sleep out of them.

"Yes, I need your eyes to make out the *Duncan* in this darkness, so come on."

"Au diable la nyctalopie!"[fn3] Paganel muttered to himself, though he was pleased to be of any service to his friend.

He got up, shook his stiffened limbs, and stretching and yawning as most people do when roused from sleep, followed Glenarvan to the shore.

Glenarvan begged him to examine the distant horizon across the sea, which he did most conscientiously for some minutes.

"Well, do you see anything?" asked Glenarvan.

"Not a thing. Even a cat couldn't see two paces in this darkness."

"Look for a red light or a green one — her larboard or starboard light."

"I see neither a red, nor a green light; all is pitch dark." Paganel's eyes involuntarily began to close.

For half an hour he followed his impatient friend mechanically, letting his head frequently drop on his chest, and raising it again with a start. At last he neither answered nor spoke. His unsteady steps made him reel about like a drunken man. Glenarvan looked at him, and found he was asleep on his feet!

Glenarvan took him by the arm, and — without waking him — took him back to his hole, where he comfortably buried him.

At dawn, everyone was startled awake by a loud cry.

"The *Duncan*, the *Duncan!"* shouted Glenarvan.

They rushed to the shore, shouting *"Hurrah, hurrah!"*

There she was, five miles out, her lower sails carefully reefed, and her steam half up. Her smoke was lost in the morning mist. The sea was so rough that a vessel of her tonnage could not have ventured safely nearer the beach.

Glenarvan, armed with Paganel's telescope, watched the *Duncan*'s progress. John Mangles had not yet seen them on the shore, for he did not alter his course, and continued to run, on port tack, under his topsails alone.

Thalcave fired his rifle, loaded with extra powder, in the direction of the yacht. They watched, and listened, but the Duncan gave no sign of having heard the shot. Thalcave fired a second, and third time. The reports of his gun echoed off the dunes.

At last a plume of white smoke was seen issuing from the side of the yacht.

"They see us!" cried Glenarvan. "That's the *Duncan*'s gun."

A few seconds later, a dull detonation came to die at the edge of the shore. The Duncan's topsails were adjusted and the yacht came about, to come in as close to the shore as was safe.

Presently, through the glass, they saw a boat lowered.

"Lady Helena will not be able to come," said Tom Austin. "It is too rough."

"Nor John Mangles," added MacNabbs; "he cannot leave the ship."

"My sister, my sister!" cried Robert, stretching out his arms toward the yacht, which was now rolling violently.

"Oh, I can't wait to get on board!" said Glenarvan.

"Patience, Edward! You will be there in a couple of hours," replied the major.

Two hours! But it was impossible for a boat, rowed with six oars, to make the return trip in a shorter space of time.

Glenarvan went back to Thalcave, who stood with his arms crossed beside Thaouka, calmly watching the waves.

Glenarvan took his hand, and pointing to the yacht, said "Come!"

The Indian gently shook his head.

"Come, friend," said Glenarvan.

"No," said Thalcave, softly. "Here is Thaouka, and there, the Pampas," he added, embracing with a passionate gesture the wide-stretching prairies.

Glenarvan understood his refusal. He knew that the Indian would never forsake the prairie where the bones of his fathers were whitening, and he knew the religious attachment of these sons of the desert for their native land. He therefore did not urge Thalcave longer, but simply squeezed his hand. Nor could he find it in his heart to insist, when the Indian, smiling as usual, would not accept the price of his services, pushing back the money, and saying:

"For friendship."

Glenarvan could not reply, but he wished — at least — to leave the brave Indian some souvenir of his European friends. What was there to give? Weapons? Horses? He had lost everything in the disasters of the flood. His friends were no richer than him.

He was quite at a loss how to show his recognition of the selflessness of this noble guide, when an idea occurred to him. He drew from his wallet a precious medallion which surrounded an admirable portrait, a masterpiece of Lawrence, and he offered it to the Indian.

"My wife."

The Indian gazed at it with a softened eye. "Good and beautiful," he said.

Robert, Paganel, the major, Tom Austin, and the two sailors exchanged heartfelt farewells with the Patagonian. These good people were sincerely moved to leave this intrepid, and devoted friend. Thalcave embraced them each, and pressed them to his broad chest. Paganel made him accept a map of South America and the two oceans, which he had often seen the Indian looking at with interest. It was the most precious thing the geographer possessed. As for Robert, he had only hugs to give, and these he lavished on his friend, not forgetting to give a share to Thaouka.

The boat from the *Duncan* was approaching, and in another minute had glided into a narrow channel between the sand-banks, and run ashore.

"My wife?" asked Glenarvan.

"My sister?" asked Robert.

"Lady Helena and Miss Grant are waiting for you on board," replied the coxswain; "but we don't have a minute to lose, Your Honour, for the tide is beginning to ebb."

The last hugs were exchanged, and Thalcave accompanied his friends to the boat, which had been pushed back into the water. Just as Robert was going to step in, the Indian took him in his arms, and gazed tenderly into his face.

"Now go," he said. "You are a man."

"Goodbye, friend! Farewell" said Glenarvan, once more.

"Will we ever see each other again?" asked Paganel.

"Quien sabe?"[fn4] said Thalcave, raising his arms to the sky.

Those were the Indian's last words, dying away on the breeze. The boat pushed off. The boat moved away from the shore, carried by the receding tide.

"Quien sabe?" said Thalcave

For a long time, Thalcave's dark, motionless silhouette stood out against the sky, through the white, dashing spray of the waves. Then by degrees his tall form began to diminish in size, until at last his friends lost sight of him, altogether.

An hour afterward Robert was the first to leap on board the *Duncan*. He flung his arms round Mary's neck, amid the loud, joyous hurrahs of the crew on the yacht.

Thus the crossing of South America was accomplished, scrupulously following the 37th parallel. Neither mountains, nor rivers had made the searchers change their course; and though they did not have to combat any ill-will from men, their determination had been roughly put to the test often enough by the fury of the unchained elements.

End of Book One

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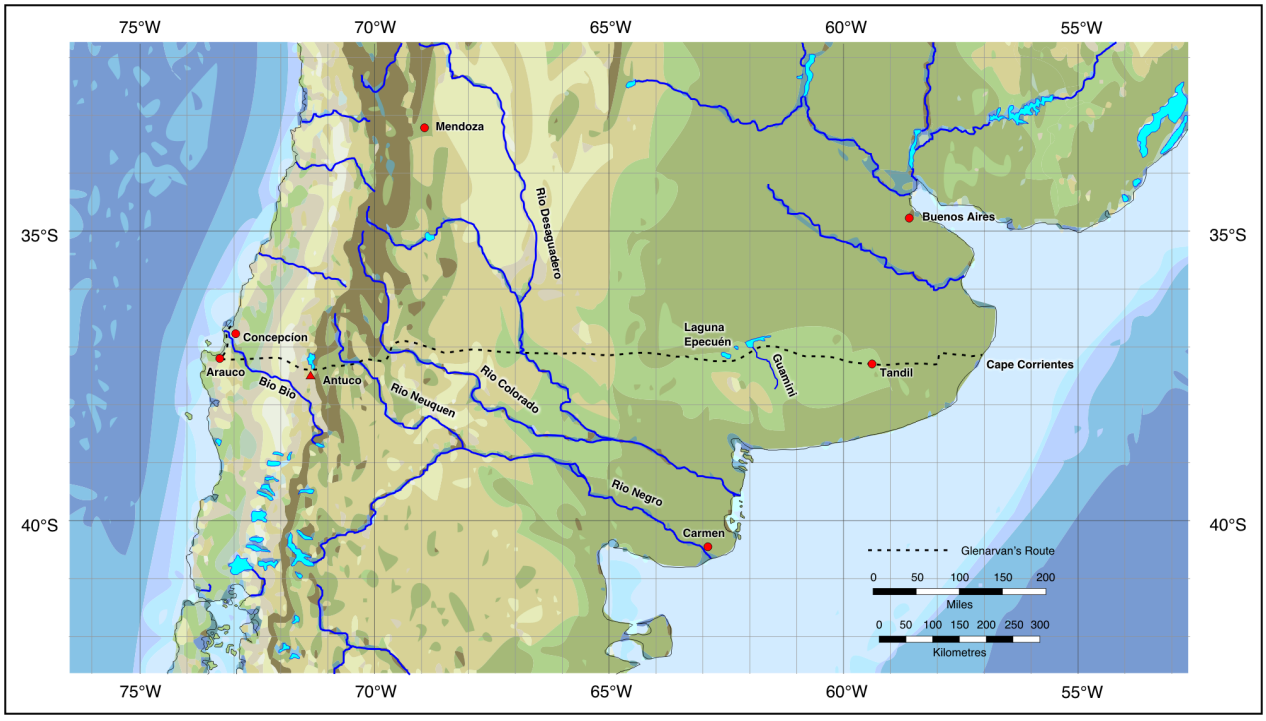
fn1. About fifteen leagues. (60 kilometres. — DAS)
fn2. Who's there? … Who are you? — DAS
fn3. Damn the nyctalopia! — DAS
fn4. Who knows?



The searcher's route across Chile and Argentina at the 37th parallel