

*Beyond the
Green Prism*

A. Hyatt Verrill

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A Sequel to "Into the Green Prism"

By A. Hyatt Verrill

Beyond the Green Prism

When we published Mr. Verrill's story, "Into the Green Prism," we were quite prepared to learn that it would meet with the general approval of our readers. But even we were surprised to receive the numerous insistent demands for a sequel, and the explanation for the various questions that arose in the minds of our readers when they had finished the story. We asked Mr. Verrill to write such a story. "Beyond the Green Prism" is the result, which, we are certain you will agree, far exceeds the original. A goodly number of the "fallacies" in the other story are explained, we believe, to the satisfaction of those whose questions and objections we published in the "Discussions" columns of AMAZING STORIES for several issues back. However, many new and thrilling adventures take place and entirely new and unexpected discoveries are made. Read the first half of this story this month.

Illustrated by MOREY

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CHAPTER I

An Unexpected Surprise

WHEN I made public my story relating the true facts regarding the mysterious disappearance of my dear friend, Professor Ramon Amador, and the incredible events that led to it, I had no expectation of ever revisiting that portion of South America where Ramon had vanished before my eyes.

In the first place, my work in the Manabi district had been completed before Ramon attempted his suicidal experiment, and in the second place, the many associations, the thoughts that would be aroused by the familiar surroundings—the holes we had dug, the traces of our camp, the site of Ramon's field laboratory—would have been more than I could bear; and finally, I would not have dared lift a shovelful of earth, drive a pick into the ground or even walk across the desert for fear of burying the microscopic people and their princess—yes, even Ramon perhaps—beneath avalanches of dislodged sand and dust.

Yet, throughout all the time that had passed since I stood beside Ramon and watched him draw the bow across the strings of his violin, and with a shattering crash the green prism and Ramon vanished together, he had been constantly in my thoughts. Ever I found myself speculating, wondering whether he had succeeded in his seemingly mad determination to reduce himself to microscopic proportions, wondering if he actually had joined his Sumak Nusta, his beloved princess, whose love had called to him across the centuries. How I longed to know the truth, to be sure that he had not vanished completely and forever, to be assured that he was dwelling happily with that supremely lovely princess of the strange lost race we had watched through the green prism for so many days. And what would I not willingly have given to have been able once again to see that minute city with its happy industrious people, to see the inhabitants kneel before their temple of the sun, to see the high priest raise his hands in benediction, and once more see the princess appear before her subjects, perchance now with Ramon walking—erect, proud as the king he was—beside her. But all was idle

speculation, all vain supposition. With the shattering of the prism through which we had so often watched the city and its people, all hopes of ever knowing what had occurred had been lost. Never again could I gaze through the marvelous, almost magical, sea-green crystal and see what was transpiring in that city whose mountains were our dust, whose people were invisible to unaided human eyes. No fragment of the strange Manabinite remained, as far as I knew, and even had there been a supply, only Ramon would have been able to construct another prism.



¶ *I heard the first crescendo note and then—Ramon, desert, everything seemed swallowed in a dense fog; a gust of wind seemed to lift me, whirl me about.*

Yet somehow I could not feel that my beloved friend had failed in his desires. I could not believe that such love as his could have been thwarted by a just and benign Divinity, and my inner consciousness kept assuring me that Ramon had succeeded, that he still lived, and that he was happier with Nusta than he ever could have been among normal fellow beings. Moreover, I had reason and logic on my side. I knew that the donkey and the dog had

survived the test, that although they had vanished as mysteriously and as abruptly as had Ramon, yet they had been uninjured by their reduction in size, and so why should Ramon have been affected otherwise? Such thoughts and mental arguments were comforting and reassuring, but they did not still my desire to know the truth, they did not prevent me from speculating continually upon Ramon's fate, and they did not restore the presence and companionship of the finest, most lovable man I had ever known.

Not until he had disappeared and was forever beyond my reach did I fully realize how much Ramon had grown to mean to me. We had been thrown very close together for months; we had worked side by side, had watched that marvelous miniature city through the same prism, and our hopes, fears, successes and disappointments had been shared equally. Moreover, Ramon had possessed a strange personal magnetism, an indescribable power of intuitively sensing one's feelings, such as I had never known in any other human being.

And though I am—I flatter myself—a matter-of-fact, hard-headed and wholly unromantic and unsentimental scientist, who—theoretically at least—should be mentally immune to all but proven facts, yet Ramon's highly romantic and sentimental nature, his readiness to believe in the most extravagant theories, his temperamental moods, his unconquerable optimism and his, to me, incomprehensible mysticism, all found a ready response in my more practical mind, and I loved him the more because he differed so widely from myself. And often, as I sat late at night, smoking contemplatively in the darkness of my study and mentally reviewing those months at Manabi, I recalled incidents that I now realized were proofs of the high courage, the indomitable will-power, the limitless patience and the almost womanly tenderness of my lost friend.

Almost without my realizing it, Ramon and I had grown to be even more than brothers, and often, as I thought of the past and of the present, a lump would come into my throat and my eyes would fill with tears as I realized that never again would I see Ramon alive.

It was, I admit, great comfort and consolation to write the story of our strange experiences and of his disappearance, but after the tale was done, I realized all the more vividly that he had gone forever and my sorrow became all the more poignant. It was like writing "Finis" to the story, and I found myself becoming morose, aloof and avoiding other men. In order to throw off this almost melancholic mood I devoted myself all the more assiduously

to my archeological work, striving in my scientific ardor to forget my lost friend.

AND then, entirely unexpectedly and as though by a direct act of Providence, a most astonishing event occurred which entirely altered my point of view, my thoughts and my plans.

Among the many wealthy private collectors of the world, Sir Richard Hargreaves, Bart, was perhaps the most widely known for the value—both intrinsically and scientifically—of his archeological treasures. For many years he had been acquiring—both by personal collection and by purchase—the most unique and priceless specimens from all parts of the world. Unlike so many wealthy men—for Sir Richard was many times a millionaire—he was neither a scientist nor a collector in the ordinary sense of the word. To him collecting archeological specimens of the greatest value was not a hobby nor a fad. Rather it was a love of art and of the irreplaceable. He realized how rapidly such objects were disappearing, how many priceless specimens had been lost to science and the world, and he was well aware that, in many if not most cases—museums and public institutions are handicapped by lack of funds and must invest their money in those things that will represent the greatest show or results in the eyes and minds of the directors and patrons.

To spend thousands of dollars for a single unique specimen seems to the lay mind a waste of funds, when the same amount would defray the expenses of an expedition and the acquisition of hundreds, perhaps thousands, of specimens. But Sir Richard, with his millions, could purchase such unique objects, thus preserving them for science, and his collections were always available for study and comparison by any archeologist. He was, in fact, one of the greatest benefactors of science, although no scientist himself, and his mansion near Guildford, Surrey, housed several thousand specimens that had no duplicates in any museum in the world. I had first met Sir Richard in Peru, where he had just purchased a marvelous collection of gold vessels from a Chimu temple-mound. Later I had the opportunity in New York of showing him some of my own finds, and I spent a most delightful fortnight at his magnificent estate, examining and describing his specimens of early American cultural art.

He was a delightful gentleman—the typical British aristocrat—abrupt, sparing of words, incapable of showing excitement, enthusiasm or surprise; but kindly, hospitable, courteous to a degree, and thoroughly unpretentious and wholly democratic. I can see him now as I close my eyes—a big-boned,

broad-shouldered, slightly-stooping figure; ruddy faced, sandy-haired; his keen, pale-blue eyes hidden under bushy brows, a close-clipped moustache above his firm lips, and always—even in the tropics—dressed in heavy tweeds. Alert, active, with a swinging stride, no one would have guessed that Sir Richard was well past the three score and ten mark, and no one would have guessed—in fact no one other than himself and his doctor knew—that Sir Richard's heart was in bad shape and might fail him at any moment.

Hence it came as a great shock when I learned of his sudden death in London, and I wondered what disposal he had made of his collections. As far as I was aware he had no family nor heirs, for his wife had died years before and there had been no children. Probably, I thought, he had willed his specimens to the British Museum and I could picture the elation of Dr. Joyce at such an unexpected acquisition.

But it appeared that Sir Richard had not agreed with my views in this matter. His will—or that portion of it that held any interest for me or has any bearing on this narrative—provided that his collections should be divided between various institutions in England and the United States.

All specimens from British territories went to the British Museum; most of his Oriental specimens went to the University of Pennsylvania Museum; the Mexican and Mayan specimens were left equally to several of our most noteworthy museums, whose studies of the Nahua and Mayan cultures had been most important, while, to my unbounded amazement, his comparatively small but priceless and unique collection of Peruvian and Ecuadorean objects were bequeathed to me in view—so the testament most flatteringly put it—of my deep interest and noteworthy discoveries in the field of Peruvian archeology and the deceased Baronet's personal esteem and regard.

Naturally I was overwhelmed. Even before I received the collection, I realized what a magnificent and princely gift it was. I had, as I have said, seen the things and had studied them and no one appreciated their character and scientific value more than I did. In fact they were so valuable that I determined that I would at once place them in the museum for safe keeping, loaning them to the institution as long as I lived and leaving them to be preserved intact when I died. Only an ardent scientist can fully appreciate my feelings as I unpacked the cases and gazed at the treasures revealed. Yet, all else were forgotten, all the unwrapped remaining specimens disregarded when, upon removing the tissue paper coverings from one specimen, I found it a rather crudely-carved mass of semi-transparent green crystal.

Instantly I recognized it. It was manabinite—a larger piece than I had ever before seen—and I stared at it with bated breath, as wild thoughts and mad impulses raced through my mind. Here in my hand was the key that might open the closed door of Ramon’s fate. Here might be the “open sesame” to enable me once again to look upon that microscopic village, to set at rest forever the question as to whether Ramon had lived and was happy or whether he had vanished once and for all. And yet—and my heart sank and I felt weak, helpless, bitterly disappointed at the realization that the lump of carved green crystal was useless to me. In its present form it would fail utterly as a lens or a prism, and I possessed none of the deep and profound knowledge of optics, none of the almost uncanny mechanical skill of Ramon. It would be utterly impossible for me to transform the crystal into a lens or a prism, and the knowledge that, although I possessed the raw material, I was incapable of using it, was a blow I could scarcely bear.

For hours I sat, brooding, staring at the translucent mass of green, cursing my lack of optical knowledge, wasting my time in vain regrets at not having learned Ramon’s formula, and racking my brains in an effort to think of some means of making the rough green mass serve to solve the mystery of my beloved friend’s fate.

THEN, suddenly, like an inspiration—almost, I thought, as if Ramon had spoken to me—an idea flashed across my mind. I could remember vividly the shape of the prisms Ramon had made. My long years of training, my acquired power to visualize the most minute details of a sculpture, or an inscription enabled me to reconstruct, in my mental vision, every detail of the prisms. Of course I realized, even at that time, that no human eye could measure, much less carry in memory, the exact curvatures and angles of a complex prism or lens. But I was positive of the general form, and trembling with fear lest the image should slip from my mind or that, in trying to revisualize it more clearly, I might become confused and uncertain, I at once made careful drawings of the prisms as I remembered them. With these and my description to guide him, any expert optician could, I felt sure, transform my mass of Manabinite into a prism that, with careful grinding and adjusting, would enable me to again view the city where Nusta—and, I prayed God, Ramon also—ruled their minute subjects. Suddenly I leaped up, shouted, actually danced, as another inspiration came to me. I still had the delicate ingenious device by means of which Ramon had focused the prisms. One had come uninjured through the

explosion of the prisms and I had preserved it, together with Ramon's violin and all else I had salvaged from Manabi.

No doubt, to an expert in optics, the device would be simple and easily understood, and would aid greatly in manufacturing the contemplated prism.

But to whom could I go with my problem? Rapidly I went over in my mind all the specialists, professors and acknowledged experts in optical physics with whom I was acquainted or with whose names I was familiar. They were lamentably few, but one was all I required. Finally I remembered Doctor Mueller, whose monographs and discoveries in his chosen field were world-famed. In view of what I hoped and expected, the fact that he was in Vienna was of no moment. I would gladly have encircled the globe had it been necessary. Within the week I was at sea, speeding as fast as the humming screws of the *Bremen* could take me across the Atlantic towards Vienna and Dr. Mueller; and locked securely in the Purser's safe was my priceless lump of manabinite, my drawings and the delicate device that Ramon had so skilfully and painstakingly wrought in his laboratory at Manabi.

CHAPTER II

The Doctor Makes Another Prism

DOCTOR RUDOLF MUELLER, next to Ramon the world's greatest authority on optics and physics, greeted me effusively and like an old friend, although I had never before met him. He was a diminutive, dried-up little man of indefinite age, bald as the proverbial billiard ball, with inquisitive eyes behind thick lenses that appeared to be held in place by his bushy overhanging eyebrows, and with such an enormous sandy moustache that I mentally wondered if all the hair which should have been on his head had not been diverted to this hirsute growth that extended fully six inches on either side of the face.

"Hah!" he exclaimed in guttural tones but in excellent English. "So, it is my pleasure to meet with you who have made such works of archeological greatness. *Ach!* Yes, it was with great interest I have read your so-wonderful story of the Herr Professor Amador." He shook his head sadly, his moustache waving like hairy banners with the motion.

"Then, Doctor, you will be doubly interested in my purpose in visiting you," I told him, and as briefly as possible I explained my purpose.

He nodded understandingly. "*Yah, yah,*" he muttered, "it is a most wonderful matter and most interesting to me. The manabinite—I have so greatly desired to see it, to experiment with it, to test it. And now you come with the crystal that I may make a prism for you that you may seek for your lost friend. No, my friend, I am afraid that you will be disappointed, for sad as it is, I feel that the Herr Professor was utterly destroyed. But we will see, we will see. Permit me the drawings and the instruments to examine."

He chuckled behind his moustache-screen as he examined my sketches. "From these sketches it would be most hard to work," he muttered, "but yet do I see in them the idea that is desired to consummate it. And the little instrument is to my eyes a delight, so-most-excellently made is it. *Yah, yah,* my friend, we will make a prism from the green crystal that will serve your purpose. But—" he threw out his hands in a gesture of finality—"no

experiments will I make and no fiddle near my laboratory will I permit. *Ach*, no! I have no wish yet to vanish nor to be transformed into a microscopic man. And—” he laughed merrily—“if that should occur, then the crystal to you would be lost and everything ended. But—” he again sighed—“it is a so-great pity this wonderful carving to destroy.”

I nodded. “Yes, it is a priceless thing, but what is a specimen—or even archeology—compared to my desire to learn the truth of Ramon’s state? And if, as you fear, he was utterly destroyed, even that knowledge will be better than the uncertainty.”

He agreed. “And maybe yet I can preserve the carvings,” he announced as he examined the crystal. “Perhaps I may slice from the mass a section with the carving intact.”

And so cleverly and skilfully did he work, that no least detail of the sculptured figures was injured or lost.

To relate the details and incidents of the manufacture of the prism would be tedious. It was done secretly, carefully and even though my sketches were of the crudest, yet so incredibly expert was Doctor Mueller that, once having determined the refractive index and other factors of the manabinite, and knowing what was desired and the general form and prismatic principles of Ramon’s invention, and having studied the device for focusing, as it were, the little Austrian cut, ground and polished until he had a perfect replica—as far as I could judge—of the prisms made by Ramon. There was only one real difference. Ramon had built up his prisms from innumerable fragments while this was constructed from a single piece. And when at last the thing was done, and in order to test if it were correctly made we tried its powers of magnification, Doctor Mueller was almost beside himself with excitement and wonder. Yet the moment I gazed into the prism I realized that for some reason it fell far short of those Ramon had made.

Its magnifying powers were, to be sure, astounding—that is to anyone who had never before experienced manabinite’s powers in this field, but as compared with those we had used at Manabi, it seemed scarcely better than an ordinary lens. No traces of atoms, much less of molecules could be seen, and I felt dubious as to the possibility of seeing the microscopic people with the thing. Whether the fault lay in the quality of the crystal—it may have come from some other source, for all I knew—whether it was due to some error in Dr. Mueller’s formula, or whether a built-up prism was superior to one made from a single piece of crystal, neither of us knew. And although by delicate and most painstaking regrinding and slightly altering the angles and

facets of the prism some improvement resulted, still it fell far short of my expectations.

“But it is marvelous, most wonderful!” cried the Doctor. “*Ach*, my friend, if we had a piece of manabinite of so sufficient size, a telescope we could make that the inhabitants upon Mars would reveal. And, my friend, for the love of science, have a care that you do not destroy or lose this so-wonderful crystal.

“Into microscope lenses transformed it would revolutionize the study of biology and germs. *Ach*, yes, if a source of this manabinite a man could find, he would be a millionaire and the world might turn topsy-turvy.”

I smiled. “I’m afraid that never will happen,” I declared. “As I told you, the crystal is formed only by meteorites striking upon certain mineralized rocks. It is, in a way, a sort of nature-made glass, and I doubt if it has ever occurred in any spot on earth other than at Manabi.”

He shrugged his thin shoulders. “Nature herself is constantly repeating,” he observed. “Maybe tomorrow—next year—some one will find another deposit. But for now, my friend, all that the world of manabinite holds is in your so-competent hands. Much would I be delighted to make further tests and experiments, but it would be too sad were it to explode or vanish when so doing. So I must content myself with what I already have seen and wish with my whole heart that you may see your dear good friend again, alive and happy.”

So, bearing the precious prism that had required months to complete, and with Doctor Mueller’s best wishes and hopes for my success in my ears, I crossed to England and took passage on a Pacific Steam Navigation Company’s ship that would carry me direct to South America. At Panama I outfitted and transferred to a coastwise vessel for Guayaquil and six weeks after leaving Vienna I found myself once more amid familiar scenes. Nothing had changed since my last visit. Guayaquil still steamed and simmered in the sun beside the river. The same dank, pungent odor of bared mud flats and decaying vegetation arose from the mangrove swamps; the same boats swung to their moorings in the stream; the same idle, brown-skinned, cigarette-smoking, open-shirted, rope-sandal-shod customs officials dozed on up-tilted broken-down chairs in the vast bare office of the customs, and I could have sworn that the same pelicans flapped ponderously back and forth and plunged into the muddy water, and

that the identical ragged, harness-galled donkeys drew the identical loads of coconuts and plantains through the glaring, roughly-cobbled streets.

The little *bongo* or sailing vessel that I chartered to carry me to Manabi was so like that in which Ramon and I had traveled that I felt a sharp pang of sadness at not finding him beside me. And though he denied all knowledge of it, and declared he never had seen me before, the fiercely-moustached, swarthy captain might have been the twin brother to him who had navigated our craft when Ramon and I had journeyed northward towards Manabi and the weirdly strange adventures and experiences we were fated to meet.

And when at last I stepped ashore and glanced about, I scarcely could believe that it had not all happened yesterday or a few weeks past. There stretched the distant desert; there were the bare red and dun mountains becoming blue and hazy as they receded to the horizon; there were the spiny cacti, the sparse growths of gray-green shrubs, the mounds of gravel where we had dug. Yes, and there was my old camp—scarcely affected by months of burning sun and drenching rains; and beyond was the framework of Ramon's laboratory. Somehow, as I gazed about and recognized each familiar scene and detail, I had a strange, indescribable, almost uncanny feeling that Ramon was close at hand.

The moment I stepped ashore all my doubts of his still living fell from me like a discarded garment. I felt absolutely sure he was alive, and I seemed actually to sense his presence near. In fact this was so strong that, as I went about directing my peons and preparing for my camp, I found myself constantly glancing up and half expecting Ramon to appear at any moment. Of course, I reasoned, this was only natural. There where Ramon and I had been so long together, where we had undergone such strange experiences, where he had so mysteriously vanished, and surrounded on every hand by scenes and objects that brought him vividly to my mind, the reflex action of my mind would unquestionably cause such sensations in my brain. Yet despite my matter-of-fact scientific reasoning, I could not help feeling that my sensations were, to some extent at least, a premonition or a promise that Ramon still existed. I turned and gazed towards the spot where I had last seen him standing before the prism, his poncho draped over his shoulders, his violin in hand, ready to take that plunge into the unknown. Only the bare stretch of sand met my gaze. Yet there, invisible to human eyes and among the minute grains of sand, were the microscopic people, the minute city with its temple, the high priest, Nusta the beautiful princess and—perhaps—my lost friend, Ramon. But were they there? My heart skipped a beat and I drew

a sharp hard breath as a thousand possibilities raced through my brain. How could I know if some sand storm had not buried them beneath inches of dust and sand? How could I be sure some torrential rain had not washed village and people away? How could I be certain that some creature—or even some man—had not dug or burrowed where the village had stood and had blindly destroyed all? Only by viewing the spot through my precious prism could I assure myself if the people still existed or if they had vanished, and I was not even certain that my prism would be powerful enough to reveal them if they were there. I was beset by terrible fears, by doubts, by the most pessimistic thoughts. I was mad to rush over, set up my prism and put all doubts at rest, and yet I almost dreaded to do so. And I was compelled to control myself, to calm my excited mind, to be patient, for I had arrived late in the day. The sun was rapidly sinking below the Pacific and there was much to be done before darkness fell, over land and sea.

So, fighting back my longings to set up the prism and end my uncertainties at once, I busied my mind with the more practical routine of establishing my camp, for I had planned to remain for some time. In the first place, I realized that it might require days, even weeks perhaps, for me to locate the precise spot where we had discovered the minute city and its people.

We had found it purely by accident and the entire settlement, I knew, occupied an infinitesimal area of the earth—a spot smaller than a pin point. To find such a tiny area amid all that waste of sand would, of course, have been impossible by ordinary means, but if my prism served its purpose as well as I hoped and prayed it might, then it would not be such a hopeless task even if I was not absolutely certain of the exact situation of the village of the lilliputian Manabis. But it would take time, even if, as I hoped and expected, I might still identify the precise spot where we had set up our prisms in the past. And even if I had good luck in locating the village, I intended to remain near for a considerable period. If I saw Ramon among the people, I would have my doubts set at rest but I felt sure that I would be unable to tear myself away for a long time. And if I saw no signs of Ramon, then I would try to forget my bitter sorrow at his loss by making a full and intensive study of the impossible people for the benefit of science.

But as I had no intention of carrying on archeological work, I had not brought any equipment for excavating nor had I engaged a large force of cholos as before. My outfit consisted mainly of supplies and my only companions were two young fellows I had engaged as camp boys and servants. One was a Jamaican whom I had found at Panama and who was to

be my cook, the other a Quichua youth who was a sort of general utility man. It might be supposed that a party of three would not require much of a camp and that an hour or so would suffice to see us settled. And it would have been enough under some conditions, but it takes time to unload a cranky bongo (canoe) surrounded by bottomless mud. It is slow work portaging boxes, bundles, bales and packages on heads or shoulders up a perpendicular river bank and across an area of floury sand, and to set up a camp with mosquito netting screening, to arrange goods, chattels and supplies, to unpack, to get the commissary under way and to pay off and bid endless farewells and “May you go with God” wishes to the boatmen. So, by the time all my outfit had been transferred to my old camp site, and the two boys were unpacking food and bedding and the bongo was slipping down stream and Sam’s fire was cracking under his pots and pans and Chico was helping me put up the mosquito bars, the sun had vanished below the horizon, and the gorgeous crimson, gold and purple western sky cast a weird lurid light across the desert and transformed the brown mountains to masses of molten gold.

Rapidly the shadows deepened, the myriad hues faded from the sky, the mountains loomed dark and mysterious against the stars and the desert spread like a black sea on every side. By the light of hurricane lanterns we ate our dinner and—so strange and inconsistent are the workings of one’s brains—my last conscious thoughts as I fell asleep were not of whether or not Ramon still lived, but speculations as to whether or not the microscopic Indians had invented some means of artificially lighting their village after nightfall.

CHAPTER III

Ramon Returns via the Prism

NEVER have I felt more excited, more keyed up than on the morning after my arrival, when I unpacked my precious prism and its accessories and prepared to learn the truth regarding Ramon's disappearance. For some reason that I have never been able to explain—even to myself—I had brought along Ramon's violin. Perhaps it was merely sentiment that had caused me to do so. Possibly I had been actuated by a subconscious, and wholly unrealized feeling that it might please Ramon—or his spirit. But mainly, I think, it was because it was the last thing that he had handled, the only connecting link, so to say, between him and myself, the only tangible object left when he had so suddenly and uncannily vanished with the explosion of the manabinite prism. At any rate, it most certainly was *not* because I had any thoughts or expectations of making use of it. I had no intention of attempting to reduce myself to microscopic proportions, even if, as I devoutly hoped, I was fortunate enough to find that Ramon had succeeded and had not been harmed by his strange transformation. And even had I desired to do so, it would have been utterly impossible, for although I had had the violin restrung—though I cannot explain why I had done so, for I did not know one note from another as far as producing them on an instrument was concerned. At all events, when on this momentous morning I was unpacking my instruments and prism and came upon the violin, something, some strange inexplicable whim or intuition, urged me to take it with me when I went to make the experiment that would settle my doubts and fears once and for all, or would prove to me that I should never know my dear friend's real fate.

It was with trepidation, as well as fast-beating pulses and taut nerves, that I approached the spot where, as nearly as I could judge by memory, Ramon and I had set up the prisms before. Somehow I could not rid myself of a most unreasonable fear of treading upon the invisible Indians—even upon Ramon—and utterly annihilating them. Yet I well knew—as we had proved so conclusively before, that a human being might walk directly over the village without causing the least damage. But the whole affair, the

village, the people, the amazing condition surrounding them, even Ramon's disappearance, was one of those incredible things that, even when we know positively that they are so, cannot be believed. But my fears of treading upon the village were dispelled when I reached the spot and glanced about. Fate, Providence or Destiny—as well as Nature and the elements—had favored me. To secure his instruments when we had been preparing for Ramon's great adventure, he had driven stakes into the sand, and they still remained, infallible marks to enable me to set up my instrument on the precise spot. Though I have ever prided myself upon the steadiness of my nerves and my coolness under all conditions, though I have faced most tense and even perilous situations calmly and with no conscious feelings of excitement or nervousness, and although I do not honestly think that I ever had experienced what is commonly termed a thrill at the prospect of some new sensation or discovery, yet, as I erected the tripod that was to support the prism and realization came to me that within a few minutes I would perhaps be watching the microscopic people and their city, might even look once more upon the face of Ramon, I found myself a-tingle from head to foot, my hands shaking as if I had a severe attack of malaria, and I was aware of a most peculiar and entirely novel sensation in my knees, which seemed suddenly and without reason to have lost their power to support me steadily. In fact, my hands and fingers were so confoundedly shaky, that it was with extreme difficulty that I managed to set up the affair and to adjust the green prism in its supports. But at last all was in readiness, and with beads of perspiration on my forehead, I swung the prism about as nearly as I could judge to the position our former device had occupied, and with a muttered prayer that the prism might not fail me, I looked into its sea-green depths and slowly, carefully adjusted the tiny screws and knurled knobs. For a space I saw nothing but a blurred, greenish haze. Then, so suddenly that I started, the tremendously enlarged sand leaped into view. Even though I had seen the same thing so many times before, even though I might and did expect it, yet for an instant I gasped, almost unable to believe my eyes. As far as all appearances went I was looking through glasses at a vast expanse of tumbled, inexpressibly wild and rugged mountainous country. Immense ridges and hollows were everywhere, their slopes, even their summits, strewn with great jagged, rounded, irregular, even crystalline masses of rock of every hue.

There were huge, shimmering, blood-red crystals like titanic rubies, ice-like octohedrons, that I knew must be diamonds, cyclopean six-sided columns of gleaming transparent material that I identified as quartz, cubes of vivid green, boulders of orange, yellow and amber; great rocks of intense

blue, and countless fragments of every shade of brown, gray, ochre with here and there masses of jet black. It was, in fact, a mineralogical wonderland; such an array of rocks, gems, semi-precious stones and metalliferous ores as could exist nowhere on earth save in an accumulation of sand, the detritus of mighty mountains disintegrated, eroded, reduced to their primordial crystals by the elements through endless ages.

I had seen the same astonishing sight many times, as I have said, yet it was as amazing, as fascinating, as though my eyes had never before looked upon it and, for the fraction of a second, my thoughts of the miniature city and—yes, I must confess it—of Ramon were forgotten in my wonder and admiration of this immeasurably magnified yet infinitesimal portion of the dull earth about me. But only for the briefest of moments. The next instant I had moved the prism slowly towards the left, watching as I did so with bated breath, striving to recognize some detail of the enlarged scene before my eyes, expecting at any moment to see the houses or the temple of the city spring into the range of my vision. I drew a sharp breath. Could I be mistaken? No, there was the narrow pass among the boulders—or rather sand grains—down which the miniature, reduced burro had come as Ramon and I had watched him with incredulous, wondering, elated eyes. My breath came in quick short gasps, there was a strange tense feeling about my heart. The village was close at hand—the merest fraction of a fraction of a millimeter from the spot; half a turn of the fine adjusting screw beneath my trembling fingers should bring it into view. A sharp, involuntary gasp escaped my lips. Clearly, as though it stood full-sized before me, I saw a low stone wall, a stone house! By its open door sat a woman spinning or weaving. Beyond were more houses, a street, men and women. I almost shouted with delight. Once more I was gazing at the microscopic Manabi village. Would I see the princess? Would I see Ramon? The crucial, long-dreamed-of moment had arrived. An instant more and——

I FELT myself hurled violently aside. I reeled backward, stumbled, strove to recover myself and came down violently with a jar that caused a whole constellation to flash and rotate before my eyes. It had all happened in the fraction of a second, yet, even in that immeasurable period of time, I found myself wondering what had happened, what heavy object had struck me, what it meant. And there is no denying that I was terrified and completely upset—both figuratively and literally—at one and the same time. I was conscious also of a sharp pain and a most disconcerting jar as I fell. In fact the jolt must have been sufficient to have dazed me for a

moment—if it did not actually render me unconscious, for I found myself blinking, rubbing my eyes and sitting up.

And what I saw came near causing me to lose my senses altogether. My jaws gaped, I felt paralyzed, as with staring wild eyes I gazed at the apparition bending over me. It could not be. It was impossible. I must be delirious, mad, suffering from delusions. Or had I been killed and was I in the spirit-land? For, as clearly, as plainly as though he were actually beside me, I saw—Ramon!

All these thoughts, these sensations, raced through my brain in the hundredth, perhaps the thousandth of a second. And coincidentally with them rushed other wild, impossible thoughts. Had I been, by some unknown means, reduced? Had something gone wrong with the prism and had I, like the burro, the dog, Ramon, been transformed to less than microscopic size? Or was it all an illusion, a figment of my overwrought brain, a chimera born of my excitement, my constant thoughts of Ramon, some injury to my spine or brain caused by my fall?

And as the vision, the ghost, the apparition reached out a hand and touched me, so tense, dazed, utterly bereft of my normal senses was I, that I screamed. Then, instantly, the spell was broken. “*Madre de Dios!*” the vision exclaimed. “I scared you almost to death. And I must have given you a fearful blow, I——”

The voice was Ramon’s! It was no vision, no hallucination! By some miraculous means he, my long-lost, dearest friend, was there beside me! What if I *had* been reduced to microscopic size? What if I *were* lost forever to the world? I had found Ramon! He was alive, unharmed, the same handsome, smiling, kindly-voiced Ramon I had known and loved as only one man may love another.

I leaped to my feet, threw myself upon him, embraced him in the effusive Spanish manner. Never in all my life has such indescribable joy, such great happiness been mine. And even in that moment, when I felt his strong muscular arm about me, a wonder beyond words to describe or express came over me. I had *not* been reduced. I was *not* in the village. Not a house was visible. There, lying on the sand within a yard of where I stood, were the tripod, Ramon’s violin, the prism, all normal in size. And there, at the edge of the trees, stood my camp. And Ramon was there, full-sized, normal, in every way just as I had last seen him except that—I stared, puzzled, uncomprehending—he was clad in dazzling, iridescent-hued, shimmering garments unlike anything I had ever—No! Sudden recollection came to me, they were—yes, the counterparts of the garments I had seen

upon those microscopic inhabitants of the village. My brain whirled, I seemed to be taking leave of my senses. Ramon's voice came to me as from a vast distance.

"*Por Dios!*" he cried, "what a splendid prism! What a magnificent crystal!"

He had caught sight of my prism and, springing towards it, eagerly examined it. "Where did you find this mass of manabinite, *amigo mio*?" he exclaimed. "It is marvelous, *magnifico*. And I thought we had searched everywhere and had secured every fragment. No wonder I crashed into you and bowled you over, *amigo*. But I did not dream you were gazing through this. You see it resulted in my missing my aim, so to speak."

At last I found my voice. "What on earth *are* you talking about?" I demanded. "What has that prism to do with knocking me down? Where have you been, what have you been doing all this time? And where did you get that strange thing you're wearing? Am I dreaming or am I crazy or are you actually here, in flesh and blood, and unchanged? For Heaven's sake, Ramon, explain yourself."

He grinned and then roared with laughter until his face was scarlet. "If you could only see your own face, *amigo!*" he cried, when at last he could control his merriment. "Never, never have I witnessed such a mingling of perplexity, of wonder, of incredulity and of injured pride. But forgive me, my dear friend. Of course it is all most strange and inexplicable. You saw me vanish, you saw me join my princess, my beloved; you saw me become a tiny microbe-like being, and now you see me and hear me talking with you, just as though nothing unusual had occurred. But——"

"Pardon me, Ramon," I interrupted. "I did *not* see you join the princess. The prism through which I was watching was shattered by the same note that caused you to disappear. I never knew whether you were reduced or whether you were utterly destroyed and——"

"*Caramba*, my fiddle!" he exclaimed, ignoring my words and seizing the instrument. "Ah *amigo*, how thoughtful, how kind, how considerate you were to have brought it! So you *were* expecting me after all."

"Confound it!" I ejaculated petulantly. "Can't you answer my questions? Can't you explain? Don't you realize that I have been racked with doubts and fears? That I came here with the one hope—the forlorn hope—of settling once and for all whether or not you lived?"

Ramon smiled, but he was now quite serious. “Forgive me, my dear, dear friend,” he begged. “It is only my joy and delight at being with you again that causes me to be so inconsequential. And of course I did *not* know that you were ignorant of the result of my experiment. But to reply to your questions. No, *amigo*, you assuredly are not dreaming, you are very wide awake and, as far as I can judge by your appearance, quite normal mentally. I *am* here, in flesh and blood, and—at the present moment—quite unaltered. As to what the prism has to do with my knocking you over: everything, my friend. And do you not recognize this garment—you who pride yourself so greatly on your trained eyesight, your ability to note the most minute details, to recall the most insignificant peculiarities of a fractured potsherd after months, years? Do you not remember the garments we both saw upon the microscopic Manabis? And as to what I have been doing, where I have been since that memorable day when I stood before the prism. Ah, *amigo mio*, I have been experiencing greater happiness, more wonderful love than I had thought could exist in this world. Never has life held such joy, such perfection as has been given me since I joined my Sumak Nusta. But you will understand when you, too, meet her and speak with her, as you will.”

I GASPED. WHAT on earth was he talking about. Was he mad? He was trying to make me believe that he had been reduced, that he had joined the princess. And yet I knew that was impossible, for was he not here before me, large as ever, and not a sign of village of Indians visible? Yet, there was his clothing, of that strange, iridescent, opalescent material that, as he reminded me, we had both observed upon the minute Manabis.

Ramon evidently judged correctly the doubts and the questions that were in my mind.

“Of course no one would believe my story,” he said. “But you, my friend, having seen with your own eyes the marvels that the manabinite prisms can perform, should not be skeptical and should be able to comprehend. But I must tell my story. First, *amigo mio*, let us look through your prism at my people. My beloved one will be worried unless she knows all is well. Already I have been too long without reassuring her. Come, gladden your eyes and set your doubts at rest by again gazing upon the village of my people and upon the loveliest, the most adorable of women—my wife, the queen.”

Still feeling as if in a dream, still beset with fears that Ramon or I were mad, utterly at a loss to understand what it all portended, I saw Ramon adjust the prism, glance through it, and utter a delighted cry.

“Here! Here, *amigo!*” he cried. “Is she not glorious? Is she not wonderful? And she sees us. She knows you, my dearest, nearest friend, are beside me, that once more we are united. Look, look *amigo!*”

In a daze, my mind a turmoil, I looked into the green depths of the crystal and as I did so a sharp cry of utter amazement escaped my lips. There, clear, sharp, shining in the morning sunlight, was the temple, the village. And there, lovelier than ever, was the princess, Nusta. And by the wrapt, joyous expression upon her face I knew that, as Ramon said, she was aware of his presence beside me. For a brief instant she looked directly at me—through the prism she appeared life-sized and seemed to be but a few yards distant and gazing into my eyes—and a strange sensation, a feeling of weakness, almost fear, swept over me as I saw those indescribably beautiful eyes so near my own, those half-parted lips seeming about to speak. Then, with a quick movement, she stepped to one side, and to my utter amazement I saw her bend and peer into a green prism that seemed a counterpart of the one before my own eyes. Before I could voice my wonder, before I could collect my thoughts at this incredible sight, she again rose, looked towards me and, touching her fingers to her lips with a lovely graceful gesture, she threw me a kiss.

CHAPTER IV

A Revelation

“MY GOD!” I gasped. “She actually saw me, Ramon! And she has a prism—a manabinite prism! What, what *does* it all mean?”

Ramon, beaming with happiness, seized me and embraced me enthusiastically.

“Of course she saw you,” he cried delightedly. “She saw you; she saw me. She knows all is well, that we are reunited. But isn’t she the loveliest, the most glorious of women? Ah, *mi amigo*, is that not proof of the great friendship I have for thee? Is not the fact that I can leave her, if only for a brief moment, proof of how I have longed and waited for the happy hour when once again I could see you, hear your voice, delight in your friendship? And is not the fact that she could permit me to leave, could risk losing me forever, proof of how greatly she values your friendship, of how grateful she is for your aid in bringing us together, of the sublime faith she has in me and my assurances? *Santisima madre, amigo*, until you have experienced such happiness as has been mine, until you have known such a love as ours, you will not, cannot understand what such a parting, such a risk means. But I felt sure, confident. Every detail of my plan was studied, and Nusta, wonderful being that she is, insisted that I take even that risk in order that you, dearest of our friends, might join us and share something of our happiness.”

With the utmost difficulty I managed to confine my brain to lucid, logical, connected thoughts. If Ramon were crazy, so was I. But the sight of the village and of Nusta had convinced me that neither one of us was mad. There was some explanation, some common sense solution to the whole weirdly incredible affair of Ramon being there beside me and yet talking as if he had been in the microscopic village. And despite the fact that it controverted all common sense, and appeared utterly beyond credence that he should have been reduced and still should be in his normal state and size, yet I realized that it was even more preposterous to assume that he had been living here in the desert alone for all the months that had passed. And I

knew, I was positive that he *had* vanished, had utterly disappeared before my eyes.

But he was speaking, and I concentrated all my senses upon his words, for at last he was serious, and was telling me strange, more incredible, more utterly amazing happenings than any living being ever experienced or that any man ever imagined.

“Though, as you now tell me, you knew nothing of what happened when on that morning I took the plunge and vanished,” he began, “yet I never, of course, realized the fact. And thank God, I did not, for, *amigo mio*, had I known that you were in ignorance of the results, I should have sorrowed and grieved at thought of the doubts and the uncertainties that might have filled your mind, and my perfect, glorious happiness would have been marred. I cannot in words explain my sensations or just what happened to myself. I remember standing before the prism, of drawing my bow across the strings. Then I seemed lifted, whirled, swept into a greenish, misty vortex. It was not unpleasant—on the contrary it was a rather pleasurable sensation—somewhat like those strange dreams in which one seems to float—a disembodied intellect—in space.

“And then—exactly as though awakening from a dream, unable to know whether the vision had endured for hours or for the fraction of a second, I blinked my eyes to find myself standing before Nusta. With a sharp glad cry she rushed to me, her soft beautiful arms encircled my neck, I held her throbbing glorious body close, and our lips met. I cannot describe to you the wonder, the glory, the heavenly joy of that moment, when, after countless centuries, our two souls were again united in that embrace. And yet my heart was torn with fears that it was only a dream, a vision born of my longings. But Nusta was very real, and presently I forced myself to believe that I *had* been reduced, that I *was* among the microscopic people who had gathered, wondering, half-frightened at my appearance, that Nusta my beloved was actually in my arms.

“Yet let me assure you, *amigo mio*, that even in that time of my new found love and happiness I did not forget you or my promise to you. Though we had no means of knowing if you were watching us, yet I turned and waved my hand, and Nusta at my request threw you the kiss I had promised you. There is no need to relate all the incidents and details now. I was happy—supremely, gloriously happy, and in the temple before the altar, Sikuyan, the priest, made Nusta my wife. Oh, *amigo mio*, if only I could convey in words some faintest idea of the joy I found with Nusta among her people. Hers is a community of perfect happiness, perfect contentment. There is no

poverty, no sickness in that village of the little people. It is almost the land of perpetual youth. The people die only of old age or accident, and—*Madre de Dios*—the discoveries I have made! The puzzles I have solved! Ah, you must congratulate me, *amigo*, for among other things I have learned the secret that has puzzled me for years, the secret of how the ancient races cut and carved the enormous stones to build their cyclopean walls. It is a scientific wonderland, a treasure-trove of archeology, *amigo mio*, for Nusta's people have preserved all the most ancient traditions, all the knowledge, all the customs of their ancestors for thousands of years. Invisible to human eyes, by their minute size isolated from all the world, they have remained untouched, unaltered, unchanged by outside influences. But come! We are wasting time; you must see for yourself; let us hurry to rejoin my beloved Nusta. I——”

“Look here, Ramon!” I cried, interrupting his words. “This has gone far enough. Do you mean to stand there—full-sized as ever—and calmly try to make me believe you actually have been among those people, have actually met and married Nusta? And what's all this damned tommy-rot about my going with you to her? Have you got some crazy idea in your head that I'm going to try the mad experiment of being reduced. No, indeed.”

Ramon smiled, but he looked hurt and grieved. “*Por Dios!*” he exclaimed. “You do not believe me, then? But, pardon me, my dear friend. Of course you would not credit my words; they must sound mad to your ears. Who would believe I spoke the truth? And yet, *mi amigo*, all I have related is as true as the Gospel. I *was* reduced, I *did* marry Nusta, I *have* dwelt among the microscopic people, and I *am* going back—yes, within ten minutes. And——” he grinned maliciously—“you, my friend, are going back with me.”

I snorted contemptuously. Still, I thought, if Ramon were mad or if he were merely romancing—and I must confess I was beginning to believe his utterly preposterous tale—it might be well to humor him, to learn just how far he would go.

“Very well,” I assented. “Admitting then that all you have told me is true, how is it, Ramon, that having been reduced as you claim, you are now here, life-size, unchanged.”

HE laughed merrily. “By the simplest of means, *amigo*,” he retorted. “By precisely the same means that reduced me.” Then, more seriously, he continued. “In that microscopic village I found

manabinite, quantities of it. To be sure the fragments were—judged by human standards, infinitesimal, particles—mere motes, but in proportion to the size of myself, of the inhabitants, larger than any of the crystals you and I found here. And at once, when I discovered the mineral, a great vista, a wonderful idea came to me. I hoped—I felt sure, that sometime you, my dear friend, would return to this spot, and I grieved to think that you might be here, might actually walk above my head and I would be oblivious of your presence. But with a manabinite prism, and looking through the reverse field, I might be able to so reduce your image as to see you. *Santisima Madre*, but it was slow, tedious work, fashioning a prism without my tools, my instruments. But the people are marvelously skilful in working the hardest of stone, and by chipping, flaking, grinding and polishing we at last completed the prism. It was a poor, inadequate affair, but it revealed wonders, and elated, I made a second, a third, a dozen, until I had two that I felt would reveal your presence if you came here. Of course, *amigo mio*, I did not dream that you would have a prism, that you would be able to see me. But it was most fortunate that you did, for never would I have known you had arrived had it not been for your prism. Do you not see? Do you not guess? It was your image, your reflection in your own prism that at last—after days, weeks, months of watching, I saw. By itself, my miserable prism would never have revealed you, but my prism when focused upon the opposite end of yours, did the trick. It was like gazing at the image in the wrong end of field glasses through the other end of a second glass. Ah, *Dios mio*, how can I describe, how can I put into words the joy, the happiness that thrilled my veins when once again I saw you, my friend, appearing so near to me. And instantly, at once, I put into practice that which I for months had planned should this occasion ever arise, and which I had talked over with my adored Nusta so many times. Having been reduced, I had no fears of attempting the experiment and even Nusta felt confident there was no risk. So, standing behind my prism, I blew the note upon the *quena* I had prepared, and, as before, came the whirling, dream-like, disembodied sensation. Then a shock, a blow, and I bumped into you, *amigo*, full-size, unchanged, enlarged by the reverse action of the two prisms in unison. And here I am!”

I sank, speechless, upon the sand. No words suitable to the occasion came to my lips. Of all the absolutely amazing and incredible things I had heard or witnessed, this was the limit. And yet, as my dazed brain began to function, I could see no valid or logical reason why everything Ramon had told me should not be so. If a man, a dog or a burro could be reduced to microscopic size by means of almost magical properties of manabinite, why

should a microscopic organism not be enlarged by reversing the process? As I thought of this, a sudden idea flashed into my mind, and I roared with laughter. “Good Lord, Ramon, you took a terrible risk,” I cried. “How did you know that if your experiment worked you would regain your normal size? How did you know that you might not be enlarged to enormous proportions, that the power of the prisms might not transform you to a giant as much larger than ordinary men as they are larger than the little people yonder!”

Ramon smiled. “I knew,” he replied, “because I have learned many secrets of manabinite’s powers of which I knew nothing when I experimented here with you. Objects, reduced by the mineral, cannot be enlarged to more than their original size, and objects enlarged cannot be reduced to smaller dimensions than they possessed before being enlarged. No, *amigo*, the risk I took was when I reduced myself. I had no positive knowledge that I might not be reduced to such minute proportions that I would be as much smaller than Nusta, as Nusta is smaller than ourselves at this moment. But I felt confident that she and her people had—or rather that their ancestors had—been reduced to the utmost limits which the manabinite could impart. And I had the evidences of the dog and the burro. They, if you remember, were reduced, and yet—though we had no previous idea of how greatly they would dwindle in size—they were in perfect proportion to the size of Nusta and her people. And I had another guide. As we looked at the village through the prism, the people appeared to be normal in size. Hence, I reasoned that as the action of the crystal when acted upon by the vibratory note was merely to make actual the image reflected in it, there would be no alteration in the size of the image when fixed, as I might say. And if Nusta and her people when refracted in the prism appeared normal in size, then, I reasoned, if the image were reversed, if my image were transferred in actual flesh and blood to the same spot upon which the prism were focused, I, when transferred bodily to that spot, would of necessity be exactly the same size as the people there. And I was quite right, *amigo*. But now, now that I *know* the powers, the properties, the means of controlling manabinite, and the laws that govern it, there are no risks. And——”

“Hold on,” I broke in. “I saw the princess—your wife, I should say—looking at us through a prism. How did it happen that when you enlarged yourself that other prism was not shattered? That was what occurred here when you were reduced.”

“That my friend, is one of the laws of manabinite. When used as a reducing prism, the stuff flies into dust-gas, I might say. But when used for

enlarging an object, no visible alteration takes place in the mineral. But now, come, *amigo!* I must keep my promise to Nusta. I must return and I must bring you with me.”

I leaped to my feet. “You’re a consummate ass if you think I’m going to try any such experiment,” I declared angrily. “Even if I were willing to risk annihilation by the thing, I have no desire to remain a microscopic being. Why, Ramon, you don’t know how I have worried for fear that at any moment someone, something might come that would bury those people—and yourself—or destroy the village and its inhabitants forever. No, no, my very dear friend. If you really want to please me, if you want me to see and meet your lovely wife, if you wish to help those people, for the love of Heaven, enlarge them all to normal size and be done with it. You have it in your power to do so. Why delay?”

RAMON roared with almost hysterical laughter. “Oh what a timid, nervous old woman Don Alfeo is!” he cried between peals of merriment. “But tell me, *amigo*, are you, are the great cities, the communities, the inhabitants of this humdrum feverish world you live in, immune to cataclysms, to accidents, to disasters? Are your cities never destroyed by earthquake, by landslides, by hurricanes? Are not thousands killed every year by motor cars, floods, explosions, cave-ins, shipwrecks, volcanic eruptions, falling rocks and ten thousand other causes? Why and how then would we, we little people, be any safer if normal in size? Perhaps—I grant that—if we could be enlarged to—well, say a thousand feet in height or even less, if we could become veritable giants, we might avoid many perils and disasters that decimate ordinary humans. But to be of ordinary size! Ah, *amigo*, we would be subject to far greater dangers than we are as microscopic beings.

“And why, dear friend, are you so fearful of being reduced? Is life in your present state and form so safe and secure that you have no least fear that some disaster may overtake you? And all your life you have been facing dangers far greater than this; braving new situations, making experiments that held far more uncertainty. I have been reduced, I know it is safe, that there is no danger, but even though you ran a great risk—which you do not—even though there was but one chance in a million that you would survive the test yet, I assure you, *amigo*, that it would be worth the risk just to see Nusta, to hear her voice, to know her in the flesh. I——”

“You forget,” I reminded him dryly, “that not only is the princess your wife, but that I am an old or at least a middle-aged man, and that Nusta is a

glorious youthful woman. And while I do not deny that there may be much of truth in your words regarding her, and though I would be delighted to meet Mrs. Amador—or should I say the Empress Amador? yet you cannot really expect me to have the same ideas as yourself regarding the risk. But, seriously,” I continued, “I do not agree with you in respect to the safety of such a proceeding as you suggest. Possibly, yes, I will go so far as to say positively—there is little or no risk in you or perhaps myself being reduced by the prism. But how do you know that two persons can be safely reduced at the same time? Even if it were possible, is it not within the bounds of possibility that in the process of reduction, two personalities might be combined into one, or that molecules or atomic portions of one might be transferred to the other, or even that the effect might be to totally eliminate both?”

Ramon rolled upon the ground roaring with laughter. “You old scare-head,” he cried, when at last he could control himself. “There is no reason to assume anything of that sort. And now, see here. If some one should tell you that a totally new and unknown civilization had left wonderful remains on the further side of yonder mountains, and that to reach them it was necessary to climb the ridge, face the perils of glaciers, crevasses, landslides, dizzy precipices and the dangers of snow blindness and starvation; or if someone should inform you that to reach an archeological site you would be forced to pass through hostile Indian country with the attendant dangers of disease, insects, snakes, rapids and what not, would you hesitate? Would you weigh the dangers before starting out? Answer me that, *amigo*. Give me an honest reply to that question.”

I had to grin in spite of myself. Ramon had me there. I shook my head. “I never hesitated and never have considered any dangers that beset the path to scientific discoveries,” I admitted. “But this is——”

“Different, you were about to say,” he interrupted. “But permit me, *amigo*, to contradict you. Among my—Nusta’s—people, in that village that you have seen only through the prism, you will find scientific treasures, archeological discoveries beyond anything of which you ever have dreamed. And they are at your fingers’ tips, if you will come with me, my friend.”

Ramon had won and he knew it. He was well aware that I could not resist the bait he held out for me, and as a matter of fact, from the very first I had, in my heart, felt sure that I would undertake the experiment. My curiosity to see the place and the people for myself was irresistible. Still, I felt I could not yield so easily. “But suppose I wish to return to this normal world, as I shall,” I asked, “are you sure I can be enlarged?”

“Absolutely,” he assured me. “Was I not enlarged, and I can enlarge you even more readily than myself. No, the only trouble is that unless some one should discover another mass of manabinite, no one in the future can ever be reduced, for as you know, this prism of yours will be shattered when we reduce ourselves. So, my friend, if you leave us and are enlarged, and at any future time should wish to revisit us, you will find it impossible.”

“Hmm,” I muttered. “Well, let us not worry about the future, Ramon. For all I know there may be no future. Your hints of what I may learn in the line of science have decided me. I am willing to take the plunge with you.”

Ramon sprang forward, embraced me, and his eyes sparkled with delight. “I knew you would, *amigo mio!*” he cried. “Ah, my friend, if you only knew the joy that fills me to know we are not to be parted. And Nusta, too, will be filled with happiness. Come, waste no more precious moments. Everything is in readiness. Stand with me behind the prism and in a moment more we will be looking into Nusta’s glorious eyes, hearing the music of her voice. And—I forgot to tell you, *amigo*—she speaks Spanish. I have taught her, in expectation of this glorious time, in hopes that some day you would be with us.”

CHAPTER V

Accepting His Friend's Invitation

I MUST admit that, as I stood there with Ramon behind the prism and watched him examine his *quena* and prepare to produce the note that would cause such miraculous results, I felt nervous, tense, keyed-up and well—I must admit it—somewhat fearful of what was about to occur. I cannot honestly say that I was afraid, for during a long life of adventure and of exploration in the wilder portions of our hemisphere, I had faced too many perils and death in too many forms to know the true meaning of what most persons call fear. Not that I am braver than the average man. I do not lay any claim to that, but merely because familiarity with danger breeds something of contempt for it, and because fear so often brings on disaster that I had trained myself to eliminate fear from my reactions. In fact I sincerely believe that I would have felt less uneasy had I been certain that the note upon Ramon's *quena* would result in our complete disintegration, for it was the uncertainty of the matter, the sensation that we or rather I was about to enter the unknown, that affected me. It is this dread of the unknown, I believe, which is the basis of most of human beings' fears and terrors. It is dread of the unknown that causes men to fear death, that makes children and some adults fear the dark, that has led to the almost universal belief in and fear of ghosts and spirits, and that is the basis of nearly all our superstitions. I might even go further and say that our religious beliefs are the direct results of man's fear of the unknown. Religion originally was invented in order to calm those fears by explaining the unknown, by picturing it as a delightful place, and by peopling it with personalities, gods or beneficent spirits. And the more highly civilized and intelligent a man is the more, I have found in my experience, he dreads the unknown. Animals do not fear death; neither do primitive savages, for the brute has no conception of the unknown, possesses no imagination, and the savage feels so assured that his conception of after-life is correct that, as far as he is concerned, there is no unknown. And I am sure that the reason that Orientals and some others court death rather than dread it is because they, too, feel convinced that there is nothing unknown before them. The idea of leaving

this familiar world, this life with its pleasures and its pains, to be plunged into some state of which we know absolutely nothing and from which no one has ever returned, is, I confess, rather appalling. In fact few persons are capable of imagining anything or any state other than an earthly existence. And I was on the verge of taking a plunge that was not only into the unknown, but that, if I could trust Ramon's words and assurances, would transform me into a microscopic being; truly a transformation that was so incredible, so utterly beyond reason or the known laws of nature that even my brain could not really conceive of it. To be sure I had one advantage over the man whose life is about to end, and I had one great advantage over Ramon when he had taken the chance in the first place. He had been through the experience and had told me of the sensations, the results. Still, there was the chance, the possibility, that the prism might fail when two persons attempted the experiment, and there was the possibility also, that for some reason or another, the result might be disastrous for us both. How could I be sure this particular prism was precisely like the others? How could I feel certain that the least variation in its composition, its form, its adjustment might not destroy us or reduce us to such infinitesimal proportions that we would be invisible even to Nusta and her people? But I had made up my mind. Ramon's hints at scientific truths to be discovered would have led me to take far greater risks, and while all these thoughts, misgivings and reasons flashed through my perturbed brain I had no intention of backing out. Then, suddenly, just as Ramon placed the *quena* to his lips, I remembered something.

"Hold on!" I cried excitedly. "I'd forgotten about my men. It won't do to vanish without preparing them for my disappearance. What the devil shall I tell them?"

Ramon grinned. "Why tell them anything?" he asked. "After they've eaten up all your supplies they'll find their way back to Guayaquil or Esmeraldas or somewhere, and tell a great story of you being whisked off by devils or getting lost in the desert."

"Yes, and probably be shot or hanged for murdering me," I reminded him. "And even if they escaped such a fate I have no desire to have my mysterious death published far and wide, and then later bob up. There'd be some rather incredible explanations to make."

"You'd really be famous if you vanished, and think what sport it would be to read all the complimentary things the world would say about you. But, honestly and seriously, I see your point. Why not tell the fellows you're

going off alone and not to worry if you don't return. You might give them a letter stating they were to be held blameless if you never reappeared."

"Not bad," I commented, "but suppose they should decide to clear out before I were reenlarged, and I should find no one here, no food, no boat? It would put me in a far from pleasant situation."

"All the more reasons for you not ever to return to normal size," he declared. "And I don't believe you ever will, *amigo*. But you might set a definite time for your return, and tell them to wait for you until then, and if you fail to reappear, to leave and report your loss. How long will the supplies last them?"

"With reasonable care, about two months," I replied. "I think your suggestion the only practical one. I'll tell them I am going off with a friend I have met, in order to visit an ancient city, and that I may be absent two months. I shall surely be ready to have you enlarge me by that time."

Ramon grinned maliciously but said nothing, and I hurried off to my camp to give instructions to my men. Being unemotional and unimaginative fellows, and quite content to live a lazy life and feast upon my provisions for the next sixty days, they asked no questions, took my announcement as a matter of course, and showed no indications either of wonder or curiosity at sight of Ramon, who was standing near.

THIS matter having been thus arranged, we returned to the prism and again took up our positions, standing as closely as possible together as Ramon tentatively ran over the scale upon his instrument. Then, with a smile and a nod, he indicated that the moment had come. The next instant the shrill, quavering note rang in my ears. Involuntarily I shut my eyes, clenched my hands, prepared for the strange sensations Ramon had described. But instead of the whirling, dream-like feeling I had expected, I heard an ejaculation from Ramon and opened my eyes. Nothing had happened. We were still there beside the prism, and Ramon was staring, a puzzled, uncomprehending half-frightened expression on his face.

"*Nombre de Dios!*" he cried. "What *is* wrong? *Santisima Madre!* Is it possible? Is it—" he left his sentence half finished, leaped aside and seized his violin, and an expression of delight, of vast relief swept across his features. "*Caramba*, of course!" he exclaimed. "I should have known. What a fool I was. And for an instant I feared—*Valgame Dios* how I feared, that something was amiss, that never, never would I be able to return to my beloved one. But it was the *quena*, *amigo mio*. Its note—enough to enlarge

me—was too weak to work upon this crystal and to reduce us. But now—now, with the note upon my fiddle, in a moment more we will be standing beside my Nusta.”

Oddly enough, as sometimes, in fact so often, happens, all my nervousness and doubts had vanished with the sudden reaction that had followed that tense moment. And as Ramon tucked the violin under his chin and grasped the bow ready to draw it across the strings, I recalled a matter that had puzzled me greatly.

“Just a moment!” I exclaimed. “How was it, Ramon, that when you were reduced your violin remained intact? When I picked it up after you had gone, I found the strings had vanished with you but otherwise it was not affected, and yet the glue that held it together should have vanished also, being animal matter.”

Ramon threw back his head and roared with laughter. “Ah, *amigo*, for a keen, observant scientist you sometimes are most unobservant. The glue that holds it together, indeed! Why, my dear friend, did you not know, have you not noticed that there is *no* glue used in this instrument. See—” he held it out for me to examine—“it is not a real violin but a *Charanko*, a native Peruvian fiddle hollowed complete, body and neck entire, from a single block of wood. And the sounding board, the belly, is attached to the sides, not by glue but by *Karamani* wax, a cement composed of vegetable gums, the secret of which is known only to the jungle Indians of the upper Amazon. Now, *amigo mio*, do you understand? And this time, my friend, we will be off. If only I could take my *Charanko* with me! How Nusta would delight in its music!”

Again he cuddled the instrument beneath his chin; his lips smiled, happiness shone in his fine eyes, his fingers caressed the strings, and with a sudden, swift motion he swept the bow downward. I was watching him intently. I saw the sudden motion of his wrist and elbow, I heard the first crescendo note and then—— Ramon, desert, everything seemed swallowed in a dense fog; a gust of wind seemed to lift me, whirl me about. I seemed floating——a spiritual, weightless, entirely disembodied intellect upon billowy clouds. Yet my mind, my brain was functioning perfectly. I found myself speculating upon what had occurred, upon what was to be the result. I endeavored to correlate, to fix every detail of my sensations in my mind. I recalled the exact motions of Ramon, the precise sound of the note that had preceded my dream-like state, and I wondered, rather vaguely, if my sensations were the same as those of a person who died, and whether I might not really be dead.

I seemed to remain in this peculiar state, drifting like a bit of thistle-down in a faintly luminous haze, for hours. I began to think that I would continue to drift in this state forever, that the experiment had been a failure, that both Ramon and myself had been killed. And then, abruptly, with precisely the same shock of consciousness that one experiences when suddenly awakened from a dream, my mentality seemed to fit itself into a corporeal body, my feet touched firm earth and the mist vanished.

For a moment I could not believe my eyes, could not credit my senses. I was standing in the Manabi village! Everything seemed normal, natural. The houses near me appeared normal-sized houses, the earth seemed ordinary sand; against a blue sky loomed a range of hills, several Indians of ordinary proportions were within range of my vision, and with a sharp, delighted yelp a mongrel dog fawned against my legs. Could it be possible, was it within the bounds of possibility that I had been reduced, that Ramon's experiment had been such a complete success, that everything appeared perfectly normal and natural, because I, instead of being a full-sized man, was in perfect proportion to my surroundings?

CHAPTER VI

In the Microscopic Eden

THEN, to my confused, whirling brain came the sound of a voice; a voice so musical, so soft, so melodious that the words might have issued from a silver flute. I wheeled at the sound and stood dumb with emotion, speechless with wonder, gazing transfixed at Nusta, who stood almost beside me, clasped in Ramon's arms. Instantly all doubt vanished from my mind. I *had* been reduced. I actually was in the miniature village. I was a microscopic being gazing with rapt admiration at the transcendently beautiful creature whose glorious head rested upon Ramon's breast, whose wonderful eyes were fixed upon me, whose luscious, adorable lips were half parted in a ravishing smile. Ramon, the villain, was grinning from ear to ear at the expression of bewilderment and amazement upon my face.

"Well, *amigo*, here we are!" he observed, as he caressed Nusta's hair. "And," he continued, "when you have quite recovered from the novelty of your experience I shall be delighted to present you to Her Majesty, Queen Naliche of Urquin, otherwise the Señorita Amador."

Then, to the superb woman in his arms, he spoke in Spanish: "Did I not say, *alma de mi vida*, that he would come back with me? Did I not promise thee, *corazoncito*, that all would be well, and that the staunchest, dearest friend a man ever had would join us here in Urquin?"

No wonder, I thought, that Ramon had been willing to risk death, the unknown, anything, on the chance of joining such a woman, with her love as the reward for his risk. The lucky devil! And it spoke volumes for his friendship for me that he could leave her—if only for a few moments—perhaps to lose her, in order to join me and induce me to return with him to the village which he called Urquin.

I had now in a measure collected my thoughts, and bowing low to Nusta, or as I should perhaps call her, Queen Naliche, I murmured conventional words of salutation and expressed my delight at being in her presence. The

next instant I was blushing scarlet and devoutly wishing I were a thousand miles from there, for I had become suddenly aware that I was naked to the waist. I had been wearing a cotton shirt, and of course it had been left behind, lying somewhere upon the sand beside the shattered prism in that outer normal world. Fortunately, I had worn woolen trousers, for otherwise I should have been a veritable Adam in this microscopic Eden. And my embarrassment was increased a thousand-fold by Nusta's, no, Naliche's next words.

"Oh, my Ramon," she exclaimed, "how beautiful is the body of our friend. It is as white as the robes of Melik the priest."

Ramon burst into a guffaw of hilarity at her words. "*Caramba!*" he exclaimed, addressing me, "I'll be getting jealous of you in a moment. The idea of you appearing in such dishabille in the presence of a queen! And my wife is in love with that blond torso of yours already! Not here five minutes and she can't take her eyes from you. Shame on you, my friend! But—" with a change of tone, "I know just how you feel, old man: as if you'd been taking a bath and the walls of the room had suddenly vanished. I'll fix you up in a moment."

He gave some order to an attendant standing near and in a few seconds the girl returned with a garment similar to Ramon's own. Donning the gorgeous opalescent thing I felt far more at ease, but Naliche declared that she thought I looked far better without it. Modesty is, I reflected, a most peculiar thing after all. Many of the men, and a number of the women, who had gathered about wore no garments above the waist, and even Naliche's costume left little to the imagination, yet I had felt inexpressibly embarrassed and ill at ease, absolutely immodest, when I had realized my condition. And I could well understand Naliche's surprise and—perhaps not admiration so much as curiosity—at the color of my skin. I was the first really white man she or any of the people had ever seen. Even Ramon's skin was a decided olive; Naliche, fairest of all her race, had a glowing, golden color, and I knew from long experience among Indian tribes that nothing arouses greater wonder among brown-skinned people than the first sight of the colorless epidermis of a white man's body.

Ramon's voice interrupted my half-conscious meditations on this phase of human psychology.

"Now that you are clothed and—I hope—in your right mind," he remarked, "permit me to invite you to accept the hospitality of the palace, *mio amigo*. Even the most sublime love and the most wonderful of women

—” with an affectionate glance at Naliche—“do not, I find, prevent one from having a healthy appetite. For myself, *amigo*, I am famished—my appetite has not diminished with my size—and you will find that we of Urquin do not lack the good things of life.” Then, with a laugh and mock bow, “Don Alfeo,” he said, “will you be so kind as to escort Her Majesty to the repast that awaits us?”

Naliche’s eyes sparkled mischievously, and she laughed musically. “Can you not be serious, O King of Urquin?” she asked him as, flushing and feeling quite like an awkward schoolboy, I took Naliche’s arm. And I must confess that at the touch of her hand, the nearness of her living, pulsing body, the ravishing beauty of her face and eyes so close to my own, a most disconcerting but very delightful thrill ran through my veins. And I no longer marvelled that Ramon was quite willing to forego all the rest of the world and to dwell here in this unknown, invisible spot, where grains of sand were mighty mountains, where a millimeter was a vast distance and where the very lovely, very feminine, supremely alluring woman by my side was his bride and his queen, even though she were smaller, yes a thousand times smaller, than a mote of dust. Abruptly, at the thought I chuckled, and Naliche turned her eyes questioningly upon me.

WHAT a strange thing is habit! How unreasonably, with what fallacy do we humans measure and judge matters! Invisible, microscopic, indeed! Motes, grains of sand, mountains, millimeters! These people were no more microscopic than I was. Everywhere about were grains of sand by countless millions. In the brilliant shaft of light that streamed through a window, sparkling motes danced and gyrated and against the horizons mountains loomed blue and hazy.

It was all a matter of proportion, of comparison, of relativity, as I might say. To these people—to myself if I had any sense—everything here was quite normal, full-sized, entirely natural. But I had been born, had lived, had become accustomed to another sphere of life, and my brain, my thoughts, my impressions remained those of the man—the gigantic incredible being—I had been. I still thought, reasoned and made comparisons as though I were yet in the world to which I had been accustomed from birth. I thought in terms of the world I had left. And yet how did I know, how did anyone know that there might not be other worlds, other phases of life, other human beings to whom the earth and its inhabitants—as I had known them—would appear as infinitesimal as this land of Urquin had appeared to me? And how could I, or Ramon, or Naliche, or any of these people, be sure that there

were not still other beings, other places, still smaller, quite invisible to them, and so on *ad infinitum*?

But I could not explain all this to Naliche, whose questioning eyes were upon me and whose silvery questions were delighting my ears. Though she spoke Spanish marvelously well, and was a remarkably intelligent little creature, yet to attempt to explain matters of which she had no conception was, I felt, beyond my limited powers. But I found that I had greatly erred. Ramon had told her all about the gigantic world he had left in order to join her. And he had made clear to her the amazing properties of the prisms and how he had been reduced. She was quite familiar, therefore, with conditions outside her own domains; she was aware that there was another world, other people of whom Ramon and I were individuals. But, most important of all, she was thoroughly familiar with the history of her own people. She knew the tradition of how her race had once been in that other world, huge people—I must say normal, to express my meaning—and how, by a great calamity, nearly all the race had been destroyed and the remainder had been transformed to their present state. To be sure, until Ramon had told her of the manabinite she had had no idea of what had occurred in the dim past, of how her people had been translated to a new existence, and she had had no slightest idea that she and her people were any smaller than their ancestors. But once Ramon had explained, once he had told her his theories and suppositions, it had all been clear.

Just as he had surmised, some of the ancient Manabis, sometime in the past had, by merest accident, by some vibratory note in all probability, been instantly reduced to microscopic (there I go again, but it cannot be helped) proportions. Naturally, not realizing what had occurred, these few, finding themselves alone in a strange spot, had assumed that all their fellows had been wiped out by some cataclysm. And being unconscious of the amazing alteration in their own size and surroundings, they had made the best of their state, had lived, established themselves, built their houses and temple, had increased and had survived believing themselves still physically unchanged and the sole inhabitants of the land. Also, as Ramon had told me, having been thus cut off and isolated through countless centuries, they had remained uninfluenced by time, by other civilizations and races, preserving all the customs, the arts, the traditions, the faith, and the unspoiled, unsullied simplicity, contentment and happiness of which human beings are capable, when free from vain ambition, politics, alien influences, envy, greed, wars, and all that go to make ordinary mortals unhappy, restless, unsatisfied and sinful.

All this I learned from Naliche—helped out by Ramon—as together we ate in the ancient palace of Urquin. And as the tale unfolded and as I glanced about at my surroundings, I realized the truth of Ramon’s words when he had declared that the place was an archeological treasure-house. Yet, somehow, it all seemed most unreal, most dream-like. I was feasting upon delicious yet strange viands—delicate meats, delectable vegetables, luscious fruits, and sipping chicha. Beside me was a breathing, vividly alive, beautiful woman. Within reach of my arm was Ramon, dark, handsome, unchanged. Silent-footed, half-naked girls moved about, attending to our wants. From somewhere the plaintive notes of a *quena* drifted to our ears, and yet all my surroundings, the ornately sculptured walls of the great hall, the pastel-colored frescoes, the mosaic floor, the vessels of marvelous pottery, of gold and of carved precious stones, might all have been those of a civilization that had vanished and had been forgotten hundreds, thousands of years before. I had in effect been whisked back through the ages, not only reduced physically but translated bodily to the life, the surroundings of perhaps three thousand years before. Even while listening to the story, the fascinating revelations of my companions, my mind or a portion of it was pondering on the past, on the amazing manner in which Urquin and its people had been preserved unchanged. Tempest, cataclysms, wars, conquests had passed them by. The steel-shod horses of the Spanish invaders, the tramping feet of Pizarros’ men had marched unsuspected, unsuspecting overhead. Kingdoms had risen and fallen, rebellions had devastated the land, civilizations had come and gone and yet these people, invisible, indescribably minute, had been, as Ramon had so truthfully expressed it, unharmed, unchanged, unsullied by their very minuteness that, at first thought would have appeared to have left them at the mercy of the first breath of wind, the first downfall of rain, the first chance passer-by. Yes, verily, that which had seemed a calamity, that which had appeared such a misfortune had proved their salvation, the most fortunate of occurrences. And I was soon to learn that it had been even a far greater blessing than I imagined.

CHAPTER VII

An Astounding Discovery

AFTER the meal, Naliche left us, and Ramon suggested that we should stroll about the city—for it deserves to be referred to as more than a village.

Although I had observed much of the life and of the industry of the place when viewing it through the prism with Ramon, yet I found I had practically no real knowledge of the place or its inhabitants. My position might be likened to that of a person who had seen a motion picture of some strange and distant spot and had imagined, from repeatedly watching the picture, that he was familiar with the place and its people. To be sure, Ramon and I had seen the actual happenings, the actual people, the actual buildings. As far as I had been able to obtain any real knowledge of affairs I might as well have watched cinematograph pictures thrown upon a screen. And at every step, at every turn and every new sight, I was more and more fascinated, more and more amazed.

In one day, I realized, I could learn more of the ancient races of Peru, could make more archeological discoveries than in months or even years devoted to poking about crumbling ruins, disinterring mummies, trying to reconstruct life and cultures as they had been ages before. For here I was surrounded by that life and culture, I was among the people who had left those amazing structures, whose feats had mystified the world's scientists for generations. In this splendid temple that we were approaching, I saw the counterpart of the wonderful temple of Pachakamak as it must have been when that sacred city was a Mecca for the races from Mexico to Chile.

Often, in company with my friend Dr. Tello of the Lima Museum, I had examined, explored and studied that most ancient of Peru's temples, and in an entirely friendly way we had argued and discussed the questions of its original plan, its details and the purposes of its various portions. Never had we been able to agree upon any of these matters, and the accounts of the Spaniards—the letters of Hernando Cortez, who visited the temple in his search for loot—threw little definite light upon the matter. Yet here, in the

great temple of Urquin, I had almost a precise replica of that at Pachakamak, and at a glance, a most cursory examination, I realized how far wrong both Don Juliano and I had been in our assumptions, our theories and our ideas.

Through the prism I had obtained no adequate impression of the temple or of its details. It had appeared a somewhat pyramidal structure ornately and impressively decorated, but I had been far more attracted by the people, the priests, and by the worship, than by the structure itself. And a score of other puzzles were solved as Ramon and I mounted the immense steps and stood within the portals of the temple. The great stone thrones or chairs, of which I have already spoken in my former manuscript, the symbolic images, the frescoes and every accessory all had their distinct and obvious reasons for being there. Objects that from time to time had been found in ancient ruins or in tombs, and whose uses or purposes no one had been able to explain, were here with their purposes quite obvious. Also, with something of a shock I found that theories and suppositions, that had so long been accepted by all archeologists as to be regarded as facts, were utterly and instantly destroyed, scrapped, and that much that I had always looked upon as almost incontrovertible truth was palpably false. I had always believed, as had others, that the story of creation as known in Peruvian folklore had been instilled by the Spanish priests and did not antedate the arrival of Europeans.

Yet here, in magnificently-executed frescoes, was the pictured tale. I, like others, have always maintained that no ancient Peruvian (and by that term I mean Ecuadorean as well, for of course there were no such places as Peru and Ecuador in pre-Columbian days) possessed a recorded language. Yet here, arranged in regular chronological order within niches—precisely like those that for years had proved a mystery to all scientists—were rows of the effigy and portrait jars that—even at a glance—divulged their purpose as ideographic records. And the peculiar elliptical, pointed-bottomed urns that Saville and others, including myself, had found in such numbers at Manabi and elsewhere in Ecuador, were here by scores, each filled with ashes of long dead and cremated members of the community, and each with its life-like portrait-jar bearing the face and features of the deceased, beside it.

Here, too, was the great altar, and above it the gleaming golden image of the sun flanked by the silvery moon, the varicolored rainbow, the planets and stars, exactly as the old Dons described the arrangement within the great Kori Kancha, or Temple of the Sun, at Cuzco. But the Spaniards had fallen far astray when they had described the figures. They had, to be sure, stated that the sun bore the likeness of a human face upon its surface, that upon the moon-disk was the face of a woman. But they had failed to relate that the

face upon the polished golden sun was that of a benign, kindly-appearing, bearded man.

It was the face of a white man.

RAMON was watching me intently and I saw a triumphant smile upon his face at my expression of surprise.

“Wira Kocho,” he observed in a low voice. “The original Bearded One of the ancient legends. I am no archeologist, as you know, *amigo*, but even I recognized him instantly. And if I am not mistaken, it knocks the jaguar-god theory all to bits. See here—doesn’t this give you a jolt?”

As he spoke, he stepped towards a shrine-like recess and I gaped in wonder. There, surrounded by offerings of fruit, textiles, weapons, precious stones and other objects, was the life-sized statue of a bearded white man! There could be no question of the fact. The features, the hair, the long flowing beard, the heavy luxuriant moustache, were all unmistakeably those of a European. And so perfectly modelled were the features that any anthropologist would instantly have recognized them as distinctly, indisputably Semitic. But if there had been any question, there were the garments. Upon the head was a tight-fitting skull-cap with tabs or ears, a cap or shawl was over the shoulders, and a toga-like robe covered the body.

I felt dazed, thunderstruck. Yet, though it destroyed all my preconceived ideas, I knew that what had always been deemed a fable, was actual fact: Wira Kocho, most revered of the ancient Peruvian divinities, the Bearded One, as he had been called, had actually existed, and he had been a European, a white man, and that ages, centuries before Columbus, a Semite, a Hebrew—or more likely many of the race—had reached the shores of the New World and had visited Peru. The conviction, the certainty that this was so, instantly explained innumerable puzzles. It solved the mystery of why there are no known evolutionary forms of the arts, cultures and religions of the ancient Americans; it accounted for the many inexplicable similarities in mythology, worship, arts, architecture, physiognomy and even dialects between those of America and the Old World, and into my mind flashed the knowledge that it explained the ancient legend of the coming of Manko Kapak, the first Inca. The tale was merely an allegory; Wira Kocho, the Semite, had come from the east, he had been revered as a divinity; he had taught the people their arts, their religion, their civilization; he had organized and enlightened them, and during the thousands of years that had passed he

had become inextricably confused with the first Incan ruler of whom the people had any definite knowledge. What more simple? And I now knew why the Incas, the royal family, had been—according to the old Spanish chroniclers—men and women very different from their subjects; tall, fine-featured, light-skinned; often brown-haired. And why Nusta—no, Naliche—was so fair, so lovely, so totally unlike the humbler inhabitants of Urquin. All were descendants—or partial descendants—of those wandering Jews, who, no one could say how long before, had reached America, had settled in the land, and had left their indelible imprint upon the people, the civilizations, the mythology of the ancient American races. I felt that I could not be wrong. The statue or image left no shadow of doubt as to the nationality of the original, and it was so obviously a likeness that I felt it must have been modelled from life. Yet—and the thought was disconcerting—how could that be? The stranger assuredly could not have been seen or known to these microscopic people, and if the statue had been made before they had been reduced, how could it—an inorganic thing—have been reduced with them? I turned to Ramon and voiced my perplexity.

He smiled. “That troubled me, also,” he admitted. “But it is very simple, *amigo*. If you will examine the image very carefully, you will find that it is not what you surmise, but the real thing. Yes, *amigo mio*, it is old Wira Kocha himself—or what remains of him—his mummy.”

I could scarcely credit my ears. But a moment’s close examination convinced me. What I had mistaken for a beautifully-modelled or carved image was a most marvelously preserved human body. Not one of the desiccated, shrivelled bodies called “mummies” that are so common in Peru and elsewhere in South America, but a cadaver preserved by some mysterious lost process more remarkable than anything ever accomplished by the old Egyptians or by any other race. Still, there had been a great deal of reconstruction done upon it. I could see that portions had been filled out, modelled in, that the features had been touched up, and that the hair, beard and moustache had been moulded into solid masses with some clay-like material. But Ramon was again speaking.

“According to tradition,” he said, “the explosion of the manabinite altar—for it was a sacred altar and not a prism that reduced the people—the explosion, I say, took place while a very holy ceremony was being conducted. And the mummy of Wira Kocha, being within the range of the activity, was reduced at the same time as the living beings. Of course, when the people came to their senses, there was no trace of their temple, their houses, or anything else they had known. But there, beside them, was their

venerated god, a little the worse for what he had been through—minus ornaments and decorations, with all the added modelling and patching missing, but still in good shape. And this, of course, convinced the people that he had stood by them, guarded them, had protected and saved the few chosen ones from destruction. Hence he became more sacred, more adored than ever, and though we have the sun-god, Inti, of my people, yet in Urquin, Wira Kocho, the Bearded One of my ancestors, of all the ancient races of Peru, is the supreme, the omnipotent.”

I could not find words to express the thoughts that filled my mind as I stood there, gazing transfixed at that hard, dark form that once had been a living, breathing human being. Who was he? Whence had he come? How many thousands of years had passed since he had left his home in Palestine, Turkey, Phoenicia, Babylonia—perchance in Atlantis, and journeying over seas had found this new world and had become revered as a deity born of the sun?

WHAT a strange, fascinating, incredible tale those bearded, kindly lips could relate could they but speak. Yet, I mused, it would be no stranger, no more incredible than the tale I could tell of my own experiences here in Urquin.

And even the wonders of the Bearded One, of the temple, of all I had seen, were no greater nor more interesting than the discoveries I made at every turn as Ramon guided me about the city. It was like stepping back perhaps ten thousand years. The arts, the habits, the life of the people were all those of the Manabis before the untoward shattering of their manabinite altar had segregated them from all mankind.

“Here’s something that will interest you,” announced Ramon, indicating a group of men busily at work in the shelter of a thatched shed.

I drew near and saw that they were metal workers, and I uttered an exclamation of delighted surprise when I saw that they were plating copper and other objects with gold. How often had I racked my brains trying to solve the secret of how the ancient Manabis, Chibchas and Chimus had plated objects of metal—and even of clay—with gold. How many theories and suppositions had I formed to explain the puzzle. But none had been near the mark, for here before my eyes the mysterious art was being carried on, and I laughed when I saw how very simple it was, how I (as well as others) had strained at a gnat and had swallowed a camel, metaphorically speaking. It was all done by amalgam, by combining gold with mercury and then

evaporating the mercury by heat leaving the gold adhering to the object to be plated. Yet, after all, there *was* a secret to the process. The objects were boiled, both before and after plating, in some chemical solutions, and even Ramon had failed to learn the secret of these compounds.

“I don’t quite understand,” I remarked, as we walked on, “how it is that if inorganic substances cannot be reduced by manabinite, there are gold, copper, silver—all the elements, minerals, substances familiar to us—in this place, and that the surroundings, the earth, the rocks, everything, appear no different from those to which we are accustomed. I expected——”

“My dear Don Alfeo,” laughed Ramon. “Why should anything be different? If we accept the known facts of science, we must believe that the entire substance of the earth is composed of certain basic elements—gases, minerals, metals—and that everything we know is composed of these in various combinations. Your own body, and mine, contain iron, sulphur, oxygen, hydrogen, carbon—the same elements as those in rocks, trees, the sea, in fact everything else. Yet we call some things organic and others non-organic. If we admit that the universe—as we know it—is composed wholly of definite elements and their combinations, then, *amigo*, we must admit that the same must occur in the most infinitesimally minute portions of the universe, to the *nth* degree as I might say. I have no doubt that, could we but view portions of the earth as much smaller than Urquin as Urquin is smaller than London, Paris or New York, we would find precisely the same conditions, surroundings, earth and objects as we find here, or as you might find anywhere in that larger sphere of life we have left. I——”

“Hold on,” I interpolated. “How about molecules, atoms, electrons? How about vibratory waves? Why, Ramon, an atom would, to my way of thinking, be out of all proportion to these people—to us. It should appear as large as—well, it should certainly be visible to us. And how is it possible for us, for the rocks, for metals composed of atoms and molecules, to exist in these minute proportions if the atoms themselves are as large or larger than the objects?”

Ramon roared and clapped me familiarly on the back. “The idea of you, a professed scientist, asking that question!” he exclaimed. “Don Alfeo, I am ashamed of you. Answer me this, *amigo mio*. What is an atom, a molecule, an electron? You can’t give me a lucid, matter-of-fact, hard and fast definition. Why? Because neither you, I, nor anyone else knows anything definite in regard to them. It is——”

“Wait a bit, wait a bit,” I admonished him. “You contradict yourself. You showed me atoms when you were experimenting with the manabinite crystals. If those whirligigs were atoms, then I most assuredly *can* describe them.”

Ramon snorted. “Yes, atoms of cloth, of objects in proportion to ourselves at that time. And that proves just the point I was about to explain. Those atoms—and for the sake of argument the electrons also—were a certain definite size, a certain definite proportion to the cloth, to ourselves, to our surroundings. And if you could look through a similar crystal, that magnified fibres or other objects here to the same extent as that lens magnified objects there, you unquestionably would see atoms that would be similar to, if not identical with, those you have viewed. In other words, *amigo*, the size of atoms depends upon the size of the object which they compose.

“I might go further and state, without the least fear of contradiction, that, as a matter of fact, we don’t know anything about atoms, molecules, electrons, vibratory waves or the rest. It’s all theory, supposition, guesswork. It’s like religion among primitive races. They argue that there must be some reason for things as they are, so they build up a theory or a faith or a religion to fit conditions, and create a god or gods or spirits to start and control matters.

“We ask ourselves: what lies back of all objects, of the universe? What keeps the wheels going around? There must be something smaller than we can see, than we can conceive, and those things must be composed of still smaller things. So we imagine atoms, electrons; this and that and the other thing. And just because we discover that we have guessed right in one detail, and that there are minute universes or planetary systems that pretty well bear out our theoretical atoms, we shout ‘I told you so’ and thereupon assume that everything else we have imagined must be equally correct. Take the question of rain. We discussed that subject long before I left you. According to theory, spatters of raindrops small enough to answer for rain here would be invisible as a gas. True enough if all atoms, all molecules in water were based on one definite condition and locality. But we have proof that this is not the case. Ah-ha! Speaking of angels, you know, here’s confirmation of my words; it’s beginning to rain. Do you note any visible difference between these drops that are falling and the raindrops to which you have been accustomed all your life?”

I admitted I did not. But my brain was in something of a chaos. I could not exactly grasp his reasoning, could not accustom myself to the idea that

there was no conceivable limit to the minuteness of things. That being the case, the component parts—atoms, electrons, whatever they might be—would of necessity be in proportion. The thing was too profoundly abstruse. It could be carried to the ultimate degree until there was—well, nothing; and was there, I wondered, such a thing as nothing? Ramon was again speaking.

“The whole trouble is,” he observed, “that we are still hedged in, hide-bound, so to speak, with ideas and conceptions acquired through generations of human beings dwelling in a definite world, under definite conditions. With our customary egotism we think that we—I am speaking of human beings as an entity and not of ourselves—are the most important, the only intellectual beings in the universe. We cannot imagine any other spheres above or below us, larger or smaller than ourselves. And yet here we have incontrovertible proof of the fallacy of such nonsensical ideas. These people in Urquin haven’t the least conception of the world you and I came from.

“To them it is non-existent. To them the whole universe is here. They live in sublime ignorance of ordinary human beings, of any other world, of any other surroundings, and if there were scientists among them, they’d have very much the same ideas and the identical theories of atomic matter as our scientists who are utterly unaware of this place and these people. Why, *amigo*, even I who have lived here, who am wedded to the most wonderful woman alive, who have become accustomed to the place and the life, even I, I say, find that my brain, my intellect, my reasoning powers are all more or less controlled by the ideas and beliefs acquired in my former physical state. I find myself constantly, unconsciously, making comparisons, thinking of everything here as small, reasoning in terms of inches, millimeters, hours, litres, grams, and all that tommy-rot. Size, time, measurement, weight—Bosh!

“Such things don’t exist. They’re merely means adopted to enable us to classify and understand matters that otherwise would be impossible. It’s all a matter of proportion, of relativity as Einstein puts it. But, *amigo*, even Einstein is as far off as the rest of mankind. He’s on the right track, but he’s traveling in circles. If I could induce him to be reduced and he could live here in Urquin a while, he’d see things from a new point of view. But—” he laughed at the thought—“I’ll wager he would not be satisfied. He’d never rest content until he’d tried reducing himself to still more minute proportions; and the Lord alone knows where that might end. It’s beyond the limits of our imagination to contemplate it. But there’s another matter, *amigo*.

“Speaking of atoms reminds me that I told you that I had discovered how the prehistoric races cut and fitted the stupendous stones used in erecting the cyclopean walls and buildings about Cuzco and Tiahuanaco. That, in a way, hinges upon the same subject we have been discussing. I know you’ll be interested. Come, let us return to the palace and join Naliche. I had my information from her lips—and from the old priest. By the way, he’s a fine chap, and brimming over with traditions, legends, history and occult knowledge. You’ll like him, and we’ll probably find him knocking about somewhere near. And I’ll tell you what I’ve learned and we have old Melik and my beloved one to verify what I say or to put me right if I make a mistake.”

CHAPTER VIII

The Manabi Prince

RAMON had an even greater surprise for me. As Nusta entered the great hall wherein we were seated, she was accompanied by a lovely young girl, who carried in her arms a mite of humanity, a bright-eyed, chubby, pink boy who kicked and crowed and sucked his thumb, oblivious of the fact that he was a prince of a microscopic land. Ramon grinned at my surprise, and Naliche blushed rosily as I glanced from one to the other, and tickled the royal kiddy's dimpled cheeks.

"What think you, *amigo*, of that?" cried Ramon. "Is it not the most wonderful thing you have seen here?"

"Unquestionably," I assured him, adding, with a glance at Naliche, "with the exception of his mother. And"—I finished—"a far greater mystery than any of the handiwork of the ancient races. I congratulate you both. With parents combining such remarkable attributes of physical beauty, intelligence, health, delightful characters and other desirable qualities, the scion of the house of Urquin should mature to be a most remarkable man. But at the present moment—admitting for the sake of argument his good looks—his intellect appears mainly devoted to attempting to swallow his own fist, due, no doubt, to the experimental complex inherited from his father. But, seriously, what is the little fellow's name?"

Ramon and Naliche were laughing merrily. "He have no name to now," replied Naliche, glancing at me with her marvelous eyes. "We have wait to make him the name. My hus—my Ramon, always he say some time perhaps his so dear friend may come, and we wait so maybe he can be here to be the—how you call it, the——"

"*Padrino*" (godfather), supplied Ramon. "Yes, old man, that's it. I have always felt, *amigo*, you would yet come, and I wanted my dearest, truest friend to be the godfather of our first born. We'll have old Melik christen him in the temple tomorrow morning. But you've got to find a name for him, *amigo*. Naliche and I cannot decide on one."

I chuckled. “I feel honored,” I assured them, “but isn’t christening a somewhat paradoxical expression to use? Surely your friend Melik is not a Christian priest. And I was not aware that in the—er—faith of your ancestors, Ramon, there were such personages as godfathers.”

Ramon grinned, but I don’t think Naliche quite understood my meaning, for she glanced with a puzzled, questioning expression from one to the other of us.

“They have godfathers all right,” declared Ramon, “but of course I said ‘christening’ in a purely figurative sense. I should have said——”

“*Wira-Kochering*,” I suggested with a laugh. “But regarding the name. Must it be in Manabi, Spanish or English; or doesn’t it matter?”

“He is the some of the Urquin and the some of the Quichua and the little of the Spanish,” Naliche reminded me. “And the—the *Padrino*—he is of the Americanos. Maybe”—blushing prettily—“he can the names of all be given.”

“*Madre de Dios*, no!” exclaimed Ramon. “Don’t let’s burden the poor *chiquito* with a string of names like that. I know what ’tis—I’ve ten names myself. No, old man, I’m leaving the name to you. Only don’t give a name that none of the people here can pronounce.”

“Hmm,” I muttered, “Let’s see. Ah—how would Mara-Choki do?”

Part II



¶ *With one accord they all knelt, and in unison their voices rose in the joyful chant of praise*

Naliche clapped her hands in delight and her eyes sparkled. “But our dear friend he speaks the Hualla!” she cried. “Oh, my Ramon, why you not told me that I might speak with him so?”

“I didn’t know it myself,” confessed Ramon.

I grinned. “I cannot say that I speak it,” I declared, “but I possess some knowledge of the dialect, and I have noticed that the Urquin tongue is merely a local variation of the ancient mother-tongue of Peru. But how about the name?”

“It is most beautiful,” Naliche assured me, now using her native tongue. “Star of Gold! Ah, is he not that? Our star, the star of Urquin, and his skin as golden as the face of Inti. Oh, my dear friend, I——” With a sudden swift movement she stepped forward, and before I realized her intentions, she kissed my cheek.

A moment later, the priest, Melik, entered. I recognized him instantly as the man I had seen conducting the services in the temple, and I studied his face with interest. He was an elderly man—I should have said about seventy—with large, keen, and kindly eyes; a firm but sensitive mouth; good forehead, and a high-bridged, thin, aquiline nose. A sparse, gray wisp of beard was on his chin, and his white hair fell about his shoulders. Never, had I met him amid other surroundings, would I have taken him for an Indian. He might have been of any race of southern Europe, or an American, and I wondered if the blood in his veins was not largely that of the ancient Wira Kocha, the Bearded One. That he was very fond of both Naliche and Ramon was evident from the smile that crossed his wrinkled face and the light that brightened his eyes as he greeted them. And it was equally obvious that the kiddy—Mara-Choki, rather—was almost as important to him as to his parents. And he expressed delight at the name I had selected for the child, and at the fact that I could—with some difficulty and stumblingly—converse in his own dialect.

“You wouldn’t think the old boy was a couple of hundred years old, would you?” muttered Ramon in Spanish, as Melik turned to speak with Naliche.

“What!” I ejaculated. “Nonsense, Ramon. Such tales of extreme age are common among the Ameticab races, but are seldom fact—they merely forget the dates of their birth and keep adding on to their imagined age.”

“Not Melik, *amigo*,” he assured me. “I’ve proved to my own satisfaction he’s over two hundred and he may be five hundred for all I know.”

I laughed outright. “Why don’t you say he was here when the reduction of the people took place, or even was contemporary with Wira Kocha?” I asked.

“Maybe he was,” replied Ramon quite seriously. “Nothing would surprise me here.” He hesitated. “Guess Naliche’s age,” he said.

“That,” I declared, “is simple. I should say without hesitation that she is between eighteen and twenty. If she were a native of a northern locality I would add perhaps two years more.”

Ramon roared until Naliche and Melik gazed at him in surprise, and the infant howled in terror. Then, turning to Naliche, he said something in words too rapid for me to follow, and instantly both she and the priest burst into peals of merriment.

“What’s the huge joke?” I demanded.

“Naliche, my adored one, eighteen or twenty!” gasped Ramon, striving to control himself. “Oh, *amigo mio*, that’s rich! Why, she’s older than I am—yes, *amigo*, older than you, you old fossil. She’s nearly forty!”

“The joke,” I observed, “is that you imagine for one moment I will believe that statement. I presume you will now assure me that your son yonder is a man of twenty-five.”

“But she is,” insisted Ramon. “You cannot judge the age of people here by our standards. And every birth for the past—well, at least eight centuries—has been recorded or registered; that is, the births of all members of the aristocracy and priesthood. They are all on file in Melik’s sanctum adjoining the temple—recorded on quipos, the knotted cords used for registering events and computations—and I looked up that of Naliche because I couldn’t believe it, even when she told me her age.”

“Possibly,” I suggested, “you have found the land of the Fountain of Youth. Though, if such be the case, I should like you to explain why it is that people die here.”

RAMON was now serious once more. “Of course they die,” he said. “They’re mortal like anyone else. But they live to extreme age. It puzzled me in the beginning, but I discovered the reason.”

“If you can elucidate to my satisfaction, and prove your assertion, I may be converted,” I informed him. “What *is* the mysterious cause of the Manabis’, no, the Urquins’, longevity?”

“First let me put a question,” he replied. “What are the chief causes for human beings dying at less than one hundred or two hundred years? You, as a scientist and anthropologist, must realize that, judged by biological laws and precedents, human beings should live normally for one hundred and fifty years, more or less—approximately five times the period it requires for them to reach maturity. Yet how many live to that age? And how many ever die of old age?”

“Naturally, diseases cause the majority of deaths,” I replied. “Accidents take their toll, and death is hastened, in the case of civilized men, by excesses, lack of care, late hours, and a thousand-and-one other causes. But in answer to your first question, I would say that tuberculosis, cancer and—well, possibly malaria, are the three most potent factors in destroying human life prematurely; that is, of course, excepting wars, pestilences, floods and—as the insurance companies put it—acts of God.”

“Precisely, *amigo*,” he agreed. “And if these diseases—if all maladies caused by parasitic or deadly germs could be eliminated, why shouldn’t people live to one hundred or more? And why shouldn’t they keep their youth into what we call middle age?”

“No reason at all,” I admitted. “But no one has yet, and the chances are no one ever will eliminate such diseases.”

“No?” Ramon shrugged his shoulders and raised his eyebrows. “In that,” he continued, “you are greatly mistaken. Here in Urquin there are no germ or microbe diseases. That is,” he hastened to add, “unless you and I have brought them in.”

“Nonsense!” I exclaimed.

“Nonsense nothing,” he retorted. “Just use your reason, *amigo mio*. Remember that we—all the people here—are, according to your former standards, tiny, ultra-microscopic beings. Then, considering that point, tell me how it would be possible for germs—say of malaria—to live in our veins? Why, *mi amigo*, it would be like tadpoles in the blood of ordinary-sized men.”

I smiled. “You quite forget.” I reminded him, “that when the Manabis—no, confound it, the Urquins—were reduced, the germs in their systems would have been reduced also, and that their descendants would still be of reduced size.”

“Granted,” he retorted. “But you, *amigo*, forget that the most deadly of germs, those of malaria, yellow fever, cholera, plague and others, can be transmitted, propagated only by means of carriers—insects. And that, with no carriers, the breed would soon die out and disappear completely. And that, my friend, is precisely what occurred here. For all I know, the original ancestors of these people may have been entirely free of any injurious germs. But that makes no difference. It happens that no carriers—no fleas, no mosquitoes, no bedbugs, no biting insects are here. You see, the people

were in their temple when the calamity occurred, and probably no insects were present. But—”

“How about the dog we reduced?” I asked. “Didn’t he bring fleas with him?”

“If you recollect,” he reminded me, “we had the cur in my laboratory for a week or more, and as I am, unfortunately, or rather was—very susceptible to fleas, I most thoroughly defleaed him as well as my quarters. I doubt if there was a living flea in the place.”

“Hmm,” I muttered, “I can understand, in a measure, the freedom from diseases of some sorts here. But there are others—smallpox, measles, tuberculosis, cancer, pneumonia, scores of virulent maladies, that do not require carriers.”

“*Madre de Dios!*” exclaimed Ramon. “Did not you, yourself, assure me that all or nearly all of these were introduced to America by the Europeans? And do you not realize that the Urquins were reduced ages before the first European arrived in America?”

“Even so,” I argued, for I hated to let him know he had me, “I fail to see how that fact would enable a man to live two hundred years. Or how a girl—er—a woman—as beautiful and as youthful as your most lovely wife, can be forty years of age.”

“That,” admitted Ramon, “is something I do not know. Perhaps it is due to the normal, healthy life they lead. They do not smoke, nor chew coca, nor drink alcohol. They sleep twelve hours out of twenty-four; they live an out-of-doors life, and they have no worries, no problems, no troubles. Urquin, *amigo*, is as near to Utopia as can be found on this earth.”

“I’m beginning to think so myself,” I assured him. “But tell me, what was it you discovered in regard to the secret of the Cyclopean architecture? I am more interested in archeological matters than in eugenics or perpetual youth, you know.”

“The same old Don Alfeo,” laughed Ramon. “A slave to your pet science. But I can’t blame you; you haven’t the same interests here as I have.”

“If,” I said, “I could find a—er—companionable young girl, as beautiful—no, that is impossible; but, let us say, quite reasonably lovely, and, well, possibly not more than sixty or seventy years of age—and provided she were not adversely influenced by personal appearances, I might—well, I might consider acquiring much the same interests as you possess here.”

Ramon laughed merrily. “Very possibly you may find that that is just what will happen,” he declared. “Old Melik has a really charming daughter, though I doubt if she is much over fifty, and having had ample opportunity of judging what a most excellent husband I have proved, I imagine that Mosock Nina might be tempted to try the experiment of acquiring a mate from the outside world. You’ll have an opportunity to judge of the—er—girl of fifty summers this evening. Naliche is a born matchmaker, and Melik’s daughter will dine with us.”

I smiled. “Hmm, Mosock Nina,” I murmured. “That, I believe, if freely translated, means ‘New fires.’ A somewhat ominous name for a young lady who is seeking a husband. Ah well, possibly she *may* kindle new fires in an old bachelor, after all. But, come, let’s have your revelations regarding the prehistoric stone-cutting. I’m impatient to hear about your discoveries. And, by the way, just how *did* you discover it? I have seen no stonework of any size—certainly nothing of the Cyclopean type, here.”

“Had it from old—from your prospective father-in-law,” he replied with a sly nudge in my ribs. “He had it from his father and so on—handed down like all the history here, from father to son among the priests. And I feel certain it’s the truth, for it answers all the requirements of the case. But we’ll have to wait until later, old man. Here comes your future bride.”

CHAPTER IX

Woman, the Enigma

POSSIBLY, under the circumstances, it may be both ungallant and inadvisable to admit it, but this being a true and unvarnished narrative of actual events I must not evade facts. In short, I must admit that Mosock Nina did not, at first glance, stir any of the “new fires” her name implied. But of course, with Naliche for comparison, no woman would have appeared unusually beautiful. Also, very possibly—though quite unconsciously—I was influenced by having—also unconsciously, surrounded myself with a defensive armor, if I may use the simile, of determination not to fall a victim to any woman’s wiles or appearances. Mosock Nina was, however, a really beautiful woman. Although Ramon had declared she was at least fifty, I could not, even after his lucid and quite reasonable explanation, believe she was more than twenty-five or six. Her skin was of much the same shade as Naliche’s, a soft, warm, golden hue, which was not surprising, as it developed that the two women were cousins. Her hair was very luxuriant and soft, and although black, it showed brown or reddish, even golden, tints in the light. Her features were those of her father, softened and refined by youth and femininity; her eyes were large, soft and expressive, and her figure was superb. In any other place and amid any other surroundings I should have felt—as I afterwards felt—that she was a most gloriously lovely woman, and I soon found that she was as merry, as companionable and as delightful as any man might wish. And she quite obviously did *not* judge by appearances only, for she appeared quite—I might say decidedly—interested in me. In fact, to cut a long story short, before the evening, or I might say afternoon, for darkness in Urqui meant bed-time, I found, quite to my surprise and somewhat to my dismay, that I had fallen deeply in love with Mosock Nina and, if I could judge of the matter, that my feelings were reciprocated. I do not think it essential to my narrative to dwell upon the subsequent events nor to describe matters that, I feel, hold no interest for any others, and which, to my mind, were strictly of a private nature.

I must confess, however, that, during the ensuing weeks, I found that my interest in archeology became, much to my surprise, a matter of secondary consideration, and I quite agreed with that anonymous personage who advised that, if business interfered with pleasure, one should give up business. Nevertheless, I did not entirely neglect my research work, and even dragged my mind from thoughts of Mosock Nina and kept Ramon to his promise to tell me of his discovery regarding the pre-Incan Cyclopean architecture. As some of my readers may not be familiar with this subject, a few words of explanation may not be amiss.

Throughout the interior of Peru and Bolivia are the remains of immense cities, huge forts, massive walls and great buildings, all constructed of stones of such stupendous size that they appear as if erected by a race of giants. Often these stones weigh from thirty to two hundred tons and even more, and all are fitted together with such incredible nicety and precision—even where there are as many as twenty angles—that although no mortar nor cement was used, a knife blade cannot be inserted between them today.

That they were erected by a highly civilized and cultured people, who lived and vanished ages before the Incan civilization, is evident, for even the Incans had no traditions or history of their origin, but attributed them to the gods. And for years, since archeologists first studied the Peruvian remains, they have proved a puzzle and an unsolved mystery to all scientists. No one ever has been able to offer a plausible theory to explain how they were cut and fitted, how they were transported from the distant quarries, or by what means they were lifted—without the aid of modern machinery—and placed in position.

Hence, Ramon's casual statement that he had solved the mystery of the Cyclopean architecture, as it is called, and his assurance that he knew the secret so long unsolved, filled me with the most intense interest, an interest that was not entirely submerged in my sudden and wholly unexpected interest in Mosock Nina. And I listened to Ramon's words when at last I pinned him down to his promise and he told me of his truly amazing and altogether incredible solution of the mystery.

“You remember, *amigo*,” he said, “that I once declared—when we were in Manabi—that I had a feeling the minute gold beads and the titanic stones had some connection?”

I nodded assent. “But that is ridiculous,” I declared. “There are no such immense stones in the neighborhood of Manabi.”

“Don’t interrupt, *amigo mio*,” he smiled. “And don’t declare anything ridiculous. Judged from the point of view of your fellow scientists, your own status at the present time—if described to them—would be dubbed impossible and ridiculous. Nothing, *amigo*, is impossible nor ridiculous in this world unless it controverts the laws of Nature. And as none of us know what these laws are, we are wholly incompetent to judge of what is and what is not impossible. Anyhow, as I was about to say, I was not so far off in my ‘hunch,’ as you might call it. There is not, I may assure you in order to set your mind at rest, any real connection between the microscopic gold beads which—thank God—were the indirect means of my present happiness, and the Cyclopean stonework. But there *is* a very definite connection between the manner in which the beads were made and the stones were cut and placed. It——”

Again I interrupted him. “You mean the stones were permanently enlarged after cutting, I suppose.”

“No, on the contrary, just the reverse,” he replied. “The stones at Cuzco and elsewhere are today their original size or very near it. They were permanently, physically magnified, cut and fitted, and then reduced to their normal dimensions.”

I snorted. “That’s going too far, Ramon,” I objected. “In the first place, you proved conclusively that minerals—nothing not an animal substance—could not be reduced by Manabinite prisms. Take your fiddle, my clothes, the dog’s plate. You tried and failed. And——”

“Hold on!” he exclaimed. “Like all scientists, you are jumping at conclusions. I was not, I confess, able to reduce objects not composed of animal matter. But that does not prove that, had I enlarged such objects, I might not have found that the prism would reduce them to their original or normal size. And how do you or I know that, under certain conditions or when subjected to some peculiar vibratory stimulant, Manabinite might not be capable of reducing any material to the same extent that the prisms we employed reduced animal matter?”

“Hmm,” I muttered. “I see your point. Possibly you are right. But even so—even if the ancients increased the size of the stones to any extent, I fail to see why it would facilitate cutting or fitting them. On the contrary, I should declare without the least hesitation that it would render the task even more difficult. No human beings could move one of those two-hundred-ton blocks if it were three or four times as large. And to cut and fit a large stone

is far more difficult than to do the same work on a small stone. No, no, Ramon, your explanation so far is not logical.”

HE smiled condescendingly. “Your reasoning is entirely wrong,” he declared. “First let me ask you a few questions. What is weight? Why *are* some substances lighter than others? Why, for example, is sandstone lighter than flint? Why is marble softer than granite?”

“Why, why,” I stammered, suddenly realizing it was a rather difficult matter to give a wholly satisfactory reply. “Weight, my dear boy, is a—well, a—a term used to express the comparative—well, weights of various substances. It is—why, the comparative pull of gravitation upon various materials and bodies. It——”

“Wait a bit,” he interrupted. “Accepting your somewhat lame explanation of weight in the abstract, how, may I ask, is weight established?”

“Why, by specific gravity,” I replied. “By——”

“And,” interrupted Ramon, “why does one object have a greater specific gravity than another? Why does one material float on water while another sinks?”

“Any schoolboy could answer that,” I retorted. “The object that floats, if pushed under, displaces a volume of water exceeding its own weight. It——”

“And I might state that your answer is no more specific than the gravity you are prating about,” he declared, interrupting my sentence. “You go around and around in circles. You get no nearer the truth. The fact is that weight, as you call it, is all bunk. It’s all a matter of relativity, and its relativity depends entirely upon the degree of space—I say space in a broadly comparative term only, for of course there is no such thing as space—between the atoms of which the material is composed. If the atoms, electrons or whatever you please to call the objects that form all substances, are pressed closely together, we have a dense, heavy material. If they are widely separated we have a porous, light material.

“And when I say dense or porous I mean dense or porous and not hard or soft. As a rule, I admit, the dense material is far harder than the porous material, but there are exceptions. Gold and platinum are very dense, yet they are soft, whereas certain forms of glass and certain minerals may be porous, light and exceedingly hard. But, invariably, the dense substances are,

as you would express it, heavy, and the porous substances are comparatively light. You know that yourself. The porous woods are light, the dense woods heavy and, in cases where the usual rule is borne out, the dense object is the harder. But, even in cases where the dense object is comparatively soft—as in the case of lead, tin, copper, gold, platinum, etc., the material would be far softer if it were rendered more porous. Lead or gold, for example, if as porous as—well, say wood—would be as soft or softer than putty. In fact, I doubt if the adhesion of the atoms would be sufficient to hold them together. They would probably disintegrate completely. But that, *amigo*, has no real bearing on my discovery. The pith of the matter is this: if a normally hard, dense substance could be so altered that the atoms composing it were separated, it would become a porous and soft substance, would it not?”

“I should not care to express a definite opinion in regard to that,” I evaded. “But assuming it to be a fact, what of it?”

“Everything!” he retorted. “You can break soft sandstone with your fingers, but you can make no impression upon granite without a steel tool. Why? Because in one case you have a porous rock with loose structure, while in the other case it is a dense rock with closely pressed together structure. But if by some means you could separate the molecules of the granite to the same extent that those of the sandstone are separated, you could crumble the granite as readily as you can the sandstone. Do you admit that?”

I nodded assent, but I was not sure he was right.

“Fine, *amigo*!” he ejaculated. “For once you cannot raise a valid or an invalid objection based on what you call ‘science.’ But to proceed. That, my friend, was precisely what the builders of cyclopean architecture did. They expanded the stones of hard, dense, refractory rock until they were porous, soft, and could be worked with the greatest ease. Then they reduced them to normal size. That was all.”

“But,” I cried, “you completely forget that if the andesite or arsenite or granite was enlarged until your hypothetical cutting became possible, the stones would be too cumbersome, far too heavy to handle.”

Ramon burst into laughter. “Back to the old schoolboy ideas of weight,” he exclaimed. “Haven’t you just admitted that weight was basically a matter of comparison, of the specific gravity, as you call it? Haven’t you admitted that if a substance floated on water it was light; if it sunk it was heavy; that if it was porous it would float; if dense it would sink? In that case, *amigo*, how could the same block of andesite, even if enlarged to ten times its size,

one hundred, one thousand times its size, be any heavier than the original block.”

“Good Lord!” I gasped. “I’m beginning to see. Concisely put, you mean that the enlarged block would contain no more material—no more atoms of material, than the original? By heavens, Ramon, I never thought of that. I do believe you may be right. But—but why, if you are, if an enlarged mass of stone would be light in direct relation to its size—in other words, if its displacement were greater than its weight of water, it would actually float. By Jove, Ramon, that might solve another mystery: how the Tiahuanacans transported their stupendous stones across Lake Titicaca. Why, man alive, if they were first enlarged as you suggest, they could have been rafted across as easily as logs.”

Ramon was grinning. “Of course they could and they were,” he assured me. “And if you don’t believe it I can prove it to you. But to go on with my tale of discoveries. I——”

“Wait. Hold on!” I cried, as a new thought entered my mind. “Your theory can’t be right. It’s a poor rule that doesn’t work both ways. If a stone enlarged would weigh less, then a stone, a body, anything reduced would weigh more. And if enlarging the stone renders it more porous, then reducing it would render it more dense. In that case your body and mine would be as dense, as hard as diamond, and we would weigh thousands of pounds each.”

Ramon fairly choked with laughter at my serious expression as—quite without realizing it—I pinched myself as if testing the density and hardness of my flesh.

“My dear, dear old friend,” he said, “haven’t I just been at some pains to explain that the enlarged stone is no lighter than in its original size. It weighs precisely the same; but as it has a greater cubic volume, its weight, as expressed in your units based on specific gravity, appears less. If water were to be enlarged to the same extent, you would find the stone sank as quickly as it did in its normal state in normal water, and if a steel tool were enlarged in the same ratio it would be as difficult to cut the stone with it as it was when in its original form. It’s all a matter of relativity, my friend. The stone is enlarged out of all proportion to its surroundings; hence the results. The same holds true in the matter of reduction. With one exception. The same laws do *not* hold when it comes to the action of manabinite on animal matter. Why, I do not know. It is one of the many phenomena connected with the crystal. Possibly the atoms that form animal matter are of a

different character from those of mineral and other substances and hence are reduced to the same extent as the objects they form, or possibly manabinite does not affect them the same way. All I know is that it is so. But, as a matter of fact, I believe we weigh precisely what we weighed before we were reduced. I——”

It was my turn to laugh, and I did. “The idea, even the thought of a man of normal weight and only some thousandths of a millimeter in height, is,” I declared, “highly amusing, Ramon. And I suppose you claim that Mosock Nina tops the scales at some one hundred and ten pounds, more or less. I ——”

“If we had scales in the same proportion to ourselves as those to which you are accustomed are to ordinary humans, I have no doubt you would find you weigh around one hundred and seventy pounds, and that your fiancée can boast of some one hundred and twenty pounds of feminine loveliness. In other words, *mi amigo*, your specific gravity in the water of Urquin would be precisely the same as in the waters of New York if you were of your normal dimensions.”

“Bosh!” I cried. “Maybe you’re all right and maybe not. It’s all too dashed complicated, too theoretical, too involved and too puzzling to bother my head over it. I’ll occupy my mind with something that is neither complicated nor theoretical and much pleasanter. If——”

“Meaning Mosock Nina, I presume,” he interrupted with a grin. “In which case,” he added, “let me warn you that you will find by experience that nothing you have yet heard or seen can possibly equal the complications of a woman’s mind, and that nothing is so puzzling as a woman.”

I gave him a withering look and hurried off to find Mosock Nina.

CHAPTER X

Ramon Proves His Point

IT was not until some time later, after thinking over Ramon's statements, that I thought I found some flaws in his arguments. If the stones had been enlarged as he claimed, why, I reasoned, would their atoms not be correspondingly enlarged? And if they were, then the enlarged stone would be as hard and dense as it was in its original form. It was quite obvious, too, that his statement that in Urquin water we or I would have the same specific gravity as I formerly had in comparison to normal water, must be wrong. He admitted, and I knew, that in the case of animal matter the atoms composing it were proportionately reduced, and he had explained that the molecules of water, falling as rain in Urquin, were incalculably small in proportion to ordinary molecules. Yet the water in Urquin had not been reduced, and how then could it bear the same relation to me, or to him, that ordinary water would bear to ordinary men?

The whole thing puzzled me tremendously, and I lay awake the greater part of the night trying to coördinate the facts in my brain and to find some logical explanation of it all. But when, in the morning, I mentioned my thoughts and my inability to grasp or explain the seemingly paradoxical and wholly contradictory matters, he merely laughed and declared that it was a pure waste of time and nerves to bother trying to straighten it out. That we would have to accept facts as they were, and it was no more use striving to understand the inscrutable ways of Nature than endeavoring to understand the equally incomprehensible ways of women. A statement, I reflected, that hinted that his path of love and of marital bliss was not wholly free from the ruts and thorns of others. But I was not to be put off so readily. I possess a rather prominent bump of stubbornness when it comes to baldly accepting theories without *prima facie* evidence of their truth, and I am something of a fiend on the subject of demonstrations. So I very promptly informed Ramon that while he might be willing to accept things as they were, or rather as they appeared to be, and though he might feel convinced that his explanation of the mystery of the cyclopean architecture was the correct one, I had my doubts, and was not at all ready to accept his explanations.

“You always were a most skeptical chap, *amigo*,” he informed me, “but there’s nothing I enjoy more than convincing a person against his will. I remarked yesterday that I would prove my theory true—or at least prove my contention in regard to the stones, and I’ll keep my promise. I do not know precisely what process the pre-Incas used, and Melik, who gave me the facts about the stones, couldn’t explain very clearly. But, working along my own lines, and with what he had divulged to guide me, I managed to invent a process that works, at least to a certain extent, and I’ll give you a demonstration.”

“Fine!” I exclaimed. “I may be skeptical, but once I see a thing with my own eyes, I am willing to be convinced of anything.”

“So I observe,” he remarked with a leer. “You were quite convinced of Mosock Nina, once you had seen her with your own eyes. And——”

“She *is* most convincing,” I interrupted. “And if you can show me anything in support of your theory that is one-half as convincing as my future wife, I am willing to accept all your seemingly preposterous explanations.”

“You’ll find a woman is a darned lot more convincing after marriage than before,” he remarked dryly, “but come on. There is no time like the present, you know.”

Rather to my surprise, for he had not mentioned it, I found that Ramon had quite a complete laboratory in one wing of the big rambling palace. Of course he lacked many instruments and appliances that, ordinarily, are considered essential, but his marvelous inventive genius, the skill and patience of the Urquins and his own mechanical skill had served to provide makeshifts and substitutes that were both serviceable and clever. Very evidently his experiments had been mainly in the lines of physics and optics—his own specialties—and equally obviously he had devoted most of his time to experiments with manabinite, for partly finished, broken and discarded lenses, prisms and fragments of the mineral were scattered about in profusion. But of course this was to have been expected for, as he told me, he had worked assiduously and almost constantly to produce prisms capable of enlarging himself to normal size whenever I might appear. And as I glanced about at his instruments and his store of the green crystal, it occurred to me that, had he so desired, he might have enlarged not only himself but Naliche and all the people at the same time, and I wondered why he had not done so. But when I put the question to him, he seemed surprised.

“Why should I?” he demanded. “Would we—they—be any better off? No, *amigo*, on the contrary, they would be far worse off. What would we gain? We are happy, contented, safe here. Why should I transfer myself and my adopted people to a world of which they know nothing? To a status in which they would be lost? And why should I sacrifice them to the dangers, the discontent, the unhappiness of life and civilization as we knew it? And, *amigo mio*, think of the effects of disease? Through generations of freedom from all microbe diseases these people have lost the power to resist germs, and the most ordinary ills—measles, colds, whooping cough or any others might prove fatal and utterly destroy them.”

“But,” I objected. “There is no future, no progress here. And at any instant the village and all of you may be totally destroyed. A flood, an earthquake, a shovelful of sand, some burrowing animal or insect might wipe out Urquin and every one of its inhabitants. And——”

“As I once said before, the same is equally true of existence in the world of everyday men and women,” he interrupted. “And we do not face the dangers of one thousand-and-one things that other people have to guard against. As for progress and the future, as you call them—utter rot! What *is* progress? Merely another name for discontent; making life and the world more and more complicated, more and more dangerous, more and more unhappy. Are people any better off, any happier with motor cars than they were with horses and carriages? Are they healthier or more at peace when able to travel around the earth in a month than when it required twice that time to cross the Atlantic? Do airplanes bring any real advantages to mankind? Are you—the people of today—any happier, any more contented, any better off, as far as peace of mind and body are concerned, than were our ancestors fifty, one hundred years ago? I say no. *Por Dios*, we are far worse off! The more people have and the more they know, the more they want and demand. It is a vicious circle. The laborer demands more; to get more he forces his employer to pay him more; his employer raises the price of necessities and luxuries to enable him to make his profit and yet pay his help more, and as a result the artisan is as badly off as ever. But he is caught in the mesh of what you call ‘progress’ and goes on, demanding and receiving more, paying out equally more, getting more and more discontented, more sour, more unhappy. *Madre de Dios*, where will it all end, this thing called progress? And the worst of it is, it gets nobody anywhere. Boiled down to its basic elements, all man gets out of life is his food, his shelter, protection from the elements and amusements that do not amuse. He——”

“Hold on, Ramon,” I ejaculated. “How about knowledge, spiritual life, health, longevity, comforts?”

HE laughed sarcastically. “Of what use is your so-called knowledge if it cannot make life brighter or happier?” he demanded. “And as for life, I’ll stake my life that there is truer, purer, more enduring love right here in Urquin or among primitive savages, than you can find in New York, London, Paris or anywhere in your progressive civilizations. Spiritual life! *Santisima Madre, amigo*, you amuse me! What spiritual life have your progressives that we in Urquin lack? Nothing. We have our faith, our religion, our gods, and we believe in an after-life, in souls, in a Creator and we live according to the tenets of our religion, which is more than you can say of your civilized people.

“Comforts? Pah! Is a New York hotel or steam-heated flat any more comfortable than this mud palace? Is the indigestible menu of a Parisian restaurant any more delicious than the food we have here? Are the ridiculous costumes of your progressive men and women as sensible and comfortable as our clothes? And as for health and longevity—*Caramba, Don Alfeo*, where do you find men in civilized progressive lands still in their prime of life at the age of two hundred years? And where will you find beautiful girl-like ladies of fifty? And do you notice a hospital here? Do you see doctors’ shingles on the houses? Have you seen an ill, maimed, lame, unhealthy, weak or ailing person in Urquin? No, no, a thousand times no, *mi amigo*! We are immeasurably better off, happier, more contented, healthier than we could be if in the same world as your progressive civilized people. But enough of this. Let me prove my statements about the stones.”

As he spoke, he adjusted a number of crude yet delicate instruments on a table or stand, selected several crystals, arranged these with great care, and then picked up a small slab or fragment of stone and handed it to me.

“As you will see,” he began in the tone he once used in the lecture-room, “you hold a fragment of arsenopyrite rock or mispickel. I would ask that you examine it with your pocket-lens and also that you test its hardness by means of this bronze too.” He handed me a chisel-like instrument. “Then kindly drop the stone in this vessel of water. Ah, as you see, it sinks to the bottom instantly. Also, you find the bronze too makes no impression upon the mineral, and your examination by your lens has revealed a stone of fine, dense structure. Do you agree to all this?”

I laughed. “I am not, Ramon, a freshman in a classroom,” I reminded him. “Neither the lens, the chisel nor the water were necessary to convince me that it *is* arsenopyrite, that a bronze instrument will *not* cut it, and that it *will sink*. However——”

He grinned. “But I only wanted to be sure that no question arose in your mind. Now,” he continued, as he took the stone and placed it on a second stand between two of his instruments, “watch what happens.”

As he spoke, he picked up a contrivance something like the old “bull roarers” of my boyhood days; a stick or rod to which a string or cord bearing a weight, was attached, and whirled it rapidly about. A low buzzing hum resulted that increased in volume as he swung the thing faster and faster, until the sound was deafening and the air vibrated in my ears. It was more like the sound of an airplane propeller than anything else but with a sharper, more highly pitched note that reminded me of the song of gigantic cicada, and that seemed to go through and through me like an electrical discharge. For an instant the hum remained the same. Then, suddenly, as it soared in a high crescendo, and I gasped and started back as there was a crackling explosive detonation from where the stone had been placed. A shower of brilliant sparks seemed to issue from the mineral, and it was enveloped in a smoke-like vapor. It was precisely as if a bunch of good-sized firecrackers had been set off on the stone.

Instantly Ramon dropped the whirling stick, the hum ceased, and he turned to me grinning. “Nice fireworks,” he remarked. “And made without fire at that. But just have a look at the stone, *amigo*.”

I could scarcely believe my eyes. Where the little slab had been—a piece of stone perhaps an inch square, rested an immense block of stone twice as high as my head, reaching across the entire width of the room and fully six feet in thickness. It was the most incredible, the most uncannily mysterious happening I had ever seen.

But my amazement had only commenced. I stepped forward and examined the mass of stone, and uttered an ejaculation of inexpressible wonder. Instead of a dense, fine-grained mineral, I was looking upon what was apparently coarse schist or sandstone. Ramon, grinning like a Cheshire cat, handed me the bronze chisel. As if in a dream I grasped it and chipped with it at the stone. At the first blow a large flake flew off, and I found no difficulty in scoring and cutting the stone even with the soft metal tool.

“Now, *amigo mio*, do you believe?” exclaimed Ramon.

I sank weakly upon a bench, mopped my forehead and stared at the stone as if expecting it to take wings and vanish. “Good Lord!” I managed to exclaim at last. “It’s a fact, Ramon. You’re right. I take back all I said. But _____”

“You were about to say ‘but can I restore the stone to its original status?’” he broke in, as if reading my thoughts. “Yes, *amigo*, I can and I will.”

Again he adjusted his instruments, made some alterations, and once more swung the humming device. This time, however, the note—whether caused by the motion or by some change in it—was much heavier, duller; a sort of booming, like that made by the ruffed grouse when “drumming.” And there was no fireworks display. Instead, there was a single, rending crash, like that of a heavy object dropped upon old bottles, and before my incredulous eyes I actually *saw* the great stone shrink, writhe and dwindle, until, with the final note of Ramon’s instrument, it remained stationary—the tiny fragment of what was now hard stone.

“And now, *amigo*, to prove there is no trickery and that all is as I said, will you look carefully at the bit of mineral? You will find, I think, the marks you made with the chisel are quite distinct upon it.”

He was right. There were the scratches, the cuts, the spot where I had flaked off a bit of stone. I was speechless. There was nothing I could say. I could not find words to adequately express my indescribable amazement at his seemingly supernatural and impossible feat.

CHAPTER XI

Melik Makes a Decision

IT was not long after Ramon's astounding demonstration that I was married to Mosock Nina. As I belonged to no particular denomination, and have ever been liberal and broad-minded in religious matters, I felt that a wedding consecrated by Melik in the temple was quite as orthodox as any other. It was a really imposing ceremony, and I fear that—if I tell the truth—I must confess that my mind strayed more than once from the marriage service in its relation to myself and my bride, to dwell upon the fascinating and valuable scientific interests it presented. And somehow it seemed exceedingly dream-like and unreal, not to say incongruous, for me, a staid twentieth-century American scientist, to be standing in an ancient pre-Incan temple before the image of the sun-god, and listening to the aged priest chanting the words of the ancient Hualla marriage ceremony, while all about stood the reverent people, who might well have stepped from the days of the long-forgotten past. And as Melik raised his arms and called upon the sun-god to bestow his blessings upon us, and I cast a glance at the motionless, sphinx-like figure of Wira Kocha in his niche, the calm, benign face seemed to smile and I could have sworn that the mummy actually winked.

Of course, during all this time, ever since I had been in Urquin, in fact, I had been constantly making new and most noteworthy discoveries. With Ramon's help I had invented and made a notebook, using the thin, membranous tissues of a most remarkable animal for the parchment pages, and on this I had recorded brief accounts of my discoveries. And in this connection I must not forget to mention, that in Urquin all forms of both animal and plant life were wholly different from anything I had ever seen.

I am no zoologist and know very little of botany, and hence cannot classify nor adequately and scientifically describe the strange beasts and plants of the place. In fact, I am not at all sure whether all the creatures belonged to the same order, or whether several orders were represented; but all were insect-like in appearance, although many were in some respects like

crustaceans. And, as I believe that true insects are distinguished in one respect from the crustaceans by having six legs, I am convinced that, if they were insects, they were entirely distinct from any heretofore known. Whether any were forms that had been reduced along with the people, or whether all were inconceivably minute forms that have always existed, I cannot say. But the interesting point is that they followed very closely the habits, characteristics and traits of our fauna. Some were carnivorous, others herbivorous; some were diurnal, others nocturnal; and while the flesh of some was edible and extremely palatable and highly prized, that of others was not considered fit to eat. Many were most grotesque in appearance, others were horrible, others were indescribably beautiful. Particularly was this last attribute true of bird-like creatures that I can best compare to sphinx-moths, but whose wings, instead of being covered with scales or down as in our moths, were of satiny tissue most brilliantly tinted with iridescent or opalescent hues.

It was this membrane or skin that was used by the people for their garments, and these creatures, alone of all the fauna, had been domesticated or at least were bred in captivity, by the people. There were not, however, any dangerous, venomous nor harmful creatures in the place, and the people were, as Ramon had stated, entirely free from the pests, vermin and noxious insects, which are such plagues to other inhabitants of the earth.

The plant life, I think, was entirely confined to moulds or fungi. Plants were not abundant, and where there was cultivation, the edible varieties were most intensively cultivated. There were no seeds nor grains as we know them; the plants propagating their kinds by means of spores and spreading roots, and the edible portions consisted of shoots, stems, leaves, and, in some cases, enlarged tuberous root-stalks. Taken all in all, I was amazed to find how closely the life, the customs, the entire system of existence followed our own and yet was totally different. It followed on parallel lines; at every turn there were analogous details and conditions, and yet in no case—or at least in very few—were there identical details. The more I saw of the place and the people, the more I was impressed with the truth of the time-honored hypothesis that like conditions beget like results and that, no matter what their environment or their resources, human beings will eventually arrive at nearly the same results in one place as in another. In fact, I often wondered, if we could but visit the planets, whether we would not find that their inhabitants, while differing in details of life, were after all very similar to ourselves, and if a man, suddenly transported to Mars or Venus, would not, in a very short time, adapt himself to conditions and feel perfectly at home.

And then I wondered if such a person, regardless of the extreme interests he might have in his surroundings, regardless of the fact that he might be better off than on earth, would not at times long to return to his own people and his own home. I felt quite certain that he would, for unconsciously at first but with ever increasing desire, I found myself longing to return to my original normal state. Possibly my desire was actuated by the ineradicable longing that all true scientists possess, to make public my discoveries.

But whatever the underlying cause—and I must confess that I was happy, that I had every comfort and everything that any man might reasonably ask—I was, to use a trite expression, homesick. And had it not been for my wife, whom I literally adored, I should have begged Ramon to enlarge me and—though it would have been with deep regret—I would have bid farewell to Urquin, to him and to Naliche. But the mere thought of losing Mosock Nina was unbearable, and even should she consent to being enlarged with me, I felt that, away from her friends and family and the surroundings and life to which she was accustomed, she would be far from happy or content. But I soon found, as Ramon had so truly said, that man never can fathom a woman's mind, even if that woman is his wife.

She had always been intensely fascinated by my descriptions of the outer world, of my former life and of our civilization. She would listen open-eyed and with parted lips to my words, and finally she astounded me one day by begging me to take her with me and return to the world I had left.

IN vain I argued against her mad scheme, although I fear a bit half-heartedly. But nothing I could say would sway her from her purpose. Her feminine curiosity had been aroused, and womanlike, she refused to listen to logic, although I must qualify that statement somewhat, for I am convinced, from carefully analyzing my wife's idiosyncrasies, as well as those of other women I have met since I have been married, that woman's mind is not constructed on logical lines. However, that is aside from my story.

In vain I pointed out all that Ramon had said in support of his refusal to restore all the Urquins to our normal proportions. I assured her she would be unhappy, discontented and would long to return to her people. I might as well have talked to the mummy of Wira Kocha in the temple. Sickness, disease, all the dangers and perils of our everyday life, were so totally unknown and incomprehensible to her that she did not even grasp their meaning or their importance. As for death—that was nothing as long as I died too, so we would not be parted in Hamak Pakak, the Urquin's heaven.

And the instant I mentioned being parted from her people she clapped her hands and danced with delight. It would be wonderful to go out of Urquin, to live in my world, and to come back and tell of all her wonderful adventures. That such a thing would be impossible she refused to believe. Ramon and I had managed it. Ramon had gone and had returned. So why couldn't we? It was useless to declare that there was no manabinite. She seemed to think the crystal could be made by Ramon or by myself and—sly little woman that she is—she knew, by woman's intuition, that I had been more or less homesick and longing to return to my former state for some time. Then she petted and caressed, pouted and pleaded by turns, until finally, at my wits' end, I told her I would leave the decision to her father and to Naliche.

In the presence of Melik, Naliche, and of course Ramon, I stated the case, not without difficulty, for Mosock Nina interrupted constantly. Ramon looked very thoughtful and sad. Naliche's eyes sparkled, yet I instinctively saw no support from her quarter, and old Melik listened intently, stroking his thin beard, nodding his head from time to time, and reminding me of a venerable judge, listening to evidence in a divorce case.

Ramon was the first to speak when I ceased my plea. He used the same arguments he had given me, and added that he had never thought that, after having tried to rejoin him for over a year, I should be so ready to leave him. Poor fellow; he was deeply moved and, for the time, I rather prayed that the decision of the triumvirate would be adverse.

Then Melik spoke. "Wisdom, my son," he declared judicially, and almost as if pronouncing sentence upon me, "is the gift of the gods. Unto thee the gods have given wisdom. Unto our prince," (he indicated Ramon) "husband of the divine Queen of Urquin, has been given even more, and I, the high priest of Urquin—Melik Amautu, was blessed by the gods with rare wisdom. Yet wisdom, my son, grows and flowers only when it is nurtured in good soil and becomes a stalwart tree by years of growth. Hence, my son, I, who have lived many times thy years, have more wisdom than thou, my son, or even than our adored Prince. Yet such is not the case. I have great wisdom of our gods, of our race, of our history, of many things. But my son and our God-sent Prince tells of many things of which they have wisdom and of which I know nothing. My son makes the symbols that speak unto another. My son knows much of other people of whom I know not the names. My son has dwelt in another world, that to me is as unknown as the heavens where dwell the gods. And I, though I am no longer a youth" (I had to smile at the centuries-old priest's words) "would learn something of my son's

wisdom ere I pass to my fathers. I, too, my son, would go with thee and my daughter into that world beyond.”

I gasped. It was bad enough to have to stand out against my wife. But here was the old priest expressing his desire to be transformed to ordinary human size. My thoughts were interrupted by Naliche, who, with as much enthusiasm as Mosock Nina had exhibited, insisted that she, too, would accompany us in our proposed transformation. Ramon threw up his hands in despair, my wife fell upon me and almost choked me with hugs and kisses, and old Melik smiled and nodded as much as to say it was all arranged.

“*Madre de Dios*, what *can* I do?” cried Ramon. “If I should consent to the mad scheme I could never get you all back here. And even if I could, how could I be sure you would not bring diseases or germs or a plague here? *Por Dios*, I won’t do it. I’ll smash every prism in Urquin, every fragment of _____”

His words were silenced by Naliche’s lips. But presently he freed himself, and leaping up, paced back and forth excitedly. “And even if I should consent,” he exclaimed, “what would become of the people here? They would have no priest, no queen, no_____”

“Prince,” I supplied with a laugh, “for of course,” I added, “if Naliche goes you will go also.”

“And also will go with us the little Mara-Choki,” put in Naliche.

“*Santisima Madre!*” he cried. “We might just as well transform the whole population and be done with it.”

“A most excellent idea,” I assured him. “Provided you have enough manabinite to accomplish the feat. And, honestly, Ramon, I believe there is no other course. Despite the fact that you claim you are perfectly happy, I believe you, too, would feel more content in our old world and in your old form. And_____”

“It’s a damnable risk,” he burst out. “How do I know that some terrible tragedy may not happen? How do we know that, in the outer world, all the years these people have lived may not come over them with a rush. How would you like to see your Mosock Nina transformed into a gray-haired, wrinkled old woman?”

I laughed. “I’m not afraid of that,” I assured him, “and I might remind you that you took far greater risks when you first stood before the reducing prism and drew the bow across the strings of your fiddle. And you took as

great a risk when you enlarged yourself to come to me. You were not at all certain you ever could return to Naliche.”

“But where could these people live? Where could they go? What could they do?” he cried. “They are living two, three thousand years back. They know nothing of our world, of its dangers, its temptations, its ills. They’d become drunkards, vagabonds, thieves, or they’d become civilized, lazy, dirty Indians, and in a few years—even in a few months—they’d disappear, die off.”

“By Jove!” I ejaculated. “I believe I have the answer to your questions, Ramon. Do you remember I told you of a remarkable hidden and inaccessible valley I stumbled upon in the mountains? Remember, I told you that it could be reached only by a hidden way, by a narrow cleft just at the snow line, and which, from even a short distance, appeared to be blocked by a cataract of water melted from the glaciers. And the entrance could be held by one man against hundreds if need be. No one could leave or enter unless it was desired, and the valley itself, the crater of an extinct volcano, is most beautiful. It is warm and sunny; a brawling river flows through it, the soil is rich, it teems with fish and game, and there are even wild llamas, the descendants of those that escaped from captivity ages ago. And it was at one time inhabited. There are the ruins of houses, of a temple, of impressive buildings, and many in such perfect condition that they could be used as habitations today. It would be, I think, an ideal refuge for these people. You could reign as their king with Naliche, their queen. They would be as completely cut off from contact with the world as here, and they, you, would be far better off and just as safe if not much safer. And I can guide you to it easily. It’s barely four days’ tramp from Manabi.”

Ramon’s eyes had brightened as I continued speaking, and I knew him so well and could so readily interpret his moods that I knew he, too, had been won over.

“*Por Dios*, I had forgotten that!” he cried, springing forward and embracing me. “It’s the very spot and—*mil diablos, amigo mio*, I must admit it, you *were* right about my longing to go back to the outer world. I’ve been worried to death for months fearing some such calamity as you suggested. At first I did not fully appreciate our minute, our incalculably small size and the ever-present dangers that surround us. It has been by the merest chance that Urquin hasn’t been utterly destroyed with all its people centuries ago. Suppose, for example, some prospector, some settler, some confounded archeologist should drive a stake down in this spot! *Valgame Dios*, it makes me shudder to think of it! Or suppose some one happened to

kindle a roaring campfire over our heads! But now you remind me of that secret valley, I shall hesitate no longer. Just as soon as I can build a large enough prism—or rather a series of small ones—with the capacity to transform everywhere one at one time, I'll move every soul in Urquin to your blessed valley.”

I grasped his hand. Naliche cavorted and danced in most unqueenly fashion. Mosock Nina alternately threw herself upon me and upon Ramon. Old Melik fairly beamed, and Mara-Choki, not to be outdone, crowed lustily and kicked his heels in delight.

CHAPTER XII

The Manabi Village Enlarged

RAMON'S preparations for the greatest event in the history of Urquin since its inhabitants had been accidentally reduced, did not require as much time as he or I had anticipated. This was due largely to old Melik. The old priest astounded us by revealing the fact that he knew of a large mass of manabinite but, having always regarded the stuff as evil and as magic, he had never told of it to anyone. But now that he was keen on entering an entirely new world and a new life, he lost no time in guiding us to it. The mass of crystal was—in the terms of ordinary measurements—an infinitesimal bit of dust, hundreds, thousands of times smaller than any visible dust mote. But in comparison to the other fragments we had seen, in comparison to ourselves, it was enormous, and Ramon felt sure that it would possess sufficient power to transform the entire population at one time. But, as he wisely pointed out, there might be difficulties or even real dangers in attempting such a wholesale enlarging.

The note of the *quena* might not be powerful enough to actuate the huge prism and it might, for all he or I knew, enlarge everyone to gigantic size.

Moreover, the mechanical difficulties to be met in transforming the mass to a prism were nearly insurmountable. But, as Ramon pointed out, it would provide material enough for prisms for every inhabitant. Each, he explained, would be back of his or her individual prism and—if he were not wholly wrong in his calculations—a single note would do the trick.

This seemed as reasonable as anything in the impossible land, and we at once set to work with a gang of skilled stone-cutters. In a very short time, we had the entire mass of crystal in Ramon's workshop. Then the cutting, grinding and polishing of the crystalline prisms began, and months went by before one-half of them were completed. But eventually all were ready, and Ramon devoted the greatest care and many days to setting up his stands and adjusting devices in the plaza. They were arranged in a circle, spaced with the most exact mathematical calculations, precisely the same distance apart and from a common centre, where another was placed. With equal precision

and exactitude Ramon placed small stone tablets on the ground, each the identical distance from a prism as its neighbor, and he placed another the same distance from the central stand. The idea, he explained, was to insure the actuating vibratory note reaching every prism at the same instant and with exactly the same volume. On each plate or slab a man, woman or child was to stand. He was to stand on the central slab and at the properly pitched note on his *quena* every prism would—if his calculations were not at fault—act simultaneously and enlarge every human being equally and at the identical instant.

The people, of course, had no idea of what it was all about. I imagine they regarded our preparations as mystical rites, and that some very holy and important religious ceremony was to be held in the plaza. And when at last the great day arrived, and at Naliche's commands, backed by those of Melik, the wondering and somewhat timid inhabitants flocked to the plaza and were arranged upon their respective stone pedestals, they felt certain they were taking part in some new and extremely important ceremony of their religion. And as I looked at them, submissive, peaceful, raising no questions, regarding their priest, their queen and their alien king with something akin to adoration, and knowing nothing of what was about to take place (or so at least I hoped) I could not help feeling sorry for them. It was all well enough for Ramon, myself, Mosock Nina, Naliche and Melik. We knew what we were doing, what to expect, what (provided all went well) would happen, and we had chosen to be transformed to another state of our own free will. But these poor folk had no idea of events to come. They had no say in the matter, for of course it would have been hopeless to have attempted an explanation, and they were, even if unconsciously, about to be torn from homes and all their possessions. Then I noticed that every individual carried bundles, a bulky package or two, wrapped in the thin, parchment-like material I had employed for my notebook, and tied with thongs. What, I wondered, did these packages contain? My unspoken question was answered by Naliche who was now speaking.

SHE was telling them that she, her husband, the priest and the *Amautu* (Wiseman) with the beard (myself) had decided it was best for all to go to a new land, that there was no danger; and she was asking if all were there, if all were in readiness for departure. "Have all obeyed my instructions to have with you food that may sustain you on the long journey?" she asked.

By Jove! she had had more common sense than any of us. She had foreseen that the people would need food, and had given directions for all to provide themselves with enough provisions to last for some time. But what food had they taken? If they had cereals, vegetable foodstuffs, in their packs, they would find nothing within the wrappings when they had gone through the approaching transformation. It would never do to overlook this detail, and breaking in upon Naliche's words, I voiced my fears to Ramon.

"Don't worry," he assured me. "Naliche saw to that. All they carry is meat. But how about yourself? Where's your *comida* (food) *amigo*?"

"I—I—" I stammered, heartily ashamed of my own lack of foresight. "I _____"

"It is provided," announced my wife. "My dearly beloved cannot remember even to eat many times, so busy is his mind with other things, and so I have what he shall need on the journey. It is with mine in the hands of *Manakan* (our serving man) and *Yakussa* (her maid)."

And now Melik was speaking, and as I turned towards him I grinned. The old priest did not intend to go hungry at any rate. Beside him stood an immense bundle half as tall as himself and far greater in girth than his lean body.

"My children," he said, "fear not, no matter what may happen. We go upon a strange journey, and the King and the Wise One of the Beard, with their magic and with the help of the gods and the stones of green, will shorten our journey, and strange events may come to you. But you need have no fear, for think you that your divine Queen and your King of great wisdom, and the Prince, Mara-Choki, and my daughter, Mosock Nina, and even I, your priest of the sun, would face dangers if such they were? And now prepare yourselves, for all is in readiness, and fall upon your knees and give prayers unto the gods of our fathers. And chant praises unto Inti and unto Wira Kocha, and unto our divine Queen and our King, and unto the Wise One of the Beard, for great will be the blessings that shall be yours."

With one accord everyone knelt, and in unison their voices rose in the joyful chant of praise. Then in silence they rose, and though I saw awe and reverence and wonder upon their faces, nowhere was there a sign of fear or of doubt. Their faith was sublime, and they would follow blindly without thought of question, wherever their adored queen and their revered priest might lead.

Then I saw Ramon place his bone quena to his lips, as expectantly, all waited for the unknown events that were to follow. A few soft low tones came from the instrument, and then a quavering, wailing note that seemed to tear at one's very heart strings. Higher and higher it rose, and I realized that it must have some strange, hypnotic quality, for I felt suddenly drowsy; despite my efforts to observe what took place, my eyes closed, and I felt that delightful but indescribable sensation that we have when on the borderland of slumber. Then, with the same abrupt jerk with which one awakens from such a semi-conscious state, I came to my senses and opened my eyes.

I glanced about, and an ejaculation of surprise and disappointment escaped me. What had gone wrong? Had the prisms failed us? There, still gazing with awed, wondering faces, were the people. There stood Ramon, quena in hand. There was Naliche with the little prince in her arms, Mosock Nina's hand rested in mine, and—I gasped, utterly unable to believe my senses. The great temple, the palace, every building had vanished! The stones on which we had stood had disappeared! On every side stretched barren sand, broken only by clumps of stunted trees and giant cacti. Was it possible? Had——. Ramon's voice broke the silence. "Well, *amigo*, here we are!" he cried gaily. "Easy as possible. Not even a jolt or a jar on that trip. And—*Por Dios*, what *do* you see? You look as if you saw a ghost." He turned in the direction in which I was staring, as if, as he truly said, I saw a ghost. And little wonder, for as I had glanced at Melik I had seen beside him, not the bundle I had noticed in Urquin, but the dried, mummified body of Wira Kocha!

Ramon chuckled. "*Madre de Dios!*" he exclaimed. "He's brought along the ancestral god! Well, it's not a bad idea. These people will feel far safer and more content with him to watch over them. I'm surprised old Melik thought of it. But he's a wise old——"

A joyful yelping interrupted his words and into the circle trotted the burro with the dog leaping playfully about him. We had completely forgotten them, but they must have been within range of the manabinite's activity, for here they were, still with us. Then my eyes caught sight of something else. Sniffing about the sand as if searching for food in this unfamiliar land, were two of the strange, eight-legged, hard-shelled creatures that had been domesticated by the Urquins. And as if the presence of the four familiar beasts broke the spell that was upon them, the people burst into joyous shouts and everyone began to laugh, talk and chatter at once.

“*Santisima Madre*, but it’s hard to believe we’ve ever been away from here,” cried Ramon. “Look, *amigo*, there’s your camp—nothing’s changed. I wonder if your men are still here. If they are and they see this crowd, they’ll take to their heels or drop dead with terror. I——”

“No chance of that,” I replied. “They’ve undoubtedly left long ago. You forget I’ve been away for months. But we might as well stop here and use the camp tonight. It’s too late to start off for your secret valley now. We can start first thing in the morning, and there’s no chance of being intruded upon here.”

“Fine, come ahead,” cried Ramon joyously, and with Mosock Nina’s hand clasped in mine, accompanied by Ramon, Naliche and old Melik, who was followed by two temple attendants carefully carrying Wira’s mummy, we led our little host across the stretch of desert towards my former camp. As I had expected, it was deserted (I did not learn until much later that the men had abandoned it a few days after I had disappeared with Ramon). But I suspected as much when I found that the camp contained a large portion of my outfit and a quantity of provisions. That the scallawags had left anything of value was due entirely to their inability to carry any more in their canoes. But the food was most acceptable and the tools, the supplies, the innumerable utensils and articles with which I had equipped myself for the expedition and for a stay of unknown duration at the spot, would all be invaluable to Ramon and his people in their new home. And he was overjoyed to find that the corn, the beans, the potatoes and *camotes* (sweet potatoes), were all untouched by mice or weevils, and would serve as the nucleus for bounteous crops and harvests in the hidden valley. And I had to laugh at his delighted exclamation, when, in cleaning out the place, he found that the straw used by the men for their beds had heads of wheat and barley in the litter, and that there were grains of the cereals still in them. In fact the rubbish proved a veritable treasure-trove, and for once I was thankful for the untidy, not to say filthy, habits of the natives. There were orange and lemon seeds scattered on the floor. We picked up a number of *durazno* (peach) pits. Remains of pineapples, cast carelessly outside, had taken root, and several *palta* (alligator or avocado pear) seeds had sprouted. There were a few peanuts also. And there was a bag of cocoa beans, and a small sack of coffee beans.

“*Gracias a Dios!*” exclaimed Ramon. “We can now raise everything we need in the valley. All we lack is sugar and cotton.”

“Don’t worry over those,” I said. “Whoever lived in the valley before left plenty of cotton—there are acres of it, and as for sugar, look here.” I led

him to one side of the camp, and pointed to a clump of scraggly cane. "Thank Sam for that," I said. "Like all West Indians, he was forever chewing sugar-cane, and just as an experiment he planted some here. It's pretty poor stuff, but in good soil it will be as fine as you can wish. Now let's get settled down for the night. By Jove! Look at the people, Ramon. What's the matter with them? They're frightened half to death."

Ever since we had arrived, the people had been timid, herding close together, gazing about at every object, for of course every object was new and strange to their eyes, and even Melik, Naliche and my wife kept close to our sides, awed and half-frightened, amid their strange surroundings.

But now abject terror had seized the people. They had clustered together in a dense throng, they were fairly quaking with dread, and strange sobbing sigh-like wails arose from them.

All were gazing with abject fear into the east, as if they had seen some horrible apparition.

Then, as Ramon and I followed their terrified gaze, we burst into peals of laughter.

They were looking at the moon!

But to them it was no laughing matter. Even Melik was frightened half to death, and little wonder. Although there had been night and day in Urquin; light and darkness, yet never had the Urquins viewed either the sun or the moon. To them the sun was merely light, and was visualized only in the image of the sun-god, a symbol handed down from the times when their ancestors had been full-sized men and women. Yet now, here in this new, strange land, they saw this great, round, luminous thing rising like a ball of light in the sky. To their eyes it seemed the metal sun-disc of their temple come suddenly to life, for, seen through the haze above the mountains, it was golden in color, and the dim shadows of mountains upon its surface were not unlike the features graven upon the gold sun in the Urquin temple. And to see the sun-god suddenly appear to them as a moving, apparently living thing, was as terrifying, as awe-inspiring to them as the sudden reincarnation of our God would be to us.

It was with the utmost difficulty that we calmed their fears, and we never would have succeeded if it had not been for Melik who, being a most sensible chap, even if he was my father-in-law, quickly grasped the situation and, with his accustomed ability to take full advantage of the psychological moment, saw, in the rising moon, an opportunity not to be missed.

“Behold!” he cried in his deep, ringing voice as he raised his gaunt arms and all eyes turned towards him. “Behold, my children, the Goddess, *Mama-Quilla*, wife of our Lord *Inti*, the Sun. She comes to smile upon you, her people, and to do homage to our sacred Wira Kocha, whose spirit ever guards thee, and whose body is here beside me. Fall upon your knees, O, my children, and give prayers to *Mama-Quilla*, that, throughout this night and the nights to come, she may ever smile benignly upon thee, while her lord the Sun is at rest, and pray unto her to carry thy prayers and thy salutations to her Lord, that he may smile brightly upon you on the morrow and on each day until the end of time.”

Ramon, who had dropped to his knees beside me with the others, nudged me. “*Por Dios*, I’m afraid your respected father-in-law is fixing for a cropper,” he whispered with a grin. “I wonder how he’ll square himself when the moon wanes and doesn’t show up some night.”

“That’s his lookout,” I whispered in reply, as I squeezed my wife’s hand reassuringly. “But you needn’t worry over him. You’d have to get up mighty early to get ahead of him, Ramon. In fact you’d have to stay up all night. He’s nobody’s fool by a long shot, and instead of taking the cropper you foresee, he’ll turn it all to his own account—or rather to the glory of old Wira Kocha and his faith.”

Ramon chuckled. “I’d give a lot to know what Wira himself thinks about it,” he murmured. “Look at him! He may be only a mummy, but, *por Dios*, *amigo mio*, I could swear he winked when he caught my eye!”

CHAPTER XIII

Finale

THERE is not much more to relate. And as I sit here, writing these lines with my adorable Mosock Nina beside me—though in her conventional clothes she is not to my eyes as beautiful as in her scintillating robes of insect-wings, I find it hard to believe that all the events I have written down actually occurred. Despite my strange notebook—which by the way contains only blank pages, for of course the writing, being in vegetable ink, was not enlarged; despite Mosock Nina; despite our Urquin costumes carefully packed away, and despite my vivid memories and my wife's confirmation of the details, I feel at times as if it were all a dream.

It seems incredible that I, that my wife, that Ramon should have been invisible, microscopic beings in an equally microscopic land. And it seems almost as incredible that Ramon, Naliche, Melik, Mara-Choki and all the others—even the mummy of that unknown ancient Semite, Wira Kocha, are in the hidden secret valley in the Ecuadorean Andes. And yet I know it to be so, and I know—unless some unforeseen casualty prevents—that, within the next thirty days, my wife and I will be again among her people; that I shall again be clasping the hand of Ramon; that I shall again greet Queen Naliche and old Melik the priest, and that I shall again look upon the mute, bearded body of Wira Kocha seated in his niche in the restored temple in the hidden valley, now green with the tilled fields of maize, wheat, cotton and cane of the happy, gentle Urquins. Whether we shall remain there and settle down to spend our lives among the adopted people of Ramon, I am not sure. But even should we decide to return to our so-called civilization—which I doubt, for I am becoming heartily sick of it all—we can always return to visit Naliche, Ramon and the others whenever we wish.

But I am digressing. Early on the morning following our strange transformation we started on the long journey to the secret valley. No human eye saw that strange procession as it wound across the desert towards the distant hills, for in all that land no human being dwelt. The first part of the way was hard, for it led across the desert, but the worst of it was over before

the sun rose high. Then, to rest the people, and out of consideration for the women and children, we halted in a grove of trees during the hottest portion of the day and resumed the journey in the afternoon. Of course, though I forgot to mention the fact, the rising sun caused almost as much terror and even more awe than had the moon the night before. But in a way the people had been prepared for the appearance of the blazing deity, and were expecting it. And of course everything they saw filled them with wonder. They had literally entered a new world and it speaks volumes for their courage and for their entire faith in their rulers and their priest, that they did not become paralyzed or stampede with abject fear of the unknown, and of the strange objects, conditions and surroundings.

As we ascended the Andean ranges we were forced to proceed very slowly, and I, as well as Ramon, began to fear that the altitudes would play havoc with the people and that, after all, we might be forced to abandon our well-laid plans.

But in this we were mistaken. The Urquins showed no serious effects, even at heights that would affect many men accustomed to mountains, and in due time we approached the glistening snow-caps of the peak wherein the valley lay. It was well that Naliche had foreseen the need of food, and it was still more fortunate that the supplies had been augmented by what we found in my camp, for long before we reached the narrow black cleft that was the entrance to the valley, we were all on short rations. But we did not worry. I knew that we would find game within the valley—fish and probably some edible vegetables that had run wild since the place had last been inhabited. In this I was not mistaken. And Ramon, when he looked upon the great fair valley was enthusiastic in praise, while Naliche's eyes sparkled. She fairly danced, and all vowed that they had never dreamed there could be a scene so beautiful. Beside the river we made our temporary homes, using the ruins of the ancient inhabitants for shelter, and in the vicinity we found an abundance of half-wild maize, of *camotes*, peas, beans and other food. The dog chased and captured a large marmot; several of the men—accustomed to hunting the giant insects of their former home—secured a deer, and all dined well. Meanwhile, Melik, in whose mind religion took precedence over food, had cleaned out the ruined temple, had installed Wira's mummy within it, and as the sun set, he summoned all to render their devotions and to give thanks to the gods for the blessings they had received.

I was truly amazed to see how quickly the people adapted themselves to their new environment. Within a few days they were taking everything as a matter of course. They found no difficulty in cultivating the new crops as

well as they had those in Urquin. They fashioned weapons and hunted the beasts and birds so strange to them. They repaired and occupied the prehistoric dwellings and transformed the ruined palace into a royal home for Ramon and Naliche, and they worked like beavers from dawn until dark.

Even to Ramon, who was not yet convinced that they were better off, it was obvious that, under the new state of affairs and in the pure mountain air, the people were livelier, stronger than before, and he was vastly relieved to find that the youth of the aged and the—well somewhat advanced—years of Naliche and of Mosock Nina, was not altered by their change in life and environment. In fact, in a short time, he was as enthusiastic over the transference as was everyone else. But he expressed a fear that somehow, sometime, the valley might be discovered and invaded. “There’s always the chance of an airplane seeing us,” he declared. “Then how could we remain free from all the damned troubles and ills of the rest of the world?”

“There’s no fear of that,” I assured him. “In the first place no plane is coming this way if the pilot can avoid it. It’s far too dangerous, flying among these high peaks. An aviator would have to reach an altitude of more than twenty thousand feet to cross the surrounding summits, and at that height he couldn’t distinguish the details of the valley. And even if, by some miracle, he should see houses and fields here, he’d assume they were ruins and deserted fields of ancient, long-dead inhabitants. No, Ramon, you and your people are as safe here as on another planet. Rest assured of that.”

I remained with him and his people for several months, until I had seen them well started and established. But my wife was as anxious to see the marvels of the rest of the world as she had been in Urquin, and I felt that I must get back to civilization in order to publish the results of my discoveries and to set at rest all rumors that, unquestionably, had been spread regarding my disappearance. Moreover, I had many business matters to attend to, and I must admit I was most anxious to let Mosock Nina see civilization and I was even more anxious to let civilization have the pleasure of seeing her.

So at last we bade farewell to the valley and to our beloved friends and, by easy stages, made our way to a little interior town. During our stay in the valley the people had taken to weaving cotton and we both were attired in cotton garments, so that our appearance aroused no comment. But my wife was filled with wonder at the strange people, the houses, the clothes worn, and she was thunderstruck at the first railway train she saw. Still she had heard from me of all these things, and hence did not regard them either as supernatural or dangerous, and with the quick adaptability of her race she soon accepted everything as a matter of course. In due time we reached

Quito, where I secured funds from friends, (for I forgot to mention that my abandoning peons had helped themselves to all the money and valuables I had had) and having purchased suitable clothes and other necessities, we made our way to New York.

A narrative far more lengthy than this could be written of my Urquin wife's experiences, surprise, wonder and impressions of our teeming city and its denizens. But that has no place in this tale. And now I must close and accompany my wife, who is waiting for me to take her to the top of the Woolworth Tower. I believe it is the only thing she has not yet "done" and she insists upon gazing across Manhattan from that lofty perch before we embark on the ship that sails for Guayaquil tomorrow, and which will carry us on our way towards that distant secret valley wherein are Naliche, Ramon, Melik, and all the others—yes, even the burro, the dog and benignly-smiling old Wira Kocho.

THE END

TRANSCRIBER NOTES

A table of contents has been added for reader convenience.

Misspelled words and printer errors have been corrected. Where multiple spellings occur, majority use has been employed.

Punctuation has been maintained except where obvious printer errors occur.

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[The end of *Beyond the Green Prism* by A. Hyatt Verrill]