

FOREWORD

THIS tale is to be of days when the green forest-aisles and mountain trails of America saw the glint of the steel of men in armor. It will have to do with times when the aborigine looked upon the sparkle of lance, the flutter of pennon, the gleam of corselet, helm, and morion, and felt his primeval turf tremble beneath the hoofs of steers in full panoply. It will tell of plumed and plated cavaliers, "In brave pursuit of universal emprise," who found in the wilderness of the New World adventures no less hardy, and near as strange, as any fabled one encountered by knight of old.

It is easily half forgotten that our continent has its chronicles which link us with the age of chivalry; that its soil once sustained the march of men armed cap-a-pie, as bold of heart, greedy for renown, and thirsty for blood, as ever a crusader. They came, proof-valiant against all peril; of a fire-eating, eager courage surpassed alone by their truculence and cruelty; of a courage to meet not only dangers real, but a myriad direful ones born of fancy. For they were, withal, men of imagination and fine, wide credulity. They peopled the West with Amazons, giants, dragons, and legions of varied and curious monstrosity. They were prepared in mind not only to fight battles, but to encounter sorcerers, witches, and the Fiend himself; to undergo all manner of spells, charms, enchantments, and hundred grisly experiences and phenomena. They sought earnestly, conscientiously, and with diligence, for golden Manoa and its emperor, El Dorado, and for the Fountain of Perpetual Youth. If they failed to come upon these, and did no preternatural deeds, they were none the less heroes, animated by the spirit of knight-errantry, which with them took its final leave of earth.