



THE GOLD  
FISH OF WY  
GRAN &  
CHIMV &  

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BY CHARLES  
F. LYMMIS



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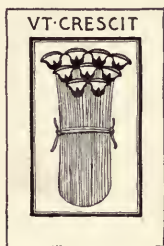


# The Gold Fish of Gran Chimú

By

Charles F. Lummis

*Illustrated by Henry Sandham, R.C.A.*



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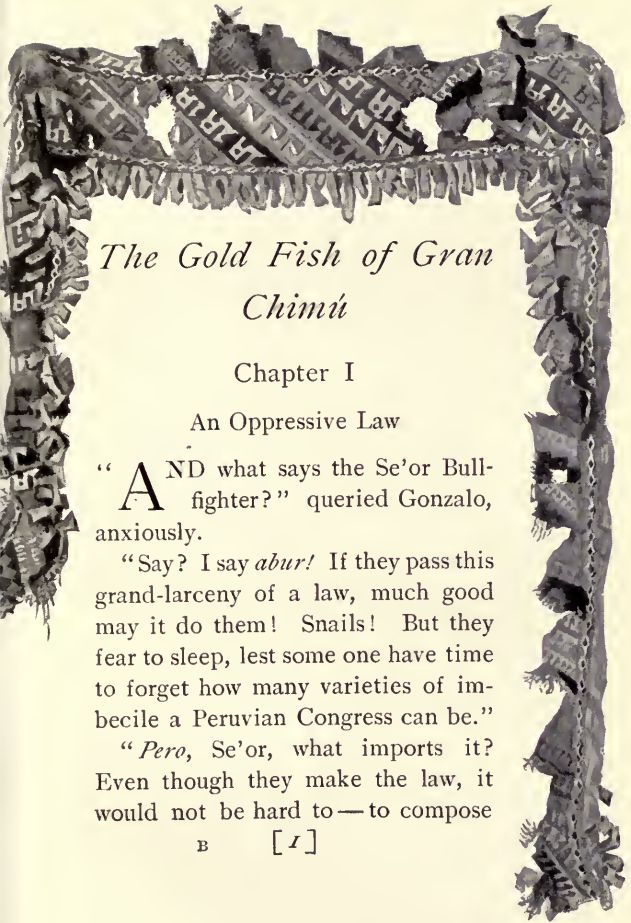
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*The Gold Fish of Gran  
Chimú*

Chapter I

An Oppressive Law

“AND what says the Se’or Bull-fighter?” queried Gonzalo, anxiously.

“Say? I say *abur!* If they pass this grand-larceny of a law, much good may it do them! Snails! But they fear to sleep, lest some one have time to forget how many varieties of imbecile a Peruvian Congress can be.”

“*Pero*, Se’or, what imports it? Even though they make the law, it would not be hard to—to compose

*The Gold Fish of Gran Chimú* the Prefect or to gratify the soldiers, so that one might dig none the less." It was Franco who said this, with a foxy twinkle in his thin, light face.

"No!" replied the Bullfighter, sharply. "It is a fool's law, a thief's law — but if they pass it, there it is. When I'm in a country I obey its laws, crazy though they be. If Congress shows its ears, we will do no more digging, that's all. I would sooner the whole expedition failed than either break their law or be robbed by it. It hasn't even the sense to be funny. If it were possible to exhaust the mummies, as they've exhausted the guano and the mines, it would be right to protect them; but all the people in Peru, digging a hundred years, could hardly make a beginning on the antiquities, much less finish them. Bah! When the Chileans come, these gentlemen cannot find roads enough to run away by. When a president has stolen only five millions, they re-elect him to steal another five. But when a Peruvian or a foreigner dares to be a scholar — *verémos!*"

With this outburst he rose from the block of adobe upon which he had been sitting,

filled his capacious lungs with a jerk, as if he were rather angry at the Peruvian air, too, and strode off around the corner of a huge wall that shielded them from the tropic sun.

“But he is a so-little revolutionary, no, this Se’or *Yanqui*?” observed Franco in a low tone, looking to see that the *Yanqui* had well gone.

“How revolutionary, thou? Did he not say he would mind the law, bad though it be? *Claro*, that he is angry now—and who can make strange? Here they have come, he and the Maestro, thousands of miles, and spending money like the sands of the pampa; and of a sudden our Congress would prevent them. Yet, even angry, he says ‘no more digging.’ Is that seditious? As for saying fools and thieves, what else do *we* say? Do not our own papers write ‘We Peruasnos,<sup>1</sup> that serve for nothing expect to be robbed’?”

“And *he*, also, is an *asno*—for they might well dig in spite of the law. All know the Prefect, that he has his lean side; and it were easy to make that the *húaqueando*<sup>2</sup> go

<sup>1</sup> A sarcastic jumbling of *Peruano* and *asno*, like saying “Peruviasses” instead of Peruvians.

<sup>2</sup> The specific word for *mummy-mining*.

*The Gold Fish of Gran Chimú* on, with soldiers to watch, — yet getting not much for the government. With a good *gratificacion* to the Prefect, and now and then a *sol* to the guards — pooh, they would be blind as Beggar Juan!”

“Without shame! When the strangers for their own interest will not sneak, how should a Peruvian? They are right, and I will stop too, when comes the law. Truly, I know not what we shall do, for now there is nothing else but mummy-mining — but no *huaquero* could make the livelihood as they order. *Ea!* But perhaps it will not endure — for laws come and go. My father has told me when there were laws here against carriages, and against capes, and the women’s shawls — and even that Indians should not eat cucumbers.<sup>1</sup> But they were not for long. Perhaps even so this ill law will last not much — or, *quizá* they will not pass it after all. But *vamos* — I think the Maestro will be ready to measure again. He said to come to the Bewitched Fig.”

The Bullfighter was headed for the same

<sup>1</sup>A real decree of the Duque de Palata, viceroy of Perú, about 1680.

spot; his brow wrinkled up and down, and fists clenching now and then as he jumped arroyos and clambered over ruined walls. He was not really a bullfighter at all, of course, or he never would have been in the Gran Chimú. But his bronzed face was clean-shaven; and in Peru no one except a *toreador* or a priest would think of exposing himself without so much as a moustache. As priests do not wear hunting boots and corduroy jackets, it was plain that this *Yanqui* must be a bullfighter; and people in the Peruvian cities stepped down from the narrow sidewalks to give him room, and boys followed at a respectful distance, and the clergy bowed courteously at meeting him. So it was not strange that every one should continue to call him "the Bullfighter," even after they knew his business; and that he should accept the nickname with his usual carelessness about careless opinions. He had been mistaken for so many different things, in his wanderings, and this was by so much the least troublesome error, that it rather pleased him.

Emerging from a maze of ruined buildings, he crossed a clear, level space faintly fur-

*The Gold Fish of Gran Chimú* rowed with the strangest patterns that ever a plowed field bore, and presently came to a great pit, in the center of which stood an ancient fig-tree—the only green thing in miles around. In its shade sat another *Yanqui*, bending over a paper covered with figures. He, also, was clean-shaven and bronzed, but much older, and not to be mistaken for a bullfighter. Still, he was rather too quick-footed for a priest; and the country agreed in calling him “the Master,”—vaguely knowing that he was a great scholar, a *científico* whose name was high in both hemispheres.

“So! When did you get back from Moche? And where are the boys?” he said, without looking up.

“I finished the pictures there last night. The boys will be here. I left them in the edge of the second *barrio*. But say—have you heard about this law Congress is going to pass?”

“Yes, and I had been expecting it. This National Museum plan has been in the air for years, but they have not been able to vote money to found it, for the very good reason that there was no money. Now they see a



way to dance and let others pay the piper. It is really a polite manner of confiscating certain collections and documents they have long had a jealous eye upon — and taking the pick of all future ones. I think, however, they are overreaching themselves. They certainly shall not fatten on us; and I doubt if any one will work under such restrictions.”

“Do you know just what they are? Old Quesada had not the full details.”

“It is simple but effective. Any one who wishes to dig for antiquities must notify the Prefect, who will authorize the Intendente to detail a guard of soldiers to watch every turn of the digging. You feed and pay these *guardias* out of your own pocket, and they take charge of everything you find. One-half (the better half, of course) is the property of the government. Your half is also taken, ‘to be photographed and described for the National Museum.’ It is supposed to be then returned to you — and may be it will be. Furthermore, you will have to give the Museum copies of all your photographs, and I of all my ground plans.”

“Pestilence! Well, it shuts the door on further excavations, no?”

*The Gold Fish of Gran Chimú*      “Certainly. We couldn’t carry them on under such conditions even in a country where we could trust the government to do its part. But that is not vital. We can continue to excavate until the law passes, and then stop. The surveys, measurements, photographing — all the more important work — can still go on. We have collections enough for the present — and, thank heaven, they are all safely on their way to New York. By the time we need more, there may be better laws. Where it will come hardest is on Peru herself — on the poor *huaqueros*, who have no resource but mummy-mining. That law will make criminals; for many of these poor fellows will *have* to dig, and will do it furtively, as they cannot afford to ‘go halves’ with the government. Ah, *picaros!*” he added, with a sudden change of tone, as Gonzalo and Franco came scuffing down the bank. “Why should I not bump you the heads, for keeping me so long waiting?” His face and speech were wholly severe; but the boys laughed understandingly. He was so droll, this wise Maestro — to whom the learned listened with reverence, and whom

the ignorant found even more entertaining than the wittiest of their rough companions.

“Pues, Se’or, now we are ready,” answered Gonzalo, still smiling. “Only to-morrow, and for a few days, if you will dispense with us — for there is to be a new law, ill for the *huaqueros*, and we would like to dig what can be before it.”

“Rascals! Well, dig then. And that you find the *Pez Grande!* But now, to work.”

Franco took the plane-table and the surveyor’s level, Gonzalo the tripod and the little side-satchel of notes, and the three clambered out of the big pits, trudging away through the sands toward a huge wall that stood off to the northwest.

“Until soon!” said the Bullfighter, looking at his watch. “I’m going over to the Hall of the Arabesques to study the light a little, — the shadows in that last photograph didn’t suit me.”

“Much eye, then!” called back Franco, twisting his sharp face over his shoulder. “For there, many say, is the hiding-place of the *Pez Grande.*”

“Bother your Big Fish! If you Peruvians

*The Gold Fish of Gran Chimú* would dig your fields half as hard as you dig for that treasure, you wouldn't *need* any wind-falls. Not but I'd like to stumble on the tail of him, myself," smiled the Bullfighter, as he strode away to the southeast. "He must be a very pretty lump, when the Little Fish was such a whopper. But plain *huacos* are good enough for me, — personally I don't care to get a touch of the golden fever."

The others had already disappeared behind the great wall, as he went scrambling over mounds of crumbled adobe masonry — the ruins of prehistoric homes and temples. Ahead was a stupendous truncated pyramid of the same clay bricks, — a terraced artificial hill, five hundred feet long and one hundred and fifty high, — and off in the southerly haze stood out the shadowy vastness of the far greater Pyramid of Moche. No wonder a deep light came into his eyes as they swept that wondrous view, — the gray eyes that in boyhood had always dreamed of exploring and of antiquity, and that now found themselves explorers sure enough, in the Gran Chimú! That prehistoric "city" whose origin is lost in the dawn of time; that ruin

whose mighty walls and bewildering edifices cover more area than the city of London; that greatest town that aborigines ever built in the New World!

*An  
Oppres-  
sive Law*

Nor had it grown common to him with familiarity. The months of measurements, of photographing, of excavating, of study, had but enhanced the fascination of the forgotten city. Every day and every hour there was some new wonder, some new beauty. What architects were those stolid Indians of Peru when Europe was in the Dark Ages! As for relics of antiquity, the innumerable and precious curios that their peons were constantly turning up, — how poverty-stricken all the years of exploration in North American ruins looked, beside these dazzling finds! He could remember the boy days when the acquisition of a poor little flint arrow-head had kept him sleepless all night with the oppression of riches, — and here already they had gathered such collections of ancient Peruvian relics as the British Museum itself never held!

Now he was threading his way through a vast and confused huddle of mounds, each of

*The Gold Fish of Gran Chimú* which had been, in its immemorial day, a great building. All about were modern holes, tunnels, banks of upthrown earth; and here and there volleys of dust kept puffing up from trenches and pits. It was a favorite part of the ruins with the *huaqueros*; for somehow a belief had grown current that in this vicinity was the famous "Big Fish."

"God give Your Grace good-day," spoke out a courtly old Spaniard as the Bullfighter dropped lightly down a fourteen-foot wall, instead of going around by the trail which led to the bottom of the excavation. "How easy of foot are you *Norte-Americanos*! And comes Your Grace to help us uncover the *Pez Grande*?" The speaker's hair and beard were white, and in his swart cheeks the darker wrinkles ran deep and innumerable; but his voice was musical with the tone of one who has learned, and his step was springy.

"Ah, Don Beltran!" said the American, warmly grasping the proffered hand. "Few of us are so easy of foot at seventy-five. A jaguar might envy you. No, I don't believe the *Pez Grande* has bitten me, yet — though if you come across him, just let me scrape up

a scale or two, eh? I'm a pretty good hand with the shovel, myself."

*An  
Oppres-  
sive Law*

"Well do I believe it. Aye, so *are* the *Yanquis* not afraid to work, for proud though they be. But in my unhappy land we have only 'gentlemen' — '*gentlemen*,'" he repeated bitterly, "ashamed to be men. There is nothing 'gentle' except to be lazy — or, if one have no longer mine nor hacienda to feed him, then to hold office and rob his country!"

"*Pobre de Peru!* If there were more to think like you, Don Beltran!"

"But what is one poor old man? I work, yes! And my son, my little Gonzalo, he is no *flojo*. Do you not find him a very worker? So I have taught him from my knee, and it is in the bone. I have said-him: '*hijito*, here they are blind. They make it disgrace to harden the hand. But they do not see the world. We are behind, for elsewhere they have learned it — the honor of *to do*. Even in Peru we were not always thus — did not Don Francisco, the Conqueror, himself work even as the common soldier? Remember this, my Gonzalito, what a man is is what he does. Thou, whose ancestor was the Con-

*The Gold Fish of Gran Chimí* queror of New Granada, hast blood and name as well as any; but upon that thou must build for thyself. *Do! Do!* Fear not that work shall bring thee down—it is the Man who exalts his work.’ ”

“Bravely said, Don Beltran, and worthy of your blood. And you may be proud of such a son as Gonzalo — I love the boy, too. But come, what are you finding since I was here?”

“*Pues*, it is little!” And the old man gave a shrug. “Some well-wrought *huacos* and a few admirable cloths; but of gold, or silver, nothing.”

“Yes, here is!” croaked a hoarse voice near by, and a tattered *huaquero* scrambled out of his pit, holding up a long, thin plate of metal, reddish, shaped to the rude semblance of a fish.

“So! The *Pez Chiqui-ti-ti-i-to!*” laughed the Bullfighter, wetting a spot on the plate and rubbing it hard on his leg. Just there the red hue departed, and a rich, waxy yellow took its place. “And it’s very *good* gold, too,” he added, surveying it critically and weighing it upon his fingers. “Curious how the alloy varies! I’ve dug up gold in Pachacámac



that was half copper — and then the very next ornament was as pure as our eighteen-karat jewelry. It shows how little of a science smelting was with the old Peruvians, after all — their alloys all went by guesswork. Well, I hope the gold fish had a big shoal of small-fry, and that you'll catch them all. But as for me, I'd rather have yonder cloth than a whole string of your gold fish."

"Carry!" cried the old man, picking up and handing him a fabric a yard square, as fine as a spider's web, so beautiful in design that no one who had not seen it come up from twenty feet under ground could have believed that it had lain buried so many centuries. "No," he added, "there is not whereof to thank. But come, tell me. I have known the story of the *Pez Chico* since I was born, and so did my fathers. But I never besought the records. You, who are e-scholar, you shall know to the point. It is historical, no?"

"Oh, yes—and past all doubt. The records are exact — you see everything was done with a system, then. I only wish we Saxons had as faithful and full chronicles of our early doings in America. Well, it is an historical

*The Gold Fish of Gran Chimú* fact that in the year 1575 a Spanish peddler from Lima, named Garci-Gutierrez de Toledo began tramping up the coast to Truxillo with his pack. He was what you call *simpatico*, making many friends—and warmest of them all, the old Indian in whose house he lodged during these visits. You know the cacique of an Indian village is in honor bound to entertain strangers; and the peddler's host was Antonio Chayhuac, the last cacique of Mansiche. Between the two sprung up a friendship of unusual strength. The peddler often lamented his poverty; and one dark night in 1576 the cacique said: 'Then I am the one who will help you.' Leading the way to yonder *huaca*, he opened the hidden mouth of an underground passage. At the bottom was the *Pez Chico*;<sup>1</sup> and it made Garci-Gutierrez the richest man in Peru. Of all treasure found, one-fifth had to go, you know, to the king of Spain; and in this case the 'Royal Fifth' was \$58,527 in weighed gold—so the whole find was nearly \$300,000. That *was* a fortune for those days, since gold was worth several times as much as it is now. The lucky

<sup>1</sup> "The Little Fish."

peddler made a present to Don Francisco de Toledo, the fifth viceroy of Peru, of \$20,000 worth of golden vessels and trinkets.”

*An  
Oppres-  
sive Law*

“And the *Pez Grande*?”

“Ah, the Big Fish is only guesswork, though there’s no possible doubt it rests on this truth — that there are still great treasures here. The *legend* is that the messengers who were carrying to Cajamarca the golden ransom with which their captive war-chief, Atahualpa, had promised to fill his room, turned back when they heard of his death and buried the treasure here in the Gran Chimú. That story has been believed for three hundred and fifty years—and there is nothing impossible in it. Garci-Gutierrez, by the way, squandered his Little Fish superbly, and forgot his old friends. In a few years he was poor as ever. *Then* he came back to Truxillo and begged the cacique to disclose the hiding-place of the Big Fish; but the Indian laughed. I only hope *you* find it!”

“Ah,” sighed Don Beltran. “But this evil law they talk to pass—this law meant to rob our few scholars of their collections—if one were to find even the *Pez Grande*, it would

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rob him even of that. There is no remedy; either to find it before the law shall pass, or not at all. And see how the news of it has set the poor afoot!" he added, pointing to distant groups of men, trudging with spade on shoulder, or already flinging out the dust from their prospect-holes. "All Peru will be digging by to-morrow. All, it is to say, except the *gentlemen*."

"It is worth more that you find it on your own land, Don Beltran," smiled the Bullfighter as he turned toward a doorway in the massive walls. The voice was jesting; but there was a note in it which none should better interpret than this brave old cavalier, head of a noble but decayed house.





## Chapter II

### Some of the Anglers

THE Maestro and the two boys stood on *Some*  
top of the tallest wall in the Gran *of the*  
Chimú. Upon this vast adobe circumvalla- *Anglers*  
tion, over thirty feet high and four yards  
thick at the base, they were lingering a  
moment before they should scramble down  
a gap and turn homeward. Their day's  
work was done. The red ball of the sun  
was just resting on the blue Pacific, the  
boom of whose surf stole up on the faint

*The* breeze. The great, sharp, barren peaks of  
*Gold Fish* Salaverry burned high above the advance-  
*of Gran* guard of the fog ; and upon the ruins of  
*Chimú* the Gran Chimú lay such wizard shadows  
that one could almost find it once more  
a peopled city, and begin to look for the  
brown Yuncas to come gliding back out of  
the forgotten centuries and fill their broken  
streets again with labor and with life. The  
great wall boxed a court fifteen hundred feet  
square, with two gateways. Within, and  
parallel to it, was a lesser wall, leaving be-  
tween them a narrow alley all around the  
court. Inside this, again, stood the myriad  
naked walls of a whole town of pitch-roof  
adobe houses, in "blocks" separated by nar-  
row passages. It was one of the "wards" of  
the ancient city ; as all Chimú had a tre-  
mendous circumvallation against hostile out-  
siders, so each ward had a similar defense  
against its jealous and sometimes hostile  
neighbor wards. There are many very beau-  
tiful things about the organization of primi-  
tive peoples, — many virtues which do not  
seem to thrive so well in civilization. But  
there are also, as a rule, many unlovely fea-

tures; and it does not do to believe all — nor *Some*  
half — the romantic moonshine we have been *of the*  
taught about ancient Peru and “the enlight- *Anglers*  
ened rule of the Incas.” We are coming to  
understand these things, now that scientists  
and historians have learned that it is wise to  
see and know something of the country they  
are going to write about, — and something  
of other countries, too.

“*Ea!* But this is a *laberinto!*” cried the  
flippant Franco, breaking the almost solemn  
hush. Evidently his thoughts had not been  
with the grandeur and awe of the scene.  
“To-morrow, *pues*, I shall dig even yonder;  
for this *barrio* is the best in all the Gran  
Chimú, and why should not the treasure be  
in that *huaca?*” In an open space amid the  
thatchless houses stood a dim adobe pyra-  
mid, the sacrifice-mound of the ward.

No one answered, and he rattled on. “But  
it can be that I will wait a so-little. Don  
Guzman, the old Stingy, thinks to dig, and  
maybe he will know where! You know that  
Indian, Bartolo, — he that is said to be a de-  
scendant of the caciques? Well, I saw them  
this morning in the courtyard, and Don Guz-

*The* man was well pouring to him the red wine.  
*Gold Fish* He! he!" Franco chuckled.

*of Gran* "Shameless! Is it well to make drunk the  
*Chimú* poor old innocent, hoping that he may spill  
his knowledge? It is like Don Guzman —  
but thou! What would say my father?"  
Gonzalo had roused from his dreaming, and  
spoke sharply, rather with a tone of authority.

"What imports-me?" Franco retorted, with  
a shrug. "If the Stingy can get him a so-  
much drunk, it may be he will show where is  
the *Pez Grande*, — for sure that he can. All  
know that since the Spaniards came the secret  
is only with the caciques, who hand it down to  
their sons. And if Don Guzman finds it, call  
me toad if *I* get not a mouthful! For I shall  
watch him as the condor does a sick mule."

"*Vamos*, vultureling and eaglet," broke in  
the Maestro. "We have enough measured  
now for a while, and to-morrow you can bait  
your hooks for the Big Fish. *Ay!* But this  
ward *is* a labyrinth! I should like to know  
how many thousand walls and angles I have  
measured in it in the last ten days."

"But *where* shall we fish for him, Se'or  
Maestro?"



“H’m! Anywhere that you can be alone.” *Some*  
This was said as if to himself; and then, in *of the*  
his usual tone of banter with the boys, he *Anglers*  
added: “He is as like to be in the shallows  
as in the deeps. Only, much eye that at the  
first bite ye call friends, and not strangers,  
to help pull him out!”

By now they were in the uncertain gravelly road which winds through the ruins from the upper coast to Truxillo. Great breached walls crept up out of the dusk, and glowered down on them, and fell behind. The gray road upon the gray plain could no longer be made out, — only by their feet they knew when they had overstepped its edge. The last glow was gone from sky and peaks; even the ghostly whiteness of the city of Truxillo had disappeared. Up through the gloom came only the low, far moan of the sea, as if to emphasize the silence of the ruins.

Then this murmur seemed to grow and swell; and presently it became a sharp clatter on the pebbles, with sparks flying from iron-shod heels, and next a towering form thundered out of the darkness and reined up in their very faces.

*The Gold Fish of Gran Chimú*      “*Alto!*” roared a thick voice. “Who are ye, sneaking in the highway by night? Rats, go back, or I trample ye!”

“*Alto, thyself!*” rang the Maestro’s clear voice. “Thou art drunk. A handsome police, truly, whose sotted *zambos* would ride down their betters!”

“Who’sh drunk, rebel?” sputtered the negro cavalryman, in new rage. “I’ll show you to resist the *guardia!*” And he drew his saber, rising in his stirrups as he spurred the horse.

“Enough, *bruto!* Go and get thee sober. Meantime I will speak — so! Wouldst thou?” The hickory cane revolved in a curious fashion, and a saber was heard rattling upon the rocks off to the right. “Then thou hadst best try foils with some one who was not pupil to Ducrot. As I went to say, I will speak with my friend the Señor Intendente,<sup>1</sup> Don Pedro de Villazur, and discover why drunken *zambos* are sent out to abuse the peace they are paid to guard.”

The cavalryman was none too drunk to recognize the authority of that quiet tone,

<sup>1</sup> Chief of Police.





and that the voice was not of the rabble. *Some*  
Only the Great used such Spanish as that; *of the*  
and after stumbling and groping about for *Anglers*  
his sword, he rode away, muttering, but  
cowed.

“*Ay!* But I thought it was your hour!”  
said Gonzalo, huskily, dropping a cobblestone  
he had snatched up. “How knows Your  
Grace the sword so well? For you disarmed  
him even as one would a child.”

“So! I learned it in Paris, when I was a  
student and young. Even in science, it is  
useful to have hands; so I have not forgotten.  
*Ach!* So soon?”

It was Franco stumbling back into the  
road. “I was to go for succor,” he explained  
glibly, “seeing you so besieged by the  
*guardia.*”

“Well thought!” replied the Maestro, drily.  
“Thou for presence of mind! Now this  
young stupid here,” — and he laid his hand  
on Gonzalo’s head in the darkness, — “this  
four-times thoughtless had tumbled the *zambo*  
with a rock, even though late, if I had not  
saved him the need. So there could have  
been two to want succor by the time thou

*The* got'st back from Truxillo, which is only a  
*Gold Fish* league from here!"

*of Gran* "Yes, but I would have come in a breath,  
*Chimú* with the Se'or Intendente himself!" cried Franco, unabashed. But in himself he was wondering: "What wizard is this that sees in the night, and blows cavalry away with his breath, and reads the thought?"

After that they walked on in silence, their heels clacking on the pebbles in the hollows, or stirring a faint whisper as they shuffled up the heavy sand-dunes. Only when they came between tall hedges of osage-orange, and the lights of Cortiju were just ahead, the Maestro stopped abruptly, with a hand on Gonzalo's arm, saying: "Oyes, Franco. Put the things in my room, and then — feet in the dusty!"

"Tell me, then," he continued in a lower tone, as Franco slouched away in the gloom. "What is this I hear of thy father's hacienda? They have told me truth? That it is compromised because he guaranteed the debt of a friend, who failed to pay, and now they are to take it?"

Gonzalo hesitated a moment. "Surely, my father will not blame me," he said at

last, "for he has told me Your Grace is worthy all trust. Yes, it is truth! They want to take our dear Moche, — and then there is nothing left but this poor house in Cortiju. *Ay de mi!* And so hard as he has worked, this my father — he, Don Beltran de Quesáda, laboring even as a peon — to lift us back out of the wreck in which the Chileans left us!" The lad's voice was now unsteady.

"Pity! But in spite of the jealousy that he is industrious, thy father has much influence. He is beloved of all the common people; and of a certainty those of his own rank dare not do anything illegal against him, even in this Peru."

"No, Excellency, they dare not. But I think that legally, too, they can take the hacienda, since he formally compromised it for his friend, who is now a general in the army, but a without-shame. He laughs and says: '*Vaya! The gentleman who works — pues, let him work! Why should I waste money, paying it to one who forgets his birth?*' Thrice has my father gone to him, in vain. Only with the silver in hand to satisfy the Jews could the Moche be saved, — and it is

*The* twenty thousand *soles* he had to pay for that  
*Gold Fish* ingrate.”

*of Gran* “*Ach!* That comes to twelve thousand  
*Chimú* dollars in gold. It is ill indeed! *Pues*,  
thou must know that for much as I spend  
money, it is not mine, but in trust for the  
expedition. Of my own, I have none. But  
I have strings in this thy Peru; and perhaps  
some of my friends will aid thy father. A  
good name is good, even in Judea — though  
it is much, this twenty thousand *soles*. And  
in passing, my young fox,” he went on with-  
out change of tone, “let us suppose that thou  
betake thy tiresome ears whither I ordered  
them. For plane-tables and tripods are not  
made to go eavesdropping in the hedges.”

There had been no sound that Gonzalo’s  
sharp young ears could detect; nor was there  
now, except the snapping of one twig.  
Gonzalo gave a little start, half wonder and  
half awe.

“It is nothing,” said the Maestro, in a  
tone one might know, even in the darkness,  
had a smile in it. “A man does not live ten  
years with the North American Indians with-  
out learning what his eyes and ears were made



for. *Si*, and his nose, too. Franco is a *Some*  
clever stalker; but my tobacco-pipe in the *of the*  
satchel is a trifle too old for him to expect *Anglers*  
to bring it within so few yards of my nose  
undetected. Well, let us go in, for I have  
eaten nothing since my coffee and biscuit at  
sunrise."

It was a queer old room, that in which the  
Maestro lighted a candle in its massive silver  
stick, and then turned to wash in a silver  
basin two feet in diameter, whose pitcher  
was to match. Gonzalo set the level-box  
carefully in a corner, stowed away the tri-  
pod, plane-table, and satchel, — which they  
had found lying upon the threshold, — and  
now stood waiting respectfully, his faded  
Panamá hat in his hands.

The ceiling was high and strong, with  
carved rafters, though earthquakes had racked  
it till a star peered through here and there;  
and the mildew of a Peruvian "winter"  
stained it and the walls. The windows  
were high, narrow, deep in the yard-thick  
adobe masonry, and had, besides their iron  
bars, modern shutters almost as heavy as the  
venerable door. The furniture was a pon-

*The Gold Fish of Gran Chimú* derous bed, a table, lounge, washstand, and three chairs. It was all very shabby. Its brocades were dingy and threadbare, the wood dim with scratches till one might never have guessed that it was carved from the solid mahogany logs below Chachapoyas. The tiled floor was uneven, and in places broken. Even the great candlestick, the massive inkstand, the overgrown wash set, were so dented and discolored they might well have been mistaken for pewter, except when — as now that the Maestro bumped the bowl with the pitcher — they rang true as a good dollar upon an inquisitive counter.

That was where Don Beltran was “different.” The neighbor cavaliers, who still dressed as for Court, and kept all their airs and their soft hands, — well their silver furniture was in Jacobi’s dazzling windows, in Lima, along with countless other tokens of the time when iron was the only metal too expensive to be much used in Peru. “They have been eating their silverware these ten years,” as Jacobi concisely put it; and there was now precious little left to eat — of silver or of plain bread — in these proud houses.

But a "gentleman" could not work, of course, even though he starve. *Some of the Anglers*

Now, Don Beltran preferred to work. So the old heirlooms were still in the old, faded house, — though they had grown dull since the death of their mistress. Out in the dingy kitchen was even one of the silver cauldrons; it was still huge and thick, but so battered and begrimed that I fear poor Doña Inéz would never have recognized it, could she have come back to see how cholo servants can soon undo even so famous a house-keeper.

For Don Beltran had fallen upon poverty, though he worked, as deep as that of his lazy neighbors. He had done very bravely in building up from the wreck left by the Chilean war, till, in an evil hour, he indorsed for a pleading neighbor. It was clear as highway robbery. Don César had never intended to meet his note. Don Beltran had had to pay it, going to the bank with twenty porters, each carrying an ore-sack heavy with a thousand silver dollars, which had come up by steamer from Lima. The convenience of gold or greenbacks does not exist

*The Gold Fish of Gran Chimú* in Peru. Now he was almost penniless; while Don César, a new-fledged general in the army, and with both greedy hands in the public coffers, mocked at the claim.

It was true the silver *olla*, and the bowls, pitchers, picture-frames, stirrups of the same pretty metal, would have sold for enough to keep the family and run the hacienda a year, — not more, for such trinkets bring nowadays in Peru less than their weight in minted dollars. But as Don Beltran said: “*Pues*, we eat them for a year, eh? Good. And then? Then there is no more to eat, and my house is naked — without the trinkets that are from my fathers, and that my wife loved. Nay! If we are to starve, let it be with our heirlooms beside us and not in the pawn-shops.”

For he, too, was a little proud in his own way, you see, this old Don Beltran. As for the mortgaged plantation of Moche, the silverware would not help that. There must be a miracle, nothing less, to raise twenty thousand *soles* in hard coin. Or yes — *if* he could find the *Pez Grande!* That, also, might seem a miracle anywhere else; but in Peru, the land of buried treasures, no man

that ever touched hand to spade in one of the great ruins but believed he, his very self, might most likely find *the* treasure. Only — that accursed law! When mummy-mining should be stopped, what remained — unless to hold office? But where salaries are beggarly small, and only the chances for theft large, there is not much temptation for an honest man to enter public life.

*Some  
of the  
Anglers*

The modest supper of bread, brown beans, jerked mutton, and coffee, served by a bare-foot chola, was finished, and the Bullfighter had gone to develop his negatives in the stable. The Maestro had lighted his pipe, and Don Beltran a husk cigarro, and they were talking earnestly, while Gonzalo sat bolt upright in his chair, drinking in every word. It was ten o'clock when the old man rose with a sigh.

“You have to forgive,” he said. “I meant not to give you care. Most kind is Your Grace — more than a brother. But I hope little from your friends. Here, only the foolish give security for their fellows. No, we have to find the Fish, or Moche is lost.”

*The  
Gold Fish  
of Gran  
Chimú*

At precisely the same moment, and not a hundred yards away, there was going on a curiously different conversation, but with the same glittering text. From a corner in the osage-orange hedge a footpath led "across-lots" to the northwest. Just here and now was a noise of floundering and grunts, as if two pigs might be rooting under the hedge. Finally a short, fat figure struggled through on the farther side of the gap, hauling an unsteady mass, which also had some look of being human.

"Barbarian!" panted the fat man in an angry whisper. "One had need be a mule, to carry thee! With what motive art drunk so wastefully much? I might have spared a *medio's* worth of wine, as well as not. For heaven's sake, move!"

To this the only response was a thick: "*Ño Atahualpa.*"

"*Tst!* Hush the mouth, with thy 'father Atahualpa!' He's well dead, this three hundred and sixty years. *Anda!* Shake the feet!" and he gave his staggering charge an ungentle shove. "A whole pint of wine more than was needed! *Ay de mi!* Thou'lt

drive me to the Asylum of Indigents, wretch!  
Walking, now, stupid!" *Some  
of the  
Anglers*

But the lurching Indian either did not hear, or could not obey, the order. The mechanical motion of his legs grew more and more uncertain. He shuffled, and swayed, and backed, and lopped forward, and tangled his toes with his heels, in a fashion that some folk might find very funny — but that braver men would reckon more sad than laughable. To his conductor, indeed, it seemed lamentable enough; but perhaps not from excess of manhood. He groaned and berated at each new lurch; and when, in a particularly boneless slump, the big frame fairly lost all notion of its legs, swung over upon him and bore him headlong to the earth, his guarded voice forgot itself in a snort of rage.

“Child of sea-lions! Get thee from off me, or I break thee that leaden skull!”

But his threat was wasted. The Indian, who was head and shoulders the taller, had fallen literally “all over him.” The fat man was sprawled upon his back, with meddlesome clods searching his ribs, and that inert

*The Gold Fish of Gran Chimú* bulk half smothering him. In vain he tried to be rid of it — Typhon might as well have thought to heave Mt. Etna off his chest.

“Oyes, Bartolo,” he gasped in a conciliatory whisper. “Disembarrass me, and I have still some juice of the grape for thee.”

The only answer was a deep, husky snore. Bartolo had promptly improved the opportunity to fall into a drunken sleep. For a while after this the captive heaved and tugged in voiceless rage, and of a sudden began actually to blubber! Had he not been thus occupied in relieving his tense nerves, he might have noticed a curious sound, as of some one choking to death behind a bush a few yards away. There a prone figure shook, and writhed, and pulled the flaps of a tattered jacket about its head, as if to stifle these gurglings.

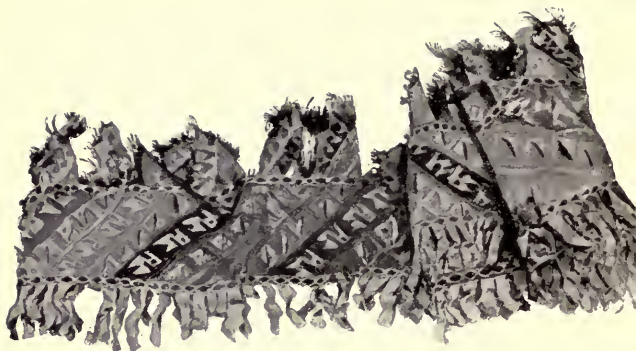
A little later, Guzman the Miser — for the fat man was he — had roused his sleeper by dint of merciless punchings and pinchings, and escaped from under him; and, sore but eager, was again dragging him along the trail, both stumbling in the darkness. In a



moment more, a much smaller form than *Some*  
either of theirs, and much better possessed *of the*  
of its feet, crept from behind its bush and *Anglers*  
followed, noiselessly as a cat.



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## Chapter III

### Fishing in the Dust

*The  
Gold Fish  
of Gran  
Chimú*

“ALL Peru” did, indeed, appear to have fallen to digging for mummies, as Don Beltran had predicted — at least, so much of it as could conveniently get at the Gran Chimú.

The square leagues of ruins had broken out with something like an eruption of dust geysers. Look whichever way one would, little clouds were puffing up so thickly that at fifty feet above the earth they united in a great can-

opy which quite hid the faint sun, and turned the landscape from its ashen gray to a curious smoky yellow. And along the ground the air was so laden with impalpable dust that it was ill breathing. *Fishing in the Dust*

As for the "fishers" in this strange sea of sand, they were a curious assortment. Here was Arana — the contractor and master-mason who was getting rich at his trade, five years ago, until he had caught the mummy-fever and was now a professional *huaquero* — with the dozen half-breed peons he had been able to secure by glittering promises. He was working vigorously among them — for Arana was at once too much of a connoisseur to let escape him the personal thrill of that exciting quest, and too frugal to forget that if he found something himself there would be no question of division or extra pay.

Over yonder a mighty cloud went up from the fast-deepening pits where toiled seven *huaqueros* of the poorer sort, who had banded together to hold a certain promising court.

In another place forty Chinese convicts

*The* were digging soberly—far too soberly to  
*Gold Fish* please the cavalier who lolled upon a mag-  
*of Gran* nificent horse on the bank above, and urged  
*Chimú* them with many gratuitous reflections upon  
their character and country; the while he  
wrapped closer a costly poncho of the silken  
vicuña to keep the dust from his clothing.

Here and there were solitary spademen,  
many of whom—as one might easily see by  
their actions—had never dug for mummies  
before; poor cholo laborers, out of work, who  
had come to think it better to cast a hook  
for the Big Fish of Chimú (or any chance  
small-fry, for that matter) than to go seining  
along the beach for the little mackerel, that  
usually, in dull times, fed them and theirs.

So it went, all across that great area—  
hardly was there a *barrio* but had some one  
gophering somewhere within its limits; and  
in certain localities, where it was thought  
more promising, the claims fairly elbowed  
one another.

Down in the Hall of the Arabesques, Don  
Beltran's old back was see-sawing with an  
agility to have shamed almost any one of his  
stout peons. He had nine of them—all the

servants and plantation hands of Moche and Cortiju; Indians, cholos, zambos. Even Chenta, the fat cook, had come along and was now dusting with her unrecognizable apron some particularly fine pottery which a laborer handed up from the depths; now stowing some metal trinkets in a coarser large jar which she covered with a square of mummy-cloth. Gonzalo was there, too, digging with the best, but a little oftener popping his head out of his shaft for a sniff of such choky air as was to be had. And amid all this stir and life dwelt a silence utterly oppressive. The dust-puffs flew up, and now and then a spade flashed above the surface; but in that strange soil there was no sound of digging. Only now and then a faint voice seemed to exhale from the underground, or there was a husky cough.

Over on the other side of the ponderous walls (uncovered by prior excavations so that their remarkable clay arabesques were fully revealed) the Bullfighter walked to and fro upon an adobe parapet, his eyes hovering from point to point in the area directly below. A score of holes were there, each

*The Gold Fish of Gran Chimú* belching its dust-cloud; and every few moments he leaped down from his wall, and bent over the mouth of one of them and ordered, "give me." Then a grimy hand would come up from below, holding a pottery vase or a metal mace-head, or some such thing, which he would examine critically, mark with a pencil, and stow in the big pockets of his horsehide coat or in the red *alforja*<sup>1</sup> over his shoulder. It was not as easy work as it looked — to watch the hired excavators of the expedition, making sure that they broke nothing and stole nothing; to clamber down into a shaft, every now and then, and in that stifling dust make a diagram of the position of some mummy with reference to its surroundings, or the construction of a peculiar burial-chamber; to scan the indications at the bottom of some hole and decide in which direction the *huaquero* had better "drift"; to unmask that beautiful camera on the wall and photograph some object just handed up from below, or lower the instrument and follow it underground, focus by the little lantern at his belt,

<sup>1</sup> A sort of saddle-bags, frequently carried as a satchel.

and make a "flashlight" of an unusual find, before it should be disturbed at all in the bed where it had slumbered for ages. Yes, it was tremendously hard work; particularly on the tense nerves. He had almost to be a mind reader to be sure that some priceless little relic did not go slipping into a greasy pocket, or some other of the innumerable details go wrong. But the Bullfighter seemed to be enjoying it; and as he strode swiftly about or leaped at the work, his face glowed through all its grime.

"*Que?*" he jerked out abruptly, as a dusty figure, slouching up the parapet, touched him upon the elbow. "Eh, *tu?* Well, Franco, what axe for the stone? I thought thee *huaqueando* to-day."

"Then, Your Grace, I — will Your Excellency honor me to speak a word in the ear? For it is *importanti-i-isimo!*"

"Quickliest, then, for I am worked. What is it?"

"But why should Your Lordship work? I am I who will make it that you need not any more. Let the peons work — and Don Beltran, who is with affection of it — but we will

*The Gold Fish of Gran Chimú* be rich and gentlemen, hiring commoners to labor for us. If only Your Worship will lend me the goodness of fifty *soles* — for *I know where is the Pez Grande!*” The sharp young face seemed grown old since yesterday, and the ferret eyes burned greenish. Franco was trembling, too — a very serious symptom in so self-possessed a young person.

“*Vaya* with your Big Fish — *I* don’t want him. And do you think me a *camarron*,<sup>1</sup> to sleep in the swift water? Do I look as one who has never seen people that ‘knew just where was the *Pez Grande*’?”

“No, no, Your Worship! I am not of those — truly, truly. — I swear it! It is that by accident I — I — in verity of truth, one who knows from the old times, a son of the caciques, showed me, in gratitude that I had once befriended him. And now it is to take out the treasure before Don Guz — before any one shall be-find it, since so many dig to-day.”

“I’m sorry to say, Franco,” replied the Bullfighter, slowly, “that I see thou art lying to me. Why canst thou not, just for change,

<sup>1</sup> Shrimp.



tell the truth like a man? Thou'rt a bright boy, a mighty clever one, and I should look to hear considerable things of thee, one of these days, — if thou knewest enough to be honest. Come, open to me."

Franco looked down, and then away, and then back again. His knees began to tap together nervously. "I *will* tell the true," he whispered abruptly, "though Your Worship shall blame me. Last night, having an errand, I was coming back through the ruins very late. Of a sudden, hearing secret voices, I crept behind a wall and listened. It was Don Guzman, the Stingy, with the Indian Bartolo very drunk. Without doubt he had made him so, by intention. And said Don Guzman: '*Where, brute? Where is it hid, this Pez Grande?*' The Indian spoke nothing, till Don Guzman shook him like a rattle and questioned again. And then he said very slow-and-sleepily: 'Even here! Dig here!'"

"Well, what have I to see with it that he did, you poor little crazed? What does *he* know about it?"

"Se'or! He is son of the caciques, as I

*The Gold Fish of Gran Chimú* have said; and all know that they know where are the *tapadas*.<sup>1</sup> For superstition, they will not use this gold for themselves, nor disclose its hiding — for to them the idols are sacred. Only making them drunk might one learn the secret; and so has done Don Guzman, who is wise as a fox.”

“Foxes aren’t wise, my boy! They are just smart enough to make good thieves, not smart enough to know that every thief is a fool. If they didn’t steal, nobody would chase them. But suppose the old miser *has* found the Big Fish?”

“*Pues*, for sharp though he be, others may be sharper! He finds the melon, and we will eat it! He is digging with near a hundred men over in the big *barrio* — just where I minded me yesterday to dig, and so told the Maestro. But to-day he will not reach. I see that it is very thick, the wall of the *huaca*. Good. Then to-night, while he dreams of his fishing, I will come-me with fifty peons that I can hire at a *sol* each one, and go in where he has saved me the most of the work — and

<sup>1</sup> Literally “covered things.” The popular general word, in Peru, for buried treasures.

it is a thing secured that before dawn I will *Fishing*  
be in the *huaca*, and the *Pez Grande* in my *in the*  
hand! Only that, as Your Grace knows, I *Dust*  
have neither white nor yellow,<sup>1</sup> and laborers  
will not take the promise of a boy. But only  
with lending me the fifty *soles* — then shall  
Your Worship share justly in all I find!”

The Bullfighter looked at him steadily a moment, and something renewed Franco's shivers. Then the *Americano* answered very low: —

“Thou hast much fortune, common, in being very young! No! And without thanks! I want no treasure thou mayest steal from an older thief who makes drunk some poor fool and coyotes his secret. *Vayate*, before I have to tell thee what I think of the pair of ye!”

“*Pero*, Se'or! — ”

“Feet in the dusty, I tell thee! For small that thou art, one might spank thee!”

Franco's face spoke as much of disgust as rage. Resentment at the suggestion of a *nalgueando* for him, a boy of sixteen, was not more rampant than contempt for the man who would not put out his hand to have a

<sup>1</sup> Silver nor gold.

*The Gold Fish of Gran Chimú* treasure poured into it. How many classes of a fool this *Yanqui* was, to be sure! Franco had more than half a mind to voice his opinion; but after a glance at those gray eyes he turned silently on a sullen heel, and slouched away as he had come. In a dozen steps he was out of sight amid the maze of ruined walls.

The Bullfighter was already stooping at one of the shafts, receiving some husky news from the invisible miner. "Yes!" he cried at last. "Very extraordinary! Move not, nor wink, till I am down — lest thou shake in earth and disturb the arrangement." In a moment more he had lowered the camera carefully into the pit. He took off the *alforja* and the horsehide coat, laying them gently upon the ground, drove a crowbar into the soil, and slipping a noose over it, slid by the rope into the shaft as glibly as a spider spinning down its line.

There must have been something very interesting in those dusty depths, for he was gone fully twenty minutes. Then he came up the rope, hand over hand, with the same strong ease, hauled up the hooded camera, and resumed the *alforja*. Doubtless he would

have first looked into that red-woven pouch, *Fishing*  
could he have had an inkling of what had *in the*  
occurred during his absence from the surface. *Dust*  
But he had no suspicion of it, whatever —  
nor, indeed, had any one else noted the head  
peering from behind a wall, the furtive figure  
sneaking out and rummaging the *alforja*, and  
then gliding off under cover of the ruins. So  
he went on with his swift work, now and then  
cracking an extraordinary smile of triumph at  
the thought of *the* find of the whole week, — a  
small parcel wrapped in a rag at the bottom  
of the *alforja*. If only he had guessed that  
just now it was not there!

It was even noon when the Bullfighter came  
up out of the shaft. Half an hour later, the  
Maestro was still laboring with his notes in  
the musty room at Cortiju, and not exactly  
in a humor for interruptions; but the object  
in his hand was an eloquent apology for the  
intruder.

“Very well, Franco,” he was saying.  
“Though, in the compact, whatever thou  
shalt dig belongs to the expedition, since  
thy wages liberally cover thy whole time, yet  
this is truly a most extraordinary antique,

*The Gold Fish of Gran Chimú* and I will pay thee for it the fifty *soles* thou sayest thy family sorely needs. But this is the last time, mind you, as it is the first. If we were to make the custom so, our *huaqueros* would find very little, and others would bring much to sell us. So! There is a check for the money. Good day."

Franco had no need of the dismissal. No sooner was he clear of the room than he set out running at the best of his legs; and it was not till halfway to Truxillo that he turned from the footpath (for he had avoided the highway) and dropped behind a tree to rest and think. That slender yellow paper had to be looked at again, and a precocious sneer curled his lip. "Then the foxes are not wise, eh?" he muttered, the sneer melting into a self-satisfied grin. "Perhaps it is because all the wisdom is locked up in the gringo donkeys! *Vaya!*" And regaining his feet, he plodded more soberly away toward the city.

For barely an hour's time, there had been a considerable change since Franco left the ruins of the Gran Chimú. Something seemed to be going on in the Hall of the Arabesques.

From ten of the prospect holes, no dust what-  
ever went up; but about the eleventh, a lot of peons were working with unwonted energy. Many bystanders were there, and others could be seen coming from different directions. The ponchoed cavalier, too, had left his Chinamen over yonder to their own devices, and urged his horse as close to the spot as even a reckless rider might. Then Gonzalo elbowed through the crowd and went racing over the ridge. The Bullfighter was photographing a peculiar mummy beside the shaft whence it had been taken. He looked up absently but kindly at the lad's approach.

"Oh, if you will come, Se'or!" panted Gonzalo. "For we think to find Something — and, as the Maestro said, it is well beforehand to have friends around you, and not strangers or indifferents. Some are there whom we trust not, and we have no defense."

"Of course I will!" said the American, heartily. "For the father of you, and for the son of your father, I would do a little. Sanchez!" — and he called up a *huaquero* from one of the shafts — "Guard me these things, and much eye that no one steals the

*The* antiquities, nor so much as breathes toward  
*Gold Fish* the instrument. *Vamos, my boy.*"

*of Gran* Don Beltran was awaiting them. He  
*Chimú* welcomed the Bullfighter with only a nod,  
but his eyes said much.

"You will pardon the *molestia*, Don Carlos?" he whispered. "In the tunnel are things as I like; but here above, not."

The younger man took a swift glance about. "There is no care, Don Beltran. Go on with your work, and leave me for guard. I will answer for your neighbors."

"God pay you, friend!" The old Spaniard put out his withered but still sinewy hand. Then, directing the peons how to enlarge the opening, that the sides might not cave down, he scrambled into the pit and was lost in its dust, followed by Gonzalo.

The volunteer sentinel looked thoughtfully about for a moment. Then he walked over to an eight-foot wall a couple of rods away, jumped and caught the top with his fingers, and vaulted up. After a glance behind, he sat down upon the wall, his heels dangling against its face, and at the same time gave a roundabout hitch to his leathern belt.



“I don’t just know which of our *amigos* *Fishing*  
here the old man is suspicious of,” he mused, *in the*  
“but the watertight way will be to keep a *Dust*  
neighborly eye upon them all. I only hope  
he *has* struck it! It would be good as a  
story, if the brave old fellow were to save his  
fortunes at the eleventh hour with stumbling  
upon a treasure! And I don’t see what any  
one could do, — they certainly wouldn’t have  
the nerve to try to jump his claim.”

None of the bystanders, in fact, looked  
apt for such desperate business. Most of  
them were cholo mummy-miners; poor  
enough, ignorant enough, perhaps none too  
much to be trusted face to face with a large  
temptation in the dark — but clearly not  
criminals. They had gathered more out of  
curiosity; and if their faces wore a shade of  
envy, the sympathy of the craft was stronger.  
As for the horseback cavalier, he had ridden  
off.

Half an hour went by, without any new  
developments from the shaft. The Bull-  
fighter yawned. His seat was none too soft,  
and he had been working “on the jump”  
since dawn. At last he got to his feet upon

*The Gold Fish of Gran Chimú* the wall, stretched his arms and chest, and turned an idle glance toward the declining sun. But certainly it was not the colors in the hazy west that caused so sudden a jerk of his shoulders and such a flash of his eyes. He bounded from the wall, strode swiftly to the top of a low, long mound at the back of Don Beltran's claim, and called out in a dangerously polite voice:—

“*Alto!* What does the *caballero* there?”

“What imports it to the gringo?” retorted the cavalier with cool insolence. “Gentlemen have not to answer to the rabble. Dig, brutes!” He lifted his whip threateningly at the gaping Chinamen.

“It imports thus much, Señor. You were *huaqueando* over yonder, quarter of a mile from here. You see Don Beltran has found something, and you sneak up behind the ridge, to dig in from the other side— and, with your more peons, to reach the supposed treasure before him. As I have the honor to be his friend, I am here to advise you that he is not to be crowded. You will do me the infinite favor to remove your operations the most promptly possible.”





The horseman was clearly a person of temper, and unused to dictation, and his rage flashed up in a storm. "Animal!" he yelled, quite beside himself, "out of my sight, or I will shoot you as a dog and feed you to my dogs of *Chinos!*" *Fishing  
in the  
Dust*

As he spoke he drew from under his poncho a jeweled revolver, and swung his horse around a hole to advance upon the stranger.

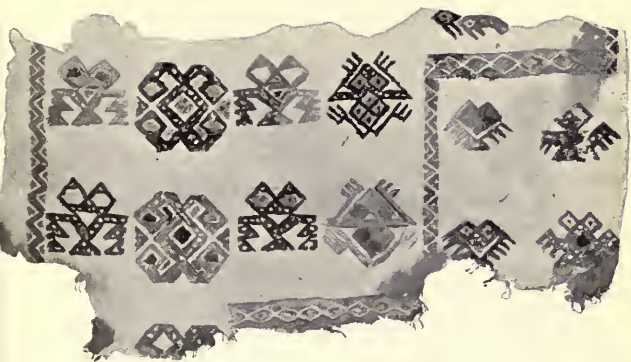
"It is worth more that you try not the game of shots with one who was baptized to it in New Mexico," the Bullfighter said slowly and in the same tone of significant formality. "Must I? When you ride to shoot, *you had better keep the reins!*"

Even as he spoke, his right hand flew up from his side to the height of his hat and dropped a foot,—all in the same indistinguishable motion,—and there was the unmistakable crack of a heavy sixshooter. The cavalier lurched backward in his saddle—for the ball had cut the pleated reins under the horse's throat just as he was leaning back upon them. He was a capital horseman, and instantly found his seat again; but the motion had set the big spurs to Fleche's ribs,

*The* and the nervous animal—terrified by that  
*Gold Fish* and the shot and the dangling rein-ends and  
*of Gran* the absence of the accustomed pressure of  
*Chimú* the cruel bit—cleared a whole file of the  
diggers at a bound, and went off in a whirl-  
wind of dust. As for the frightened China-  
men, they were already scattered in every  
direction, leaving their spades.

The Bullfighter smiled a dry little smile,  
as if satisfied that the pistol-hand had not  
forgot its cunning. He carefully wiped the  
blued Colt and thrust it into its scabbard,  
and sauntered over to the tunnel, from which  
Don Beltran was just clambering, blinking  
strangely through his earthy mask.





## Chapter IV

### A "Nibble"

"AND?" said the American, inquiringly. A  
"Nibble"

"*Quien sabe?* It can be yes, it can be no. Something there is, in there, out of the common. The rooms are those of the rich; but what shall lie beyond—come; we will see what has this mummy." The old man's lips and throat fairly creaked as he spoke. It is an awful thing, that dust of the mummy-

*The* mines — a dust the like of which is nowhere  
*Gold Fish* else in the world. One might say that it  
*of Gran* has been drying out ever since Time began.  
*Chimú* On the coast of Peru it almost never rains;  
and even when it does, the water rather runs  
off than soaks in. Through millenniums of  
drouth and tropic sun the Peruvian sands have  
been steadily baking; and in the ruins, under  
the sands, is a dust drier yet — the dust to  
which we return. It is literally humanity  
turned to powder. And it is because of this  
extraordinary dryness that articles under  
these ruins are so marvelously preserved  
that one can wear to-day a bit of lace that  
was buried beside a Yunca mummy before  
the time of Alfred the Great.

A couple of laborers were carefully lifting  
a big brown bundle from the pit. It was  
something like a huge carboy, completely  
enclosed in a wickerwork of rushes woven  
upon it. Don Beltran deftly slit this bas-  
ketry and husked it from the figure. There  
was the same shape still, swathed in a cotton  
cloth as coarse as burlap, but wonderfully  
white. He found the end of this, cut the  
stitches with which it was caught, and began



to unwind it with great care. Fold after *A*  
fold, fold after fold, it reeled off like tape "*Nibble*"  
from a roll. Not till he had unwound a full  
fifty yards did the end slip free, disclosing a  
still mysterious bundle enveloped in woolen  
fabrics of brilliant colors and beautiful pat-  
terns. At the top — in the neck of the bot-  
tle, so to speak — was a carved wooden face;  
carved as the best Swiss carver should have  
been proud to cut it, but with such a type of  
features as no man ever saw alive in Switzer-  
land, and on its brow a mat of rusty reddish  
hair.

"There's a treasure itself!" said the Bull-  
fighter, judicially. "I know the Maestro will  
want that for our collection — it is so differ-  
ent from the usual grave-mask."

Meantime Don Beltran was unwrapping,  
with even gentler fingers, the finer cloths,  
folding them and laying them in a safe place.  
At last he came to the core of the bundle —  
and there a chieftain of old Peru sat bare,  
unblinking at the forgotten sun. He was  
squatting, with bony hands clasped about his  
knees, his head bowed as if in thought, his  
long hair perfect as the day it was last combed

*The Gold Fish of Gran Chimú* with yonder comb of ironwood in his lap, though stained reddish by the nitre in the soil. A slim turban of a blue fabric, filmy as lace, held back the straying locks, and around it was twined his exquisitely braided sling. A tall plume of thin gold and a head-dress of parrot feathers nodded above his brow. The skin was like ancient parchment; on his cheeks the red face-paint was still bright. A pair of golden tweezers, the "razor" of antiquity, — and to this day many aborigines thus pluck out their beard by the roots, hair by hair, — hung by a cord from his neck. Between his jaws were thin plates of gold. One of his thumbs was turned in upon the palm, to hold a tuft of cotton upon which was the deep blue stain the mummy-miner instantly recognizes. Gold remains unchanged — or but a trifle dulled — through the ages; copper and bronze are devoured by a greedy green, which finally leaves only a stain in their place; and silver oxidizes in blue.

"*Ea!*" whispered Don Beltran. "But he had something about his neck."

The sun of the Dark Ages had failed to





tan a narrow line, which was still clear upon A  
the ancient skin. Ah! Here was the frayed “Nibble”  
end of a tiny cord, and upon it one odd-  
shaped bead. Just one — but the rest must  
be here; and the old expert began to search  
delicately. One by one he picked them out,  
here and there, in the dusty lap, in the folds  
of the cloths — until at last, straightening up,  
he poured them tenderly from his palm to  
that of the Bullfighter. Forty-seven of these  
little faceted prisms of transparent purple!  
The younger man gloated over them with  
undisguised delight.

“You are going to break the heart of my  
friend, Doctor Saenz,” he said. “No one  
ever before, among collectors, had such a  
necklace of graven amethysts but he; and  
his two together are not worth this one. See  
how finely they have carved the crystals with  
their rude tools of hard-tempered bronze!  
Of course *we* must have this — and at your  
own price.”

“Ah!” smiled the old Don. “You would  
never do to deal with Jacobi, showing thus be-  
forehand how much you make of the thing!”

“*Ay, pues*, but this is my face in the Jews’

*The Gold Fish of Gran Chimú* street" — and the shining countenance suddenly became like a block of wood, as he drawled in very different Spanish: "Oh, descend, Sigmundo! I'll give just the fourth part of that price!"

Don Beltran laughed outright. "In purity of truth I see not even he could gain from you. Neither can I. The necklace is yours for a hundred *soles*."

"Shame on you, Don Beltran! Why, Jacobi himself would have to give you a thousand *soles* for it — and you know it."

"So he should — but my friends are not Jacobi. I know its price, and I make *my* price. But I have to be in the tunnel again. As for our cacique here, the peons shall bury him decently — for I cannot bear to leave even a mummy naked to the sky. His treasures he needs not now, as do we who have not yet gone to a better world; but respect — that he shall have still."

Just then a dust-cloud bore down on them from the west, and half a dozen horsemen reined up at the top of the bank. Five of them were in uniform; the sixth wore a priceless vicuña poncho.

“There is the assassin, Señor Intendente!” *A*  
cried the latter, pointing. “Seize him — or “*Nibble*”  
shoot him down, better, for he is dangerous.”

“Little by little, Don Blas,” rejoined the Intendente. “Let us see, first — eh? Possible? Why did you not tell me it was the young American *científico*? Good evening, Don Carlos.”

“Good evening, Don Pedro. It is surprise and pleasure to see you here.”

“In the same degree. But Don Blas Viscaino here accuses that you were to murder him, and we are come to arrest you. Though of a certainty I would not have budged, had I known it was you.”

“I am at your orders, Señor Intendente, in any event — but I am no assassin. Had I tried to kill the *caballero*, he would scarce have given you a needless ride; for I learned the pistol where it is no toy, but the brother of the frontiersman. Your gentleman thought to undermine Don Beltran; and when I warned him off, he drew a toilet pistol and promised to shoot me. At that, for practice mine, and instruction of him, I shot away the reins and set him going.”

*The Gold Fish of Gran Chimú*      “Listen, then! What gringo talk is this, that such a shot was by intention? He laughs to your chin, Señor Intendente. He went to slay me — and but that my horse ran away, he should have paid for his crime!”

The Bullfighter threw back his head, laughing softly. “Nay, then,” he said, “but we will not go back to that wheat-field. I will establish my words — or to the prison with me.”

“Arrest him, Señor! He but makes some trick to escape. Is it not enough, the word of a *caballero*?”

“You will hardly make me believe him a murderer, Don Blas. I know him. But since he offers to repeat the shot, I should like to see, for these *Norte-Americanos* are wonders.”

“*Por Dios!* I will not that he fire my way again!” Don Blas reined his horse swiftly behind the others.

“There is no fear, Señor Intendente — I will not even look toward the valiant cavalier. This *sol* will do.”

He drew from his pocket a Peruvian silver dollar and clasped its circumference with the







thumb and forefinger of the right hand — *A*  
precisely as one takes a flat pebble to “skip” “*Nibble*”  
on a pond. The sixshooter lay cocked across  
the palm of his left hand, which was extended  
nearly at arm’s length before him and as high  
as his shoulder. Drawing back the right  
hand, he scaled the coin with a full-arm  
throw. In the same flash, the same hand  
caught the revolver with a curving downward  
sweep, and fired as it swung.

“Now if you will send one of your *guardias*  
to look somewhere along the foot of yonder  
big wall. And then permit me to resume  
my affairs with Don Beltran.”

In a moment the private came back, and  
laid the coin in the hand of his superior. A  
broad, dull streak ran clear across the face of  
it from a dent on one edge, and there a tiny  
particle of lead was lodged.

“Clear! It is one he carries marked in  
his pocket, to fool innocents,” sneered Don  
Blas. But his face was the color of a dead  
man’s.

“That could be, too,” rejoined the In-  
tendente, drily, “when he *deals* with inno-  
cents. But probably he carries not a furnace

*The* in his pocket, also; and you may see that  
*Gold Fish* this piece is still warm from the impact of  
*of Gran* the ball. I never could have believed it—  
*Chimú* but you all saw. A thousand pardons, Don  
Carlos. Nor did I doubt your word. As  
for you, Don Blas, my advice is: ‘Of the  
*Yanquis*, little!’ They are better let alone.  
And most certainly I counsel you not to let  
me hear that you have further molested Don  
Beltran de Quesada. In honor, the claim of  
the *huaquero* is the same as a gold-mining  
claim—and I shall so hold it, sacred from  
interference. That you pass good evening,  
gentlemen.”

The Intendente and his soldiers rode off.  
The cavalier in the poncho wavered a moment  
between rage and fear, and then spurred away  
to his former ground.

“Avail me heaven!” Don Beltran said  
earnestly. “But such an aim half gives  
one to believe in witchcraft.”

“No more magic in it, friend, than much  
practice—and the natural eye. In the  
school where I learned it, there were many  
better shots than I—and some worse.”

“The saints! But to the tunnel. Will

you enter? There is no care now — since the *A* Intendente, and that shot, no one will “*Nibble*” meddle.”

The two men let themselves down into the shaft, with a long breath as one takes at sinking under water. The pit was about eight feet deep. At its bottom a “drift” ran off southerly and downward. In the dust they could no longer use their eyes; but, groping for the opening, they began to creep in cautiously on hands and knees. Even for that posture, the passage was at times too low, and their heads kept knocking down lumps of pulverized earth which nearly smothered them. There was always danger, too, of a cave-in that would crush them to death — for in mummy-mining one does not timber the tunnels. The Bullfighter lighted his pocket lantern, and they crept on. Now, opening their eyes for an instant, they saw adobe masonry ahead; and, worming through a gap in this underground wall, were in a little adobe cell six feet square, roofed with poles. The peons had cleared it out, and a breach in the farther wall showed where they had gone on.

*The*

*Gold Fish*

*of Gran*

*Chimú*

“I know not what this shall be,” said Don Beltran in his companion’s ear. “There is a world of these little rooms here, four rooms thick and in two tiers, one upon the other. How long the row is, right and left, I do not yet know, — till now, we have only pierced it crosswise. Understood, that all these cells were full with earth; and it was in the fourth they found the mummy we have just searched, sitting upon an adobe bench. Beyond is what seems a hall, and in the further wall of that, a doorway bricked up with adobes. There is where I have the hope. Is it not a strange arrangement — and a promising one?”

They crawled on from little room to little room. In the fourth a peon was passing the dust of the floor through a small sieve.

“But not to waste time with these,” said the old man to him. “Get thee to helping them that carry out the earth. We are for great things, now, or nothing — toys will not ransom the Moche.”

Three negroes came crawling through from beyond, tugging rawhide sacks of earth to empty at the mouth of the shaft. Don Beltran and the Bullfighter entered the hole

whence they had emerged. Here Gonzalo, *A*  
with two feeble candles, was digging cau- *“Nibble”*  
tiously, and at the same time directing the  
peons. The place did look to be a narrow  
hall. It was six feet wide, and they had  
cleared out some ten feet lengthwise. The  
roof was still strong enough to protect them  
from a serious cave-in, though constantly  
sifting down a thick dust upon them. Its  
rafters were crooked trunks of small trees,  
— all but two, and they were ribs of some  
whale that had drifted upon the beach in the  
ancient days. Midway of the farther wall  
was a clearly defined doorway, walled up  
solid with the same adobe masonry.

“To see, then!” cried Don Beltran, seiz-  
ing an iron bar. “I wished you to be here  
at the entering.”

He pecked eagerly at the tough mud bricks.  
An elfish thing it was, to watch, here thirty  
feet under the ground: the crazy candles and  
brave little lantern fighting at odds with the  
gloom; the dull, close air stifling thick with  
the dust of what was life so many ages ago;  
and that swaying shadow swinging the bar,  
*peck, peck, peck*, against the ancient wall.

*The Gold Fish of Gran Chimú* Presently Don Beltran had loosened one adobe. With this gap made, he pried out the next more easily; the third more easily still. In another five minutes he had removed enough to leave a hole a couple of feet square, through which the dust from beyond came sliding about their feet. Only under high excitement could so old a man have worked so long in such air, and now Don Beltran staggered. The *Yanqui* caught him gently under the arms and laid him down; and taking a spade, began to shovel earth into one of the *zurrones* which a peon held open. That was soon filled, and the cholo dragged it off toward the upper world, while another brought his pouch for a load.

Several times the Bullfighter flung himself down, gasping upon the floor, burying his face in his sleeve to escape the dust, while a peon continued the digging. Then he would get up again and go at it as hard as ever. Already the sliding soil disclosed a considerable space of roof and wall in the new chamber.

Then the spade felt something which half resisted, half yielded. Even the Bullfighter



had dug enough in Peruvian ruins to know *A*  
what it meant. He stooped swiftly, reach- *"Nibble"*  
ing out his hand to grope in the dust. Then  
he suddenly straightened up, scraped a little  
avalanche of dust down over the spot, and  
backed out into the passage with a little twist  
in the corner of his dusty mouth.

"Come, *hijito*, and dig a little," he said  
to Gonzalo, very soberly. "Perhaps thou  
shalt bring luck."

Gonzalo did not wait for a second bidding,  
but sprang into the gap with undisguised  
delight. That is the fever of it! This boy,  
— who in six hours had drawn hardly as many  
breaths without such pain as one has who  
smothers in a burning house; who had been  
working, all those hours, as one can work  
only under keen excitement; whose hands  
were blistered and back aching; whose eyes,  
mouth, nostrils, throat, lungs, and pores  
were almost buried alive in the dust which  
had invaded them, — this boy springing to a  
new, hard task as eagerly as if he had never  
heard of discomfort!

He had not dug three spade-thrusts when  
he cried out loudly — and even with the jar

*The Gold Fish of Gran Chimú* of his voice, a barrow-load of soil pattered down in the passage. He fell upon his knees and ran his bare arm shoulder-deep in the dust, and brought out a battered object, with which he came stumbling to the nearest candle.

“Bravo!” cried his father, wiping off the dust till a blue surface was visible. “Where silver vases are so large, better things may be.” And the Bullfighter, smiling till his mask of caked dust cracked clear across, added: “A hundred *soles* the shovelful! Look what a *huaquero* is this Gonzalo!”

But the boy hardly heard. He was already back in his stope, worrying the flour-like soil. In another moment he reappeared in the passage with another vase.

“They are twins,” said Don Beltran, beginning to fire up too. “But hast thou not yet made room so that another might work in there with thee?”

“Ye-es—but oh, *tata*, it is a so-little room—let *me* find what is! *I* want to be the one to make you rich!”

“It were doubly welcome at thy hand, son. But even for that, we must not lose much

time. Yet a little longer thou — and then let *A*  
'Lipe help thee." "Nibble"

"*Ea!* But this is a *deposito* of vases, and all silver!" For Gonzalo had flung out two more. All four were about of a size — tall, tapering, and of some two quarts' capacity each. But all differed in the crude embossed figures hammered up around the rim — as the Bullfighter was satisfying himself, lying alongside his lantern and rubbing off the blue "rust" with his tough palm.

Don Beltran had been holding his hands clasped about his knees, with a tension at the knuckles which showed that he was also holding his impatience. But now he leaned forward with: "*Pues*, we must not delay more, even for the lad's delight. *Anda*, 'Lipe."

'Lipe was crawling into the hole, when Gonzalo burst out so impetuously as to send the big peon sprawling against the farther wall.

"*Mira!*" cried the lad, shrilly. "The weight of it! The weight of it! *Here* is no silver! Rub it and see!"

He was hugging to him a tall jar a foot in

*The* diameter, and flinging himself to his knees  
*Gold Fish* beside his father, he held it out, gasping.  
*of Gran* The old man caught it by the edge; and as  
*Chimú* he lifted it, his hand suddenly shivered.

“Don Carlos,” he said faintly, — and laid  
a hand softly upon the Bullfighter’s knee —  
“I—think—we have a bite of the *Pez*  
*Grande!*”





## Chapter V

### A Night in the Ruins

“GOD send it so!” answered the Bull-fighter, earnestly, pressing the old man’s hand. “But to me, the room promises to be small for that. The *Pez Grande* they would hardly divide; and it would need a very great chamber. Not that we are yet sure how large this room is; and even though the Big Fish be not here, there may be a ‘fish’ big enough for all needs. But come, *amigo* — already it is very-night, and you must rest.

*The Gold Fish of Gran Chimú*      You are too old for this, and the boy too young. If the Big Fish be here, he will not have swum away by morning."

"Ah, so little fevered! Nor am *I* a gold-crazy, either. It is only that this means to lose or to save my home — only for that I am so spurred. But you have reason. The boy must sleep. And for me — *ay!* I am shaking!"

Don Beltran had risen, but now suddenly sank back. The Bullfighter twisted him across his thick young shoulders and packed him out of the shaft, followed by Gonzalo. After a breathless scramble on all fours, they were out under the dim, fresh sky — and how good it seemed to get an honest breath again! As they gasped and gulped greedily at the salty air, one of them saw himself back in Colorado watching poor old Jack — the mule brought up to the surface for the first time in five years — and how the blinded brute went mad with very joy of the light and air and forgotten grass.

A few moments revived Don Beltran from his swoon. "We will rest us even here," he said, sitting up. "I could not leave it."

“I would stay, too, but I promised the Maestro, and it is already late.”

*A Night  
in the  
Ruins*

The Bullfighter looked at his watch in its “dust-proof” case. It had stopped. “Our watchmakers don’t know the mummy-dust,” he smiled, turning to the Southern Cross. “By the stars it should be about eleven o’clock, so I must hurry. Keep this with you, in case of need to guard your mine” — and unbuckling his belt he handed his six-shooter to the old man.

“No! You more need it, going back to Cortiju by night — for in these pauper times the bandits are a wonder.”

“There is no care,” answered the other, lightly. “Four years I was practicing the Bok-kess<sup>1</sup> daily, and my fists suffice. Except for the excavations I wouldn’t be bothered with the pistol — getting a permit and all that. Rest well and I will see you early. Till the morning, then” — and he was gone before Don Beltran could expostulate further.

The night had suddenly become very dark.

<sup>1</sup> There is no Spanish word for boxing; and this borrowed word is hard for a Spaniard to pronounce. This is as near as he comes to it.

*The  
Gold Fish  
of Gran  
Chimí*

The fog, considerably behind time, was now rolling in heavily, and had quite drowned the stars. The Bullfighter went stumbling over the uneven surface; he knew the ground well, and in spite of trips threaded his way rapidly through the maze of walls and mounds and pitfalls. His head was buzzing with excitement; for though he had talked coolly, he believed Don Beltran had "struck it." Not the "Big Fish," probably — the chamber looked wrong for that, to his notion — but at any rate, some sort of *tapada*. May be enough to set the dear old man upon his feet again.

Suddenly it was as if a cold cloud had fallen across his brain. The fire of his thoughts went out instantly, and he stopped short with an involuntary shiver.

"What thing?" he muttered in bewilderment. "What ails me? Say! Something is wrong here!" He thrust his chin out in the darkness. "Am I learning to dream nightmares awake?"

He pushed on very slowly now, with ears alert, and that aggressive chin poked forward. There was nothing to be seen, nothing







to be heard. He edged a little away from the foot of a big wall he had been following; and half faced toward it as he reached its end. *A Night in the Ruins*

There was a desperate rush in the darkness; then three sodden thumps in swift succession. He had struck out right and left, and each fist found a mark. But in almost the same instant a dull, red light seemed to smite his eyes, a sound as of crashing timbers filled his head, and he went down like a log.

But the ponchoed gentleman on horseback was by no means satisfied, when he had inspected the job. "Fools, and sons of fools!" he snarled. "Why did you strike so hard? Do you think the skull of a man is made of algarrobo wood, that such clubs cannot crack it? And I clearly told you to get him alive, for *I* had an account to settle with him. *Ea!* And these two swine that he smote, we have them to carry off, lest they lie here till they be seen. *Á dios!* What class of fists have these gringoes that exercise them with the Bok-kess? Pepe and Juancho lie as if a wall had befallen them. Stir, pigs! Fling them across the crupper, and I will pack them

*The* to the hacienda. And for the gringo — *pues,*  
*Gold Fish* here is too near the road. Haul him over to  
*of Gran* the Big Barrio and drop him in a pit.”  
*Chimú*

But the Bullfighter was not quite so dead as all that. If not altogether of ironwood, his skull was a wonderfully tough one — tough enough to have cheated the murderers. Along in the first gray of dawn, consciousness began to come back to him — and with it maddening pains in the head. Stupidly he tried to roll over, but relinquished the effort with a groan. He was lying at the bottom of a long, deep trench, sprawled and doubled over a heap of cobblestones that were wet, this morning, for the first time in years and red for perhaps quite the first time. Off to the right an enormous wall loomed up in the dark; and near it he presently became aware of a great rolling cloud.

“What — er — where am I?” he thought, as his senses began to clear. “Yon wall looks to me like one of the Big Barrio. I certainly did not lie down here — for I was sober, and not wholly insane. Where was I last? Eh — so! I knocked somebody down,

and then — the sky fell on me, I guess! I remember, now. But that wasn't here. To see!"

Clenching his teeth, he struggled up out of the trench, at last, and lay spent with the pain of the effort. There seemed to be a hum as of voices not far off, and he started to call out, but closed his mouth and dragged himself toward the sound. He was sore in need of help, but that gashed skull reminded him that it would be better first to know upon whom he called. His crawling progress was slow and full of torture; but at last he came to the top of a steep little slope, and peered over the wall at its top to the hollow beyond.

Dark figures in motion were there; and, even more visible, a great cloud that rolled up like smoke from under their feet. "Somebody must have struck a paystreak," he mused, "thus to be digging all night. Well, *huaqueros* won't hurt me —" and he was again about to call, but bit down upon the sound just in time. For down in the hollow a too well-known voice was crying: "More force, lazies! It fails little of dawn, and we must be done."

*The* "Seven million monkeys!" the wounded  
*Gold Fish* man ejaculated under his breath. "Where  
*of Gran* under the moon did the boy raise the money?  
*Chimú* Somebody has 'staked' him, and here he is  
coyoting the old miser's claim, after all.  
No, if my head aches off, I won't call him!  
The little rat—even his mercy would smell  
of thievery. But since he invited me to share  
the burglary, I suppose I'm welcome to lie  
here and watch it."

Just then there was a sudden commotion,  
down yonder, of crowding figures and low  
cries of "They have reached! One has  
broken through to the chamber! Now to  
see the *Pez Grande!*" Then Franco was  
heard again, nervously urging them to dig  
fast.

The foggy east began to light up a little,  
and the Bullfighter could see more clearly.  
Fifty peons were bunched at the foot of the  
adobe pyramid, digging for dear life; and  
the boy employer was hopping about like a  
grasshopper in hysterics, exhorting, plead-  
ing, threatening, promising, directing.

From the mouth of the big pit rolled out  
a great cloud as from a volcanic crater. They

must be clearing the chamber very fast — but *A Night*  
as yet there were no outcries. Presently *in the*  
even the low buzz began to wane. The *Ruins*  
peons turned now and then to look at one  
another as they shoveled; and Franco was  
running to and fro on the bank like a crazy  
boy.

“Will you never be done in there?” he  
cried at last, bending over the brink; and his  
voice was like a rusty hinge. “It is making  
day. Haven’t you found it yet?” He  
rushed up to the top of the ridge and looked  
off toward Truxillo; and tore down to the  
excavation again. “*Jumping!*” he fairly  
shrieked. “Already I see the dust at Cor-  
tiju — the Stingy is coming! Let me in  
there!”

He dove down out of sight in the dust-  
cloud. The laborers above straightened up  
over their spades, nodding significantly to  
one another. Two minutes after a huge  
*zambo* clambered out, hauling the boy kindly  
by the arm. Franco was limp and ghastly.

“It is too bad, young sir,” said a digger  
with evident sympathy. “But now it is to  
go — for in a breath Don Guzman will be

*The Gold Fish of Gran Chimú* here, and it is not I that have compliments to swap with him here. Our wage, then, and we are gone."

"I will pay ye in Truxillo," whined the boy. "Here is no time for counting *soles* and noses. *Vamos*, and at home you shall have the money."

"Of truth, my sir?" The big peon spoke sarcastically. "Look you, young master! The Englisher that ten years ago deserted his cholo wife and their child, here in Truxillo, — he owes me still for the work of a week. And his son will pay me before he budes from this place."

Franco groaned and glanced desperately about; but what he saw in their faces set him to shoveling down into his pockets. One after another he emptied them of their heavy load, till his tattered hat was brimming with the silver dollars. He rose from his knees with a sob, the hat sagging heavy between his hands. Then a swift, foxy light flared in his eyes, and the end of the sob had a queer, chuckling ring. Still clutching the rim, he flung his hands up and out, one higher than the other, and whirling on his heel like the



pivot of a pinwheel that flings its sparks in every direction, fled down the *barrio* like a gray shadow. Almost before the shower of silver had ceased to patter on the dust, he was out of the hollow. The peons stared after him with a gasp, and fell upon their knees, groping in the dust for the scattered coins. No use to follow him — the money was here; and if they did not get it now, they never would.

As for the Bullfighter, up behind his wall, he gasped too.

“Canary!” he muttered. “But if ever a boy was born to fit a rope, there he goes! Because his sneak-thief trick fails, he is consoled with torturing the poor peons that have been working like dogs for him. He must be poison all through.”

Such another rooting was never seen in Gran Chimú — nor anywhere else; unless it may have been when Circe flung that handful of acorns to remind Ulysses that his two-legged pigs had not yet forgotten their bristles. The only disinterested spectator would have roared in spite of his mangled head, had not his heart been sorer still with thought of

*The* the boy; and even in his repugnance a smile  
*Gold Fish* flickered on the blue lips. The poor peons  
*of Gran* were wallowing and clawing in the deep dust,  
*Chimú* jostling one another, sifting the soil through  
their fingers, in an agony of haste. Now and  
then one would thrust his hand swiftly or fur-  
tively into his pocket, and then resume his  
scratching.

All leaped to their feet as a low, search-  
ing voice called: "Feet-in-dusty, lads!  
Don Guzman comes!" Some looked about  
in wonder; others gazed hungrily at the  
ground, whose silver harvest was not yet all  
gathered; and then all scurried away through  
a walled alley. Three minutes later, the  
Miser came puffing over the southwestern  
ridge, followed by his hundred laborers.

Now the watcher's smile was uncon-  
strained. He hitched up on his elbow, the  
better to look down through his little gap in  
the adobe wall. It was quite light, and even  
faces were now clear, down there. Don Guz-  
man had plainly been walking fast, but his  
sour countenance glowed with something  
warmer than exercise. "What a heart must  
one carry, to own such a face!" thought the

watcher. "Even hope, which transfigures *A Night*  
the plainest, only makes him the uglier." *in the*

The Miser half turned as he neared the *Ruins*  
excavation, and beckoned his peons with an  
impatient sweep of the arm. "More speed,  
lazies! And to work, even as you left off.  
Five *soles* to him who shall first—Holiest  
Mother! Robbed! *Robbed!*" His voice  
rose to a howl, and he tottered upon the brink  
of the great pit.

The peons came running up with grunts  
and cries of wonder. Certain it was that  
the excavation was twice as large as they had  
left it at dark last night.

"It will be witchcraft!" whined one fel-  
low, glancing about nervously; but the Miser  
flew at him like a fury. "*What* witches?  
Nor what weathervanes!" he screamed.  
"What have *brujos* to say with money or with  
gold? A thief and son of thieves has come  
while we slept and stolen my treasure! I am  
ruined, then — *ruined!* Three hundred *soles*  
thrown to the dogs, and all that some shame-  
less should steal my prize. To see if they  
have left nothing!"

He plunged into the excavation followed

*The* by the slower peons. In a moment he was  
*Gold Fish* out again, dashing his candle viciously un-  
*of Gran* derfoot and tearing his scrawny beard.

*Chimú* "All! All!" he bawled. "It is bare as a broken jar. They left not so much as a candle-end. *Ay de mi*, wretched that I am, who have wasted my substance to make another rich!"

"But, master," ventured a cholo who had tarried longer in the tunnel, "come and look yet again. For neither did the thief find anything, or my eyes are fools!"

"Fools they are, and their owner! For what should be so great a chamber, if not to hold the Big Fish? *Ay! Ay! Ay!*"

"But come and see, nevertheless," persisted the laborer. "Nothing was in that chamber when it was opened, so all the signs say. Not so, Juan?"

"Clear!" answered the peon appealed to. "Any one may see that they found nothing."

Incredulous still, Don Guzman accompanied them back into the *huaca*. When he emerged his face was purple.

"There is but one thief — that barbarian Bartolo! And I will bring him in the courts!"

He shall rot in jail! Did I not waste a dime and a half of good wine to disclose his tongue? And when I had brought him here to Chimú with pain of my joints and asked him, 'Where? where, brute?' he said, 'Here! Dig even here!' Shameless! But he shall pay! Three hundred *soles* and fifteen cents — yes, and the costs of my sorrow!"

"*Don Guzman!*"

The Miser started, at this unknown voice, but then sank down stupidly upon the ground, flinging dust upon his hair, bewailing his three hundred *soles* and fifteen cents, and anon cursing the "barbaro."

The call came again. Above the wall up yonder a hand waved something round and shiny. Don Guzman sprang to his feet and clambered up the slope with alacrity, but at sight of that ghastly face and matted head recoiled in horror.

"There is no fear," said the young man, faintly but clearly. "Some one bumped-me the head, last night, and I cannot help myself. Lend me a pair of peons to carry me to Cortiju, and you shall have five *soles* — and I will pay them besides."

*The Gold Fish* “Money counted? For I have been robbed, Señor, of a great sum, and cannot waste time on credit.”

*Chimú* “Yes, yes! Only with haste, or not a *real* do you get.”

In half an hour two burly negroes brought the limp burden upon their shoulders into the west room at Cortiju. The Maestro sprang up, suddenly pale. “What have ye done to him? Ach, my poor boy! In the bed there — and gently, oxen! Now call me the doctor from Truxillo.”

“What an escape!” he ejaculated, when he had bandaged the broken head and heard the story. Then in his familiar way again: “I’m glad that head is good for *something!* But come, here’s better medicine than the doctor will bring you. You young crank! *I* know your blood — if you were ever quite dead (which I doubt is possible) I’d bring you to life again with just holding a rare curio to you!”

With which extravagance, half satire, half affection, he went over and dived into his desk, returning with his right hand elevated and closed.

“Now, then, let me see a little more color in that whetstone of a face!” He opened his fingers and thrust his hand before the inquiring eyes. But curiously enough, what little color was in the pale cheek left it at once. The blue lips parted and then pursed together again.

“Eh? Ever see the like? Of course you didn’t! It is a unique, I can tell you — not another like it in any collection on earth. Do you see? It is *inlaid*, silver on gold, the whole body — even the pattern of the tunic. And those eyes! Did you ever see better emeralds of their size? But I’m a brute! Pardon me, my poor boy — you are too weak.”

The “poor boy” shook his head with a grim little smile. “Oh, no! But whence is it? Can there be two? Have you also been *huaqueando*?”

“*Two* — I should say not! What are you talking about? Franco dug it up; and in spite of my rule, I gave him fifty *soles* for it, as he said his family was in great distress for the money.”

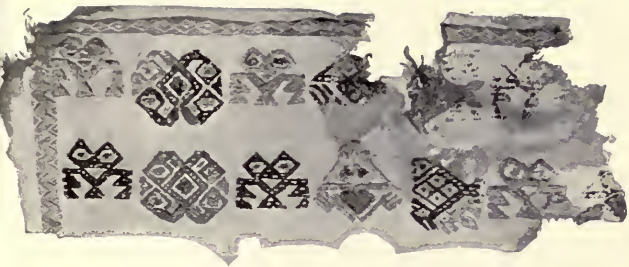
The wounded man bit his lip. Then he

*The* said quietly: "Well, you certainly were justified. It is a priceless find, and we are getting it cheap. And fifty *soles* reminds me —  
*Gold Fish* I want you to hold back fifty from my salary. Never mind why — I don't like to talk about my blunders, but I don't intend the expedition shall pay for them."  
*of Gran*  
*Chimú*

"As you will, my boy. And, by the way, I just got a despatch from Lima. Congress passed the National Museum law at last night's session!"







## Chapter VI

“And this is what they call Rain!”

DON BELTRAN and Gonzalo had been hard at work since three o'clock this morning; and now at nine were come out of the stifling hole to rest their lungs awhile. Their faces were unlike any mask of humanity, grotesquely malformed with the persistent dust. But though a stranger to the country would very probably have fled at first sight of those demoniac visages, a second glance would have reassured, and even won him. Through all the disguise, hope and wear-

*“And this is what they call Rain!”*

*The*           ness, excitement and awe, looked out their  
*Gold Fish* full humanity.

*of Gran*       “Praised be God!” the old man was mur-  
*Chimú*       muring, half to himself. “So He did not  
desert us. Ah, if only thy poor little mother  
might have waited with us, that she might  
know her son was not cursed to be a pauper!”

“*Pobrecita de mi mamá!* She would be  
better than ten *Peces Grandes!* But perhaps  
He will let her to know — and how she will  
smile, when she looks down and sees the  
Moche free! This little one I saved to build  
an altar for her, when the house is recom-  
posed.” Gonzalo drew from his pocket a  
small head of massive gold, a pound in  
weight. The rest of their trophies were laid  
up in a niche just inside the shaft — a dozen  
large golden vases, and twice as many of  
silver.

“And is there yet enough to quiet the  
usurer?” he continued, affectionately weigh-  
ing his own particular prize in a slender,  
grimy fist.

“Nor the third of it. Still, at the rate at  
which we have come this morning, two days  
more will do it — for that treasure enough is

in there, I make no doubt. But come. *“And Rest is good, and even needful; but we shall rest the better when Moche is nearer in our hands. Come, hijo.”* *this is what they call*

The old man rose, straightening his back with an effort. *Rain!”*

*“Hola, Don Beltran!”*

They were just dropping into the shaft when the call reached them, and they came back out of the dust. The Intendente and a couple of guards had reined up on the bank.

“I come to advise, friend, that we just have news. Our Congress passed the *huaca* law last night; and if you are to go on *huaqueando*, it must be under the regulations, which I shall be glad to give you at the *intendencia*.” The officer’s face and tone were full of friendly sympathy.

Don Beltran went gray as death. Big drops suddenly stood out like beads upon his forehead, and his legs seemed to be giving way. Then, gradually, he grew to his full stature, the tired old shoulders squaring back, not defiantly, but with slow unconsciousness, the grizzled head turning erect

*The Gold Fish of Gran Chimú* and steady. He looked up at the Intendente for a moment, and then said, so very slowly, clearly, softly that a woman would have wept at hearing that voice: "I give you most thanks, Don Pedro. I shall either dig no more, or comply fully. And for the past? We have already found articles of great worth, this morning — since the law became law, and perhaps something after its hour, last night. It is all here, — for we have not left the spot, — and all at your orders."

Don Pedro de Villazur looked earnestly at the slender, erect old figure, and his eyes kindled. "By St. Iago!" he cried impulsively. "There are still men in Peru! Look you, then, Don Beltran. I know not how one of our sainted courts might read the law, but as far as now *I* am its judge. There needs no witness to tell that you first hear the news from me. Then I rule that what you have done before the law was announced in the Gran Chimú makes no count. It is yours — and I but wish I could in honor say as much for afterward. But now the law is here, I shall enforce it to the letter. So if you wish to continue, I must

ask you to wait until I can send the understood detail of soldiers."

"And  
this is  
what  
they call  
Rain!"

"No, sir, and friend of mine, I shall dig no further. To what purpose, under such a law?"

"You have reason. Neither would I. So far as touches my office, you know you could expect justice; but when your treasures should once have gone to Lima — *pues*, you know our friends the officials."

Don Beltran stood watching the Intendente as he rode off. Then he sank upon a hummock of earth, and drew his arm gently about the sobbing boy, smoothing the jetty hair mechanically. "*Oyes!*" he called huskily to a peon just emptying his *zurron* from the mouth of the shaft. "Now it is to stop. The digging is finished."

"But, Se'or," ventured the laborer. "They are even now uncovering a large *bulto* which —"

"It imports not," the old man answered gently. "Leap in and bid them drop it and cease work on the instant." Then his head drooped again.

Gonzalo lifted his stained face and broke

*The* out, between sobs, "It's a wi-wicked law, —  
*Gold Fish* a law of fools and thieves, as said the Se'or  
*of Gran* Bullfighter, — and it ought to be b-broken,  
*Chimú* I say!"

"No, sonling! No law is so wicked it should be broken. True is it, what Don Carlos says; but he also will respect it — and so shall we."

"But just when we were to sa-save our dear Moche! And now it will be lost!"

"Even as God will, soul of my heart. I had hoped He would permit us — but — but —" Then, in spite of him, the brave, gentle voice broke, and laying his head to Gonzalo's he sobbed heartbrokenly.

"*Tst! Tst*, friends!" rang a cheery cry — and the Maestro was hauling at them. "Come up, sons!" He laughed, tugging their arms with affected roughness — and for their own tears they could not see the mist in his eyes.

"Come for home, you tired *huaqueros!*" he went on. "When I got a despatch from the Secretary of the Chamber, we thought of you, and now I have come for you. But you must see our poor Don Carlos. Some one

set upon him after he left you last night, and killed him — only, as you might know, he's too obstinate to admit it. But he is a sorry sight, and needs better nurses than I am. *“And this is what they call Vamos? To be sure — let me carry some of the plunder. So! All that? At the least, I can give you better prices for them than you could get from the Jews or the melting-pot. Here will be four or five thousand soles, I should say.”*

Don Beltran looked at him half dreamily. “You are too good! But it avails not. Five *soles*, or five thousand, it is all the same — since it is not twenty thousand.”

A week from that day, the Bullfighter was coming out of the Hotel Cosmos and turning down the Calle del Progreso. He was still very pale, and his step lacked its old spring; but his eyes were clear. At the corner of the plaza he ran up against a stalwart zambo. The negro started to brush him aside — and then recoiled, staring at him in evident terror.

“Ah, my lamb!” drawled the American, sardonically. “No, I am not a ghost. And welcome, thou! I looked to meet thee, but

*The Gold Fish* not so soon. I *thought* it was the cheek-bone, by the feel of my knuckles."

*of Gran Chimú* "Se'or! Of what talk you? I never saw Your Grace before!"

"Perhaps not—but felt me, no? Thinkest thou that I sign, and afterward know not my own *firma*? And I trust thy fellow is as well bewritten, eh? My left hand seemed to deal with a nose. But I have joy to meet thee and understand—for before, I was at a loss. I remember thee at the hacienda of Viscaino. Tell then thy master Don Blas, for me, that I am not feeble for long, and that if he would try me again he had best hasten, ere I get strong. And thou—go with God, lest I sign the other cheek, to balance that ugly page."

As the negro slunk away, there was a touch on the Bullfighter's elbow—which was turned out in a peculiar fashion you never see in those whose intentions are wholly peaceable. He wheeled as if to meet an attack—and dropped his hand to his side with a swift smile.

"Gonzalo, my boy! But shameless! Here I've been in the bed six days, without a word of thee."



“No, friend — shame I have! But it was not fault of mine. My father is very sick, and I have not left him till now. When they brought you to the hotel, we carried him to Moche — for he was always crying out for it in his fever. If you and the Maestro could but come! For he ever thinks on you.”

“*And this is what they call Rain!*”

“Understood that I will come, and now. The Maestro, too, when he shall return from Lima, whither he went by this morning’s steamer.”

“And that zambo, Se’or? For he is the same who has thrice interrogated me touching our luck at digging; and I saw that he was strangely maltreated in one side of the face — as if it had caved in, and with three purple cuts in a line, the middle one longest.”

The Bullfighter closed his right hand till the knuckles stood sharp, and extended it. Gonzalo nodded, with a sudden light.

“So, he was with them that laid wood to Your Grace’s head! But he not, I’ll engage. Then it is to thank Don Blas for all that cowardly crime — we thought of him. And it is he, too, who is so concerned touching what we found in the *huaca*.”

*The*                    “Well, he is not dangerous. But come  
*Gold Fish* back to the hotel, and we will take horses —  
*of Gran* for when your Peruvian sun breaks out I  
*Chimú* can't trust this second-hand head to walking  
under it.”

They had ridden down the last streets of Truxillo and out between the ponderous adobe fences of the cornfields, rather in silence. Then the Bullfighter turned to his companion.

“And? What are the plans now? Does thy father think to dig still, under the new law?”

“No, Se'or, it is useless. He talked it much with the Se'or Maestro and the Se'or Intendente, and all agree that to dig under the law is only to be robbed. I think that is his sickness. There is no longer any honest way to gain twenty thousand *soles*; and so in a few days Moche will be gone from us. He is brave, and says nothing when he is not in the fever, and then he talks of it all the time, and that I am a pauper. It avails not for much that I tell him to have *him* is riches all I want. He does not hear, and only cries: ‘Seventy and five years with these

hands untiring — and then to leave my only child a beggar! ’ ”

*“And  
this is  
what  
they call  
Rain!”*

“Dear, brave old man! If ever one manfully earned success, he has — and hard it is to see him cheated out of it. I can understand how he feels about the old hacienda. Even if it had not been in the family for three centuries, it is a place that even a new owner would hate to give up. And we are on the Moche now, no? ”

“Not yet, Se’or — about ten paces farther. Here the line runs along yonder bank of the arroyo, and thence to yonder peak, going some three hundred paces this side of the great *huaca*.”

“So! Then you own the whole pyramid of Moche — the Huaca of the Sun!”

“*Si*, Se’or. But it does us nothing. Only, that I love it — to climb up and down, and to sit upon its top where the pagans made sacrifice, and to think of the old days.”

The trail led under the very foot of the great pyramid. It is eight hundred feet long and nearly five hundred wide, and the top rises two hundred feet in the air.

“*Ay!* But so many years as it must

*The* have taken the *antiguos* to build it, no,  
*Gold Fish* Se'or?"

*of Gran* "Verily! I made a rough measurement the  
*Chimú* other day. There are like two and a third  
millions of tons of masonry in that pyramid  
now—and it used to be somewhat greater.  
Lucky that this coast is so dry, or the ages  
would have left little of this wonder."

"A thing strange, no? And you say that  
in your country, in the States Uniteds, it  
rains every year? Then you need not irri-  
gate. But in this poor my Peru, never. In  
the mountains, yes, but that is far; and they  
have told me of great storms in the Ama-  
zonas. But here in the Coast—*pues*, I have  
fifteen years, and *I* have never seen it. It  
must be a thing good to look upon, no?  
The water falling from the sky in round  
drops, they say—even like great, pitying  
tears of Our Father. And you have seen it  
rain?"

The Bullfighter smiled across to the eager  
face. "And felt it, and slept in it, many a  
night. Aye, and if this were anywhere but  
the West Coast, I should say *you'll* see rain  
before you go to bed," he added, rising in

the saddle. "See yon black front of cloud scowling behind Salaverry? That has rain in its heart, or its face is a liar."

"But it cannot rain here, I think, Se'or."

"Oh, yes it can. Your father remembers a rain about twenty-five years ago; and the walls of the Gran Chimú show rain-carving plainly. In the old records I have read of several hard rain-storms on the coast of Peru—and one in 1730 destroyed the town of Paita, so fierce was it."

"Well, I would not that it destroy anything—but oh, to see it rain, the very hardest it knows! It must be a wonder! And does it fall from all the sky, or only leaking in places? Falling from so high, it must hurt, no? But mark that cloud, how it gallops across all the heaven! I have never seen it so. Even the fog comes more slowly."

Their horses had turned through the willows, crossing a little bridge over the irrigating ditch, and quickened their pace toward the long, low, white building half hidden among its tropic trees. A servant took the animals to the stable, while Gonzalo conducted his friend through the arched halls

*The Gold Fish of Gran Chimú* and into a broad, high room. "Here he is, *tata*," he whispered at the bedside; and tip-toeing out, closed the door, leaving the old man and the younger one clasping hands and looking into one another's eyes.

When Chenta shuffled into the room half an hour later to remove the chocolate cups, she was all a-quake. "Save me, heaven!" she stammered, crossing herself. "But this will be the end of the world! Water is falling from all the sky, and swift lights go everywhere!"

"It is but rain, child," said the old man, gently. "Twice have I seen it, since I was born in Moche, and there is no fear. Storm, then, sky! But for me the clearer weather —" and his eyes turned to the Bullfighter. "Where is Gonzalo? Send him hither, that he may know who shall stand in my place to him when I am gone."

"Who knows, Se'or? He went out just before the tempest."

"There is no fear, Don Beltran," put in the American. "He has but gone to enjoy his first rain. He was greatly interested when I told him about it, and now he means

to prove it for himself. But I wonder how he will enjoy *that!*” Just then the shuttered room was pierced with a tremendous glare; and in a moment an avalanche of thunder rocked the earth. “*And this is what they call Rain!*”

The small, drenched figure squatted upon the very crest of the Pyramid of Moche could himself hardly have told at first “how he liked *that.*” As to the torrent from the clouds, there was no question. It was as glorious as it was wonderful. And this was what they call Rain! To think that the sky could drop such a deluge! There certainly must be an ocean up there — and how could so much water come overhead? He had run about in sturdy glory under the pelting down-pour — shouting — trying to catch those swift drops and see what they looked like — up-turning his face to trap them in his mouth, and sputtering with delight at the choky fullness of his success. If it would only rain oftener in Peru! Not just once in a lifetime, but every year, as it did in happier lands, — and maybe even more than once in a year, by the way Don Carlos spoke!

*The Gold Fish of Gran Chimú* But when for the first time in his life, too, he saw the sky split by a swift red blade of light, and heard the sundered halves come together again with a crash that made the pyramid shiver, he was scared very nearly out of his wits. That, however, was not for long. Finding that this blind light and appalling roar passed without harming him, he jumped less at the second bolt, and at the third hardly at all. It was rather sudden to the nerves, yes — but — but — well, he began to believe this was quite as much fun as the rain itself; and in a few minutes more he was again trotting up and down the level “platform” of the pyramid’s top, stopping now to catch the deep growl of the lions of the sky, now shouting with delight when a glare of lightning flung across his high lookout his own vast shadow, so swiftly come, so swiftly swallowed back by the gloom, that he knew it must be magic.

The rain was coming down, now, in very waves. It drummed on the adobe with the sway and roar of a rising surf. By the flashes he could see wavering pools, that ran together, and blinked on the dark edge, and



leaped off down the precipitous side in sudden whiteness.

Hm! But it must be well night! And— his father? Pricked with shame at having forgotten everything but the storm, he turned and went scrambling down at a point on the west where the pyramid was not quite so inaccessible. The rain-flood swished around his bare legs, tugging at them. The drenched adobe set his feet to sliding. He flung up his arms, lurching to get balance. And suddenly above the storm he heard a strange, gurgling roar, as of a gigantic suction; the earth gave way underfoot, and in a smother of mud and water Gonzalo went whirling into the abyss.

*“And  
this is  
what  
they call  
Rain!”*





## Chapter VII

### Gonzalo's "String"

*The  
Gold Fish  
of Gran  
Chimú*

WHEN midnight had come to Moche, and no Gonzalo, it was clear something must be done. For two hours the Bull-fighter had been frequently reassuring the fevered old man. "*No hay cuidado,*" he kept saying. "You must remember that the lad never before saw the rain, and now is

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carried away with it. But as for harm — *Gonzalo's*  
pooh, he is too *hombrote* to get into trouble.” “*String*”

But at last the comforter grew anxious, too. For a Spanish boy, of Gonzalo's bringing up, to be out thus meant something, he knew. And presently he said: “*Pues*, Don Beltran, since you have anxiety, I will go to look. Only that you promise to sleep, and leave it to me. I will answer for the boy. Until soon, then!”

The storm was over, when he descended the veranda and mounted his horse. Now and then a dingy star glimmered in the leaden sky. The only sound abroad was the swish of running waters everywhere. The horse slowly picked its way to the *acequia* and over the little bridge; and now the rider sat higher in the saddle, trying to pierce the gloom.

“I have a notion that he went to the big Pyramid. He spoke of his fondness for it — and that's the lookout I'd choose, if I were a boy. To see!”

It was ticklish going. The sidling trail was gullied everywhere, and slippery as ice. The horse, whose very grandsire was too

*The  
Gold Fish  
of Gran  
Chimú*

young to have seen a rain in Peru, was embarrassed in hoof and mind by this astounding departure from his traditions of eternal bone-dry sand. But finding himself held up and not jerked up when he would fall, and warming to certain confidential pattings, he struggled along very creditably for an animal first experiencing so serious a phenomenon as this sudden trickiness of the earth underfoot.

“So! Here’s the *huaca!*” The Bull-fighter reined up, where a deeper blackness towered against the night. “From here I reckon the old man will not be made nervous by hearing me. Gonzalo! Gonza-a-lo!”

But there was no answer. Only the rivulets, still stumbling down the pyramid, rustled in the hush. He called again; listened, and rode on. In this wet air a yell from such lungs should carry at least a mile. Clearly, then, there was no need to ride around the *huaca*. That is — unless — well, what if the boy were hurt somehow, and though hearing, could not make himself heard? Better see, anyhow — and they went slipping, slewing, stumbling, splashing around the broken flanks

of that vast pile of clay brick. Once the horse came down headlong in a big pool through which ran a current so strong that only by a desperate struggle they got out. *Gonzalo's*  
"String"

"Eh, but this is new! Can the *acequia* have broken? But no — it was running full at the house. This looks to come from the *huaca* itself! However, we shall not know in this darkness. I'll try the town, if perchance some one shall have seen him there."

Truxillo, of course, was sound asleep — as is every well-regulated Peruvian town, long before such uncanny hours. The four cholo soldier-poliçe, scattered over the city — no, they had seen nothing of the young Quesada. *Sí*, Señor, they knew him. But he had not been in Truxillo since they took their beats.

At daybreak the searcher was riding back to Moche, mud-beplastered and undeniably worried. He had scouted clear to the Gran Chimú, questioning every one he could waken, and shouting himself hoarse along deserted roads. What could he say to the wan old man awaiting him?

The gray of a Peruvian "winter" dawn was on the gaunt peaks of Salaverry. Even the

*The* great Pyramid of Moche had caught lights not  
*Gold Fish* yet vouchsafed the valley; and its lofty bulk  
*of Gran* seemed rejuvenated by the night — its wrin-  
*Chimú* kles smoothed away, and half its centuries  
forgotten.

“But *I* would have gone to the *huaca*, if I were a boy wanting to get the most of my first rain! How it must have pelted, upon that top, eh? I’m a fool — understood! But I’m going around by daylight.”

The tired horse clearly agreed with the premise, and left the trail only under compulsion. His knees were trembling with so long a fight for a footing; and when he came to a deep, broad gully he halted resolutely.

“Pause and consider, then,” smiled the rider, patiently. “And this must be the hole we measured last night. A wonder we ever got out — for by the mark the water ran ten feet deep here, with four more to the top of the bank. But where on earth did it come from? Stand and study, eh, while I go see”; and dismounting, he strode away up the arroyo.

Around a knee of the pyramid — whose base is shaped something like the letter L —

the gully led; and there at the bottom was a ragged cave running far back in the adobe masonry. *Gonzalo's* "String"

"Snails! A stream from under the *huaca*? Ah, yes — I see. The watershed of this whole side drained into yonder angle and burrowed down into the mound at that sink hole I see half-way up, and broke out again here at the base. But say! There must have been a hollow in the pyramid, or it never could have done that — solid adobe masonry isn't to be made a fool of, even by a cloud-burst. I'm going to look into that hole up there!"

What? You would like to find Gonzalo — this Bullfighter is too slow? Well, we are coming to the boy.

Twelve hours ago when he felt the very earth open its mouth and swallow him, he would not have given much for his chances of being found. It was all so sudden and so — so impossible! The solid ground, mind you, yawning — and in the same instant a torrent pounced upon him and strangled him. He could not see, nor cry out, nor, worst of

*The Gold Fish of Gran Chimú* all, think. All was, he knew himself falling — falling — falling — ! Then there was a stunning plunge into a body of water, and he went down, fathoms, till his ears were bursting; and came up so slowly that it seemed four times as deep. But at last the air roared in his face, and he was shoved against a wall, the current lifting and tugging to carry him over. For a few moments he clung there stupidly, his arms to the elbows on the dam, his feet dangling in those dreadful depths he had sounded so far.

Then, as breath and strength and heart came back, he groped forward to the right, to the left, overhead. First, it was to be understood that from the well in which his feet were, a strong current overflowed. Ahead he could hear it hissing downward in a fashion that meant a steep descent; and louder, but different, was the roar of a fall overhead, whose spray pelted his hair like rain. Up there was nothing but blackness. Left and right was a continuation of the shelf against which the current pressed his waist. To see!

He hunched along cautiously to the left, keeping his elbows well bent and his chin



thrown back, lest that mill race tip him headlong. A foot, two, three, four feet, — and suddenly he drew back from a stronger suction. Clearly, the water was making a breach there in its dam. He reached out and overhead — nothing. Then he rested carefully on his left arm, and with the right flung a handful of water. So! In spite of the roar of the falls he was sure his fluid missile had struck earth, not water. The cave must end there, and it was useless to go further. To the right, then. He hunched back, with the same slow caution. One foot, two feet, a yard; two yards three, four. *Ah!* His shoulder rubbed against something hard! A cautious hand went up. Glory! A foot above his head was a shelf of solid adobe. Trembling and half crying, now, he drew himself slowly up till one knee was on the dam; and with a wild lunge flung himself clear of the water and upon the safe ledge. He did not even grope about to see how large his shelf might be; but cuddling as small as he could, lay there, panting. It would be as foolish as false to pretend that this fifteen year old boy

*The Gold Fish of Gran Chimí* was not in mortal terror. So may all men be — unless it is true, as themselves claim, that there are some fools so absolute that they really do “not know what fear is.” But there are different kinds of cowards. Some, when they look in the eye of Death fall groveling in the dust that they may not see him smite; and some there are that tremble and are pale, but take their coward hearts in their teeth to die like men, fighting. And Gonzalo was one of these. Through all this horror his mind had worked clearly and swiftly; and his will had held the trembling body up to its work.

But now he was worn out; and for hours he lay huddled there in a shivering heap. The spray kept him drenched — and yet to his nostrils came a strange odor of dust. The pouring waters filled the gloom with a wonderful monotony — without rise or fall of sound.

The hours crept by. The exhausted boy was breathing deeply and regularly, except for now and then a fit of coughing.

“Let be! It is mine — the *Pez* —” and he sat up with a start. “Ah-h-h! I — I shall

have been dreaming! I thought I had found *Gonzalo's* it—and here I am in this grave! *Pero*, “*String*” there it is lighter!”

And indeed there was, far up at the top of his night, a queer, jagged patch of gray. As he sat and watched, it slowly grew clearer—and presently he cried out excitedly: “The sky! The good sky!”

Deeper and deeper the light crept down into his profound prison, until even a little ray of sunlight flaunted upon the left-hand wall, away overhead; and now he could see well enough to begin to explore.

First, then, that little peephole of sky was something like fifty feet above him, and its diameter maybe two yards. The walls were wet, but no more water was pouring in. At his feet was the black pool which had cushioned his fearful fall, now merely brimming at the dam. At ten feet over his head the cavity suddenly widened, and he could make out a great room, with arched roof, running forty feet to the left, and with dark recesses in the farther wall. Where the “well” overflowed looked to have been a low, narrow passageway, sloping strongly downwards.

*The Gold Fish of Gran Chimú* He reached over and felt—clear! There were adobe steps, worn but not obliterated by the waters which, for a dozen hours, had been tumbling down that secret staircase in the heart of the *huaca*.

Gonzalo had been groping and peering like the half-drowned rat he was; and now he rose stiffly to cross the strange, dim chamber. A few feet away the adobe floor was already less slippery; and he saw that the wall, two feet from the floor, was *dusty*! And yonder recess, which looked like an alcove—

In another ten minutes, if a stranger could have been set down in the heart of the Pyramid of Moche, he would have seen a draggled boy rushing to and fro in that musty catacomb like one bereft of reason; now disappearing in a dark passage, and then staggering out again, hauling or rolling a great burden; and all the while uttering strange, inarticulate cries. The beholder would have concluded either that he was enjoying a most extraordinary dream, or that this subterranean chamber was inhabited by the craziest of all gnomes.

Just as he ceased clawing at one of these *Gonzalo's*  
mysterious loads, the gnome chanced to look *"String"*  
up at that far little eye of sky — and on the  
instant went still crazier.

“Don Carlos! *Amigo!* I am *I—I—I!*”

Up there at the brink was the silhouette  
of a round head and smooth face under a  
broad hat, which started back as if at a shot,  
and then reappeared.

“*Como?*” a voice came falling down the  
pit. “Thou, my little Gonzalo? Art thou  
alive or dead? Is it deep as it sounds?  
But hold, while I fetch my reata and haul  
thee up.”

“No, friend!” The boy voice rang shrill  
and swiftly, till the words stumbled on one  
another’s heels. “There are two reatas’  
length, at the least. To the hacienda, and  
bring the peons — all, every one. And my  
father, too, if he can be carried on shoulders.  
And hasten, before I turn crazed — for I  
have Him hooked, Don Carlos! *I have Him*  
*hooked!* Tell my father only: ‘Gonzalo is  
safe, and the Moche also!’ And hurrying —  
for it is too much to be borne!”

*The Gold Fish of Gran Chimí*      When Don Beltran on his narrow mattress had been set down by strong-backed peons beside the gaping hole, he leaned over on a wavering elbow and called down tremulously: "Art safe, soul of my heart?" And whatever the answer that floated up to him, it was something at which a wondrous smile transfigured his wan face.

The Bullfighter was paying a horse-hair rope down into the pit, while three stout cholos held the coil. "Does it reach?" he shouted. "Good! Then sit on the cross-stick and hold well."

A great smooth pole had been laid across the opening, to pull the rope over, and a man anchored down each end of it. "*Já-le*, then!" The peons walked away slowly, steadily, with the reata on their shoulders, while the Bullfighter steadied it over the pole. Up and up and up they hauled, till at last a head came in view. But it was not Gonzalo's head; and Don Carlos and Don Beltran gasped at sight of it—that big, round, dented head of reddish metal, and the thick neck with the rope knotted upon it, and burly shoulders, and a strange, rude







body. The Bullfighter stooped, and with a great heave fetched out upon the ground a statue taller than himself — and heavier, too, though it was hollow from head to toes. He and Don Beltran looked in one another's eyes without a word. The old man was even paler than before. He leaned over again and called huskily: —

*Gonzalo's*  
“String”

“No, sonling! I want thee, and not the idols! Come up to me, *Gonzalito mio!*”

Already the rope was on its way down again. This time it returned faster. A muddy black head came twirling up to the daylight, and two eyes that shone like living jet blinked hard at Don Beltran and then at the Bullfighter; and in a second more there was such another fuss of hugs and tears and broken voices as the Pyramid of Moche had not seen in five hundred years, if ever.

“And the Moche, little papa!” Gonzalo laughed through new channels on his muddy cheeks. “*Ea!* But Our Father heard me, no? For always I prayed it might be *I* who should save you. And *que guapo*, no?” — dancing around the great golden image. “Much face is the face of him, no? Not

*The* many like him, perhaps, would it take to  
*Gold Fish* stop the mouths of the money-lenders?"  
*of Gran* "Few indeed!" answered Don Beltran,  
*Chimú* softly. "Two, when most. Ah, he is pure  
gold!" But he was not looking at the image  
so much as at a shabby boy whose face was  
half mud and half twinkle.

"Two, then? Well, *papacito* — I have *ten*!  
Some are smaller, a little; and one, in its  
niche, is greater, that I could not even tip it  
from its pedestal. But come, let me go down  
and send them up."

"Never, son! It is the peons that shall  
brave the pit, and not thou again."

"Nor needs it," put in the Bullfighter.  
"If I mistake not, there is an easier way.  
The water which opened the *huaca* for you  
— where that water came out must be the  
passage I saw at the base. It was the proper  
way to enter the chamber in the pyramid;  
and when the ancients closed it up, they  
never thought of two such burglars as a rain  
and Gonzalo breaking in from above. I'll  
take in the peons with lanterns, and we'll  
fetch the statues down the stairs they were  
carried up so long ago. But to think that



thou shouldst fall thus upon the secret chamber of their ancestral gods! Never but once in the world has such a thing chanced before — and that was three hundred and sixty years ago. At Cuzco, in 1532, the conquerors found in a subterranean room 'life-size golden figures, four of llamas and twelve of women, the which to see was a great comfort' — as I mind me to have read in a *Relacion* of the First Discovery. And now thou! *Pues*, 'when least one thinks, jumps the hare,' they say — and I remember, too, that when I used to fish for trout, they always bit best in rainy weather. It seems the Big Fish of Peru have the same habits."

The old Don's face was sweet with a great peace. "I give thanks," he said reverently, "not alone for this, but that I did not dig secretly in our mine after the law passed — and the temptation was sore."

"Look you then at justice," smiled the Bullfighter. "I forgot to tell you that last night, hunting the boy, I learned Don Blas is in jail for that very thing — and not to come out soon. He was *huaqueando* secretly in your shaft, and the Intendente caught him

*The* at it. But you, *picaro*," and he drew his arm  
*Gold Fish* about Gonzalo, "you go and hook your *Pez*  
*of Gran* *Grande* on your own land of Moche, where  
*Chimú* not even the laws of a Peruvian Congress can  
rob you of one scale of him!"









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