

CHAPTER XL

TWO Americans were standing talking together in a corner of the somewhat overcrowded reception-room. One was the secretary to the American legation at Varia; the other was a friend, a traveller, who had brought with him proper credentials, and was spending a few weeks in the capital.

"Well," the secretary said, "ours is a marvellous country, but I will show you something here which is almost as amazing. You see where the president and his wife are standing receiving? Now, do you see those two who are coming up the stairs, the tall, soldierly looking man with the scars on his face, and the beautiful woman?"

"I see them," his friend answered. "By Jove, the woman is handsome!"

"You hear them announced," the secretary continued, "Mr. and Mrs. John Peters."

"Evidently friends of the president's," the other remarked, as he watched the cordial greetings which were going on.

The secretary smiled. "You have been out of the