

Some time previously to that of which I am about to speak, I had made the acquaintance—it is unnecessary to say how—of a young Irishman, serving in the force of Celadores, in whose story I was much interested. These Celadores, or armed constabulary, by whom the peace of the city was maintained, numbered about three hundred men, chiefly half-bred Indians or *mestizos*, drilled to considerable discipline in the use of their rifles and bayonets. Their posts were at the principal street corners where they sat all day long, (a low chair seemed to be part of the uniform) and whence in peace time they whistled to each other through the night, by way of keeping up their spirits and relieving the dullness of their situation. The troubled position of affairs had, however, just then occasioned their nightly withdrawal to the government buildings. They wore an ill-fitting dark-blue coat and trousers unrelieved by any brighter colour, and to my fancy always presented a sullen and morose appearance. They were useful in maintaining good public behaviour, having once or twice fired on an excited Plaza mob, thereby inspiring a terror most conducive to tranquility; and they were universally regarded as the most devoted of the President's adherents.

In this body my Irish friend held some such rank as that of Inspector with us. He had been the experienced surgeon of a New Zealand passenger vessel which had made its homeward voyage via Callao, where he had quarrelled with his Captain, and, abandoning his agreement with the owners, attempted to establish himself in his profession. Failing therein—medical fees are scarcely remunerative in Peru—he had gone through various vicissitudes one after the other, until the formation of his present corps seemed to hold out prospect of service not altogether distasteful, and he had managed to procure the appointment in which I found him. He was, I believe, an energetic and valuable officer and in high favour with the superior authorities. He and I had many rides and rambles through the country, at a time when no Limeno would venture beyond the walls, and a close attachment had sprung up between us. I had been always mindful of our Craft since the day that I was made, and was pleased to recognize so far from home a brother under the old constitution, and lost, I hope, few opportunities of assuring him that his exile was not altogether friendless. Few other of his associates knew anything of his antecedents. His name, Galwa, had been Castilianized into Galvez, and his accent was so pure, and he had so readily adapted himself to South American fashions, and become so thoroughly acclimatized even in appearance, that not many of them even guessed him to be a European.

I had been for some time suffering from a delicacy of throat not uncommon here and had kept the house a good deal, when one morning, shortly after breakfast, my old friend Carlos Calzado was announced; and, advancing gaily to my sofa, condoled with me upon my enforced imprisonment, and proceeded to open his budget of the gossip of the hour. I had always suspected Calzado of being deeply involved with the revolutionists, but he had invariably avoided political topics even with me who was one of his greatest intimates, and I was not a little surprised that on this occasion he should plunge into the subject of his own uninvited accord.

The rapture of triumph was, I suppose, strong enough to overpower prudence, for he had not been ten minutes in the room when he burst out with his great news.

"You have not been about lately and your English friends do not care to interest themselves in our domestic arrangements. Well then, the Revolution is an accomplished fact, or will be so within twelve hours. I know that I am safe in telling you. Though indeed no one doubts the issue now; it is a mere question of detail."

"And the President?"

"The President is with the army to-day. Tomorrow . . ." a significant movement of the hand to the neck finished the sentence grimly.

"But this is horrible. Surely they will respect the usages of war. Perez at least is no rebel."

"You can argue the point for him by and by. For my part I should not be sorry to let the old rascal off with the bastinado and ten years guano groping at the islands."

This was the way in which they spoke there of the Chief Magistrate of the nation in arms to repel insurrection. "But the troops?" said I; "what are you going to do with them?"

"Oh, their affair is arranged; they will not be very troublesome. We outnumber them in the field, and the garrison is a mere handful. Do you know that there are not eight hundred men in Lima, Celadores included?"

It was only that morning that I had been languidly speculating with myself as to the probable effect of events upon the fortunes of my Irish friend, whom I had not seen for many days, and had proposed enquiring after him that afternoon. The present mention of the Force, chiming in with these reflections, rivetted my attention. Calzado went on.

"We will out-general them completely, or rather have done so already. Your observations may have taught you that a Peruvian army is an army of philosophers. Once prove to them that they are over-matched and they will not dream of such unreasonable obstinacy as to prolong a hopeless conflict. Well, we will bring conviction home to the minds of Perez' veterans in a few hours, and the campaign, and with it the war, is at an end. It remains but to storm the forts and the Palace, if anyone inside is fool enough to decline a peaceable surrender. The Admiral is ours already."

"And when is all this to happen?"

My rooms at Morin's opened on the Plaza, of which the hotel forms the greater part of one side having on its left the Palace and immediately facing the Cathedral. Calzado took out his watch, compared it with the great clock opposite, and answered deliberately.

"It wants eighteen minutes to One: within twenty hours the nation will have changed masters."

I leaped up and rang the bell vehemently. He seemed surprised, but said indolently enough,

"As my information was given in confidence, I know that you are not going to make use of it. Not to speak of the absurdity of imagining that any influence within your control could put back the hands of the clock, even supposing you to be interested in Perez' villainy."