Bryant, William Cullen. “A Border Tradition.” *Complete Stories.* Edited by Frank Gado. Hartford, VT: Antoca Press, 2014. pp. 33-46.

he used in driving his master's horses, and calling out the dogs, set them upon him. The deformed creature scampered before them into a neighbouring wood, and then the negro called them off.

Caspar did not return that night, and the next morning Mrs. Buckel sent to the tavern to inquire for him, but without learning any thing satisfactory concerning him. The landlord recollected he was there about the middle of the tempest, but could not say when he left the house; he mentioned, also, that after the sky began to clear, a little hunch-backed man had asked at his bar for a glass of whiskey, and having paid for it, immediately went away. As for the jockey, he had gone off with his horses just before the storm began, having been unable to drive such a bargain with Mr. Buckel as he wished.

Mrs. Buckel continued her searches and inquiries for six weary months, after which she concluded that her husband was dead, and remained disconsolate for six months longer. At the end of this period she gave her hand to a young fellow from New England, who had fallen in love with her plump, round face, and well stocked farm.

As for Caspar, he was never heard of again; but the old people say that the woods north of his widow's house are haunted at twilight by the figure of a hunch-backed little man, skipping over the fallen trees and running into gloomy thickets as soon as your eye falls on him, as if to avoid the sight of man.

A Border Tradition

In travelling through the western part of New England, not long since, I stopped for a few days at one of the beautiful villages of that region. It was situated on the edge of some fine rich meadows, lying about one of the prettiest little rivers in the world. While there, I went one morning to the top of a little round hill which commanded a view of the surrounding country. I saw the white houses under the shade of the old elms, the neat painted fences before them, and the border of bright green turf on either side of the road, which the inhabitants kept as clean as the grass plots of their gardens. I saw the river, winding away to the south between leaning trees and thick shrubs and vines; the hills, rising gently to the west of the village, covered with orchards and woods and openings of pasture ground; the rich level meadows to the east; and beyond them, at no great distance, the craggy mountains rising almost perpendicularly, as if placed there to heighten, by their rugged aspect, the soft beauty of the scene below them. If the view was striking in itself, it was rendered still more so by circumstances of life and splendor belonging to the weather, the hour, and the season. The wide circle of verdure in the midst of which I stood was loaded and almost crushed by one of those profuse dews which fall in our climate of a clear summer night, and glittered under a bright sun and a sky of transparent blue. The trees about me were noisy with birds, the bob-o'lincoln rose singing from the grass to sink in the grass again when his strain was ended, and the cat-bird squalled in the thicket in spite of the boy who was trying to stone it out. Then there was the whistle of the quail, the resounding voice of the hang-bird, the mysterous note of the post-driver, and the chatter of swallows darting to and fro. As a sort of accompaniment to this natural music, there was heard at times the deep and tremulous sound of the river breaking over a mill-dam at some distance.

There is an end of gazing at the finest sights, and of listening to the most agreeable sounds. I had turned to go down the hill, when I observed a respectable looking old man sitting near me on the edge

of a rock that projected a little way out of the ground. At the very first glance I set him down for one of the ancient yeomanry of our country, for his sturdy frame and large limbs had evidently been rendered sturdier and larger by labor and hardship, and old age had only taken away the appearance of agility without impairing his natural air of strength. I am accustomed to look with a feeling of gratitude, as well as respect, on these remnants of a hardy and useful generation. I see in them the men who have hewed down the forests and tamed the soil of the fair country we inhabit, who built the roads we travel over mountains and across morasses, and who planted the hill sides with orchards, of which we idly gather the fruit. From the attention with which the old man was looking at the surrounding prospect, I judged that he was come to the hill on the same errand with myself, and on entering into conversation with him, I found that I was not mistaken.

He had lived in the village when a boy; he had been absent from it nearly sixty years, and now, having occasion to pass through it on a journey from a distant part of the country, he was trying to recollect its features from the little eminence by which it was overlooked. "I can hardly," said he, "satisfy myself that this is the place in which I passed my boyish days. It is true, that the river is still yonder, and this is the hill where I played when a child, and those mountains, with their rocks and woods, look to me as they did then. That small peak lies still in the lap of the larger and loftier ridge that stretches like a semicircle around it. There are the same smooth meadows to the east, and the same fine ascent to the west of the village. But the old dwellings have been pulled down, and new ones built in their stead; the trees under which I sat in my childhood have decayed or been cut down, and others have been planted; the very roads have changed their places; and the rivulets that turned my little machinery are dried up. Do you see," said he, pointing with his staff, "that part of the meadow that runs up like a little creek or bay between the spurs of the upland and comes close to the highway? A brook formerly came down to that spot, and lost itself in the marshy soil, but its bed, as you see, is now dry and only serves as a channel to carry of the superabundance of the rains. That part of the meadow is now covered with thick and tall grass, but I well remember when it was overgrown with bushes and water-flags, among which many old decaying trunks of trees served as a kind of causeys over a quagmire that otherwise would have been impassable. It was a spot of evil report in the village, for it was said that lights had been seen at

night moving among the thickets, and strange noises had been heard from the ground – gurgling and half-smothered sounds, as of a living creature strangled in the midst of sods and water. It was said, also, that glimpses of something white had been seen gliding among the bushes, and that often the rank vegetation had been observed to be fearfully agitated, as if the earth shuddered at the spot where innocent blood had been shed. Some fearful deed, it was said, had doubtless been done there. It was thought by some that a child had been strangled and thrown into the quagmire by its unnatural mother, and by others that a traveller had been murdered there for the sake of his money. Nobody cared, after dark, to travel the road, which formerly wound about the base of this hill and thus kept longer beside the edge of the fen than it does now. I remember being drawn once or twice by curiosity to visit the place in company with another lad of my age. We stole in silence along the old logs, speaking to each other in whispers, and our hair stood on end at the sight of the white bones lying about. They were the bones of cattle who had sunk into the mire and could not be dragged out or had perished before they were found. There is a story about that spot," continued the old man, "which it may be worth your while to hear, and if you will please to be seated on this rock, I will tell it."

There was something in the old man's conversation which denoted a degree of intelligence and education superior to what I expected from his appearance. I was curious to know what sort of story would follow such an introduction; I sat down, therefore, by his side, on the edge of the rock, and he went on as follows.

"It is a story that I heard from my grandmother, a good old Dutch lady belonging to a family of the first settlers of the place. The Dutch from the North River, and the Yankees from the Connecticut, came into the valley about the same time and settled upon these rich meadows. Which were the first comers, I am unable to tell; I have heard different accounts of the matter, but the traditions of the Dutch families give the priority to their own ancestors, and I am inclined to think them in the right, for, although it was not uncommon in those days for the restless Yankee to settle in a neighbourhood of Dutchmen, yet it was a rare thing for the quiet Hollander voluntarily to plant himself in the midst of a bustling Yankee settlement. However this may be, it is certain that, about ninety years ago, a little neighbourhood had been formed of the descendants of both the emigrants from Holland and those from England. At first, the different races looked sourly upon

each other, but the daily sight of each other's faces and the need of each other's kindness and assistance soon brought them to live upon friendly terms. The Dutchman learned to salute his neighbour in bad English, and the Yankee began to make advances towards driving a bargain in worse Dutch.

"Jacob, or, as he was commonly called, Yok Suydam, was one of these early Dutch planters, and Jedidiah Williams, his neighbour, one of the first Yankees who sat down on the banks of this river. Williams was a man of a hard countenance and severe manners who had been a deacon of the church in the parish he had left, and who did not, as I have known some people do, forget his religion when it ceased to be of any service to him in his worldly concerns. He was as grave in his demeanor as guarded in his speech, and as constant in his devotions as ever, notwithstanding that these qualities in his character were less prized in his new situation than they had been in Connecticut. The place had as yet no minister, but Williams contrived to collect every Sunday a few of the neighbours at his house to perform the weekly worship. On a still summer morning you might hear him doling out a portion of the Scriptures, or reading a sermon of some godly divine of the day, in a sort of nasal recitation which could be distinguished, swelling over the noises of his pigs and poultry at the distance of a quarter of a mile from his dwelling.

"Honest Yok read his Bible too, but he read it in Dutch, and excused himself from attending the meetings at Williams's house on account of his ignorance of the language in which the exercises were held. Instead, however, of confining himself to the house during the whole Sunday like Williams, he would sometimes stray out into his fields to look at his cattle and his crops, and was known once or twice to lie down on the grass under a tree in the corner of one of his inclosures, where the rustling of his Indian corn and the hum of the bees among the pumpkin blossoms would put him to sleep. The rest of the day, when the weather was fine, he passed in smoking his pipe under a rude kind of piazza in front of his house, looking out over the rich meadows which he had lately cleared of their wood, or listening to a chapter of the New Testament read to him by one of his daughters. He was also less guarded in his language than suited the precise notions of Williams; the words 'duyvel' or 'donner,' or some such unnecessary exclamation, would often slip out of his mouth in the haste of conversation. But there was another practice of Yok's

which was still less to the taste of his neighbour. As was the case with most of the Dutch planters at that time, his house swarmed with negro domestics, and among the merry, sleek-faced blacks that jabbered Dutch and ate sour crout in his kitchen, there was one who could play tolerably on the fiddle. Yok did not suffer this talent to lie useless. On every New Year's eve – and not on that alone but on many a long and bright winter evening that followed it – when the snow looked whiter than ever in the moonlight and you could see the little wedges of frost floating and glistening in the air – the immense fireplace in the long kitchen was piled with dry hickory, the negro Orpheus was mounted on a high bench, and the brawny youths and ruddy girls of the place danced to the music till the cocks crew. Yok's own daughters, the prettiest maidens that ever ran in the woods of a new settlement, were allowed to acquit themselves exceedingly well on these occasions; but the performances of Yok himself extorted universal admiration. Old as he was – and he did not lack many winters of sixty – whenever he came on the floor, which was generally just before the breaking up of the revel, the youngest and most active of his guests acknowledged themselves outdone. He executed the double shuffle with incredible dexterity, drummed with his heels on the floor till you would have thought the drumming an accompaniment to the fiddle, and threw the joints of his limbs into the most gracefully acute angles that can be imagined.

"Jedidiah, of course, did not suffer these irregularities of his neighbour to pass unrebuked, and Yok always took his admonitions kindly enough, although without much disposition to profit by them. He invariably apologized by saying that he was a Dutchman, that he followed the customs of his countrymen and the practices of his fathers before him, and that it did not become the like of him to presume to be wiser or better than his ancestors, who were honest men and who, he believed, had gone to heaven. The appearance of respect, however, with which he received these reproofs went far to reconcile Jedidiah to his practical neglect of them, and a kind of friendship at length grew up between the two settlers and their families. Yok's pretty daughters came constantly to attend Williams's meetings, and Williams's son was a frequent and welcome visiter at the house of the hearty and hospitable Dutchman.

"Yok's family, with the exception of the negro domestics I have mentioned, consisted only of himself and his two daughters. Mary, the

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We soon came in sight of the tiger, moving on heavily and slowly, and staggering with the loss of blood from his wound. Before we reached him he had fallen to the ground. We despatched him without difficulty, and the natives who belonged to our party, having produced some strong cords made of the bark of the cocoa tree, which they had brought with them, tied them about the neck of the huge creature and dragged him back in triumph to Madras. As we entered the city, a large crowd of all complexions of mankind – Hindoos, Parsees, Moors, Malays, Englishmen, Germans, and Frenchmen – gathered about it and increased at every step. Even the timid Chinese artisan came to his shop-door to gaze upon the spectacle of so much fierceness tamed and so much strength overcome, and to catch a look at the man who had met the leap of a royal tiger and escaped unhurt.

The procession stopped at a kind of open square in the city. Here the animal was measured and found to exceed fifteen feet in length from the tip of the nose to the end of the tail. All who knew any thing of me in the city flocked eagerly about me; it seemed as if they could not be satisfied of my identity until they had grasped my hand. I received the cordial congratulations of my European friends. My acquaintances among the Hindoos were profuse of their florid compliments and felicitations; and as for the multitude, I thought they would never be satisfied with pressing around me and gazing at me. I withdrew as soon as I was able and sought at my lodgings the repose I so much needed. The bounty of three hundred pounds, which was the reward offered by the government of the country for killing a tiger, was paid me the next day.

If any man had ever cause of gratitude to Divine Providence for deliverance in an hour of signal danger, I am that man. I have never, since the incident I have related, ceased to cherish this feeling, and, I trust, it will not diminish in intensity to the last day of my life.

Story of the Island of Cuba

NUMEROUS as are the strangers who resort to the island of Cuba from the continent of Europe and the States of North America, few, if any, visit it from mere curiosity. The greater part are drawn thither by commerce, a few are in pursuit of health and fugitives from the severity of our northern winters; but all have almost invariably made their abode in the city of Havana, a place full of strangers and adventurers like themselves, and copying, so far as the climate will permit, the manners of the large European towns. Multitudes of these occasional residents never learn the language with sufficient perfection to speak it, or understand it when spoken, and thus are cut off from the best opportunity of becoming acquainted with the character of the native inhabitants. Thus it is that, not withstanding [that] the principal city of Cuba is the great mart for the trade of Spanish America and enjoys so large a portion of the commerce of the world, so little is yet known of the largest, finest, and most fertile of the West India Islands. All the knowledge of it exists in the minds of men too busy to write books or incompetent to literary pursuits. Geographers are at fault in searching for materials from which to compile a tolerable account of the island; and the celebrated Malte Brun, of whose work his countrymen are so proud, could do nothing better for Cuba than to give a naked translation of what was penned long ago by the old Spanish geographer Alcedo.

I also have visited Cuba, and, like others, visited it in the capacity of a man of business. I went there some fifteen years since to recover a debt due to the estate of a relation of mine, a West Indian merchant whose executor I had been appointed. Law has its delays in Cuba as well as in other countries, and being obliged to resort to legal proceedings against the debtor, I was detained longer in the island than is usual with my countrymen. I arrived there in January and passed the remainder of the winter – if so severe a name can be given to so delightful a season – pleasantly enough among its inhabitants. The acquaintances I formed in the transaction of my business introduced me into society.

I found it indeed "a web of mingled yarn," full of strong contrasts: the gentle and timid; the bold, enterprising, and unprincipled; the kind and the churlish; the acutely sensitive and shamelessly callous; disinterested honor and unblushing fraud, side by side. It was just such a state of society as our own might be were public opinion deprived of more than half its force and the opportunities of evading the laws and corrupting those who administer them a hundred-fold what they are now. Let me, however, do the Habaneros justice. Of all the citizens of Spanish America, I believe them to possess the best character. They come of a good stock – the virtuous, industrious, and poor inhabitants of Teneriffe and other Canaries [ironically] named The Fortunate were driven from Fuerteventura to the Grand Canary, from the Grand Canary to Teneriffe, and from Teneriffe to Palma by the occasional famines which afflict these islands, until they [finally] were obliged to leave their native isles altogether. Were it not for the severe laws which restrain departure, the famines would cause still greater numbers to emigrate.

In the city of Havana the rude and primitive virtues of this race are somewhat tempered by the softer and more voluptuous genius of Andalusia, but it is owing, I believe, to their extraction that so much unaffected goodness and simplicity of heart is to be found among the women. I saw them at their balls and *tertulias* in their splendid Parisian dresses; I saw them in their domestic circles in the plain but rich costume of Spain. And everywhere I found them kind, affectionate, and simple-hearted; charming in spite of the duskiness of their complexions, with the brightest and blackest eyes in the world, and forms that seemed the more graceful and bewitching from their Asiatic fulness. I talked to them in bad Spanish, and to their tuition I believe is owing the fondness I bear to their language. The people of Havana have taken some liberties with the Castilian tongue and dialect of the stately Dons. Transplanted to the delicious climate of Cuba, it has acquired an Ionic softness and volume to which it is a stranger in its original country. They have mellowed the general pronunciation, depriving it of all its harshness, and by employing on all occasions its polysyllabic superlatives and the numerous musical diminutives with which it abounds, have added to its grace what they have taken from its energy.

The warm season was advancing, and I grew uneasy at the idea of remaining in Havana, notwithstanding the hospitality with which I

was treated. The odors arising from the stables in the lower stories of all the dwellings of this closely built city overpowered me, and I was wasted and debilitated by the continual heat and perspiration. I grew weary of being obliged to change my linen four or five times a day, and, what was worse, I became afraid of the yellow fever, the black vomit, and the liver complaint. I was haunted by a continual fear that I should *coger un aire*, by which phrase the people mean the contracting of half a dozen strange disorders peculiar to the hotter parts of the West Indies. I therefore resolved to take advantage of the more salubrious situations which the island offered me and accepted the invitation of a friend to pass the summer months at his coffee plantations.

The island of Cuba possesses almost every variety of temperature. Havana, on the sea-shore, lies beneath a burning sun, but you may choose your climate on the sides of that long ridge of mountains which, running the whole length of the island, lifts you at every step into a purer and cooler atmosphere. My friend had his coffee plantation in an elevated part of the island, but still within a genial though not a torrid climate. It were a vain task for me to attempt to describe these beautiful plantations in Cuba to one who has as seen nothing like them. The shrubs that produce the aromatic kernel which supplies a refreshing beverage to the whole civilized world are not trusted to the fierce sun and rude dalliance of the air. Vast groves of the most majestic trees of the island are planted to shade them from the heat and shelter them from the winds. The shrubs are disposed in squares, and the avenues between are lined with palm-trees, with mangoes, with the plantain, the banana, and the bamboo. Amid them rises here and there the gigantic cotton-tree, its vast trunk swelling out in the midst like an Egyptian column and its huge arms stretched forth in the air high above the tops of its brethren, so high that the song of the mock-bird among them is scarcely heard on the ground below. Every kind of foliage, from the slenderest and lightest to the heaviest and most massive, from the palest to that of the most intense verdure, is mingled in these delightful bowers which murmur with the continual agitation of the soft winds, blowing by day from the sea and by night from the mountains. The orange here hangs out its fragrant blossoms and no less fragrant fruit together, roses of Jericho blossom all the year, and ranks of pineapples border the intersecting alleys. The cooing of doves is blended almost continually with the soft rustling of the innumerable branches, and over all is heard at intervals the wild shriek of the

catona or the guacamaya. In the midst of this beautiful garden – for such it truly is – often several miles in extent, is the residence of the proprietor and that of his slaves, surrounded by a circle of lime-trees closely planted, intermingled along its edge with flowers of the scarlet cordium and the oleander, and divided by broad openings looking along the principal avenues.

My friend's plantation was situated several miles from Havana, on a tract of ground which inclined with an easy declivity toward the north shore and was varied with gentle undulations. In the midst wound a little brook that fell into the *Rio de Puentes Grandes* and which was further increased by one or two springs breaking out at the foot of the hillocks. As you stood in the great northern avenue in front, you looked down upon the calm ocean which bathes the walls of Havana, the city itself unseen; and, turning to the south, your sight was met among the very tree-tops by the blue summits of San Salvador, a part of that mighty ridge which divides the island longitudinally, clothed to its loftiest peaks with forest of eternal verdure. How often, while I was swallowing the coffee which a domestic brought me at six in the morning, have I gazed through the windows of my bedchamber at those woody heights, red with the early sun, and thought of the majestic highlands of my native river! Let me not, however, forget to do justice to my friend's coffee, which was of the finest, raised on his own plantation, and of the quality of which he was justly proud. The seed from which the shrub was raised he had procured from the little Danish island of St. John's, where the best coffee in the world is produced – a fact known to epicures, and to which I can testify from my own experience, having often drank it at the house of a very knowing, agreeable man with whom I became acquainted in his official capacity, Counsellor Benzon, Governor of the Island of Santa Cruz.

I passed many agreeable days with my friend in this pleasant retreat, idly enough, but not without learning many things worthy of remembrance. My host was a native of Teneriffe, a dark-complexioned, stern-countenanced, deep-voiced man with the tall stature and powerful frame of his countrymen. His negroes held him in great awe, for he was one of those men who are obeyed by inferior minds, not from compulsion nor from affection but from a sort of instinct and the mere force of a determined manner. A look, a motion of .his hand, an indirect intimation of his will was with them equivalent to a command and was interpreted with a quickness and with an alacrity that surprised

me. Yet he was substantially kind to them, and I believe not a single instance of corporal punishment occurred on the plantation while I remained there.

I had frequent conversations with him on the subject of the colored population of the island of Cuba. "Are you not afraid," said I to him one day, "that they will rise up in a body against their masters and make a bloody attempt to shake off the burden of servitude?"

"I have no such fears," replied he. "The blacks have no arms, and there is nobody to put arms into their hands. Our shores are lined with strong military posts all along our narrow island which would quickly put down an unarmed and undisciplined insurrection. Besides, the different classes of our colored population hate each other too cordially ever to concert together a plan of rebellion. The negro of Africa, the bravest and most spirited of them all, born a free man, detests the submissive Creole, the native of the country, and the Creole negro abhors the dogged, surly, and unchristianized African. The mulatto looks with scorn upon the negro as his inferior, and the negro regards the mulatto as a degenerate mongrel, while the quadroon, who in his own estimation is almost a white man, regards both the negro and mulatto with equal disdain. Not many years since, three Indians, from the coast of Florida, did what all the blacks of the island never did, and I believe and trust never will do – they filled the whole country for nearly three years with robbery, bloodshed, burnings, and consternation.

"The Spanish government, by virtue of some treaty or other with the Indians of Florida of which I can tell you nothing else, send them an annual present of European merchandise. A vessel is usually despatched from Havana for this purpose, and some dignitary of the Church or zealous missionary accompanies the expedition. In the last year of the last century the bishop of Havana, the venerable Tres Palacios – may God rest his soul! – made the voyage to Florida. The good priest celebrated the imposing ceremonies of our religion with so much pomp, explained its mysteries with so much clearness and eloquence, and read the Latin prayers in his missal with so much unction that the hearts of the poor savages were touched; many consented to receive baptism on the spot, and the bishop returned, bringing with him as the trophies of his peaceful victory three Indian boys, who had been delivered to him to be instructed in the learning of the white man and the doctrines of the true faith.

"The young savages were at first delighted with the change in their situation. They were highly gratified with the elegant European dresses in which they were clothed by their patron, and to which they added a multitude of trinkets received as presents and fantastically disposed on their persons. In spite of the habit of apparent indifference to everything extraordinary in which they had been educated, they could not help expressing the feeling of natural astonishment which rose in their minds as they walked the streets of Havana and beheld the various labors and devices of civilization. In a short time, however, they became familiar with the wonders around them, and with their astonishment vanished the piety which the good ecclesiastic supposed he had kindled in their hearts. He discovered that his juvenile neophytes were lazy, proud, intractable; that they loved rum and tobacco and were fond of sleeping when their stomachs were full. Sometimes they would perform their wild dances with loud and heathenish cries in the court-yard of the churchman's palace, disturbing his religious meditations.

"On one of these occasions, when the old bishop sallied forth in his night-cap, cane in hand and with a most determined demeanor to quiet the uproar, they actually had the insolence to trip up his heels and to continue their dance around the body of the sprawling dignitary, shouting and yelling with greater glee than ever. They had no objections to figuring in religious processions; they carried the blazing torches with an air and bore the standards with profound gravity and solemnity, but they resolutely refused to learn their prayers and could by no means be taught the alphabet. They would often absent themselves for several days together to wander on the woody sides of the mountains, shaping bows and arrows after the fashion of their native country, making a rude sort of lance out of a hard kind of wood, the ends of which they rendered yet harder by fire, and they would return, with their clothes fairly torn from their backs, bringing home a wild pig or a huge bunch of paroquets. In short, they were so wholly insubordinate and so decidedly savage and pagan in their habits and tastes that the bishop was forced to give up the idea of making them into good Catholics who should return to spread the light of the Gospel and the power of the Church in their native land.

"At length they committed some offence against the laws. What it was I either never heard or have forgotten, but an offence they committed for which they were apprehended, found guilty, and sentenced to imprisonment at the Arsenal in Havana. The bishop, I

believe, was glad to get rid of them, for he saw that the seed he had sown had fallen upon a rock, and he was now sure that his intractable pupils would be well looked to and kept out of mischief at least. The Arsenal, you know, I suppose, is situated a little without the city, but connected with it by a gate called *Punta de la Tenaza* and surrounded by high and strong walls of its own. But if you have never visited it, you can scarcely form an idea of the activity that prevails there. It is a little town within itself. The vast magazines and storehouses, the dwellings of the officers and superintendents, the barracks of the soldiers, the dormitories of the prisoners, the shops in which various mechanical occupations are exercised, occupy the circuit of the walls with numerous buildings. Wharves extend along the edge of the water; vessels are coming and departing, taking in or discharging their cargoes; men are hurrying to and fro with packages; and a cluster of mills in the midst, turned by a canal from the river and continually employed in sawing huge trunks of the native trees of the island, fill the place with the continual noise of the machinery. Were it not that you saw here and there an officer in military uniform, sentinels pacing about, and chains fastened to the arms or legs of many of the laborers, you might fancy yourself in a common seaport. Thither the young delinquents were sent and, each being fitted with a couple of iron rings about his ankles, they were set to work in assisting to load and unload the government vessels. The employment was not much to their liking, and, after remaining there a few months, they took advantage of an opportunity to make their escape and sought refuge in *Las Vegas de Falaco*.

"The tract of country called by this name begins about twenty leagues or more to the west of Havana, on the northern shore of the island, and stretches toward Cape San Antonio as far as the settlement of Mantua and Guanes, which lie on its remotest boundary. It is fertile as the garden of Eden, and its wide extent is watered by numerous wandering rivers whose banks are encumbered with the luxuriance of their wild vegetation. A few miserable habitations are scattered here and there along the streams, or grouped into hamlets and dirty villages. In these live the herdsmen entrusted with the care of the immense droves of cattle, horses, and swine pastured in the country back of the settlements, and here also dwell the tobacco planters who cultivate patches of the rich, deep soil on the margin of the rivers. No part of Cuba is naturally finer than this, and none is peopled with a worse race. I hate the rascals, for they once stole from me the finest horse in

the world, an English hunter which cost me sixty doubloons, and I was obliged to pursue my journey on a stunted, hard-trotting jade, which I purchased of a dingy mulatto who called himself a white man, and who had the conscience to ask me a hundred dollars for her. I dare say he stole the animal.

"Hither the wreckers who haunt the keys on the coast, gangs of runaway sailors who live by the plunder of the merchant ships that come into their power, resort to spend their ill-gotten wealth in gaming and debauchery. These desperadoes keep their boats moored under the thick boughs and foliage of the mangroves, whose trunks rise in the shallows out of the very brine. You might look round on the neighboring shores and sand-banks without meeting the least indication of anything in which a human being could put to sea, but let a disaster happen to a merchant vessel off the coast, and two hundred boats, perhaps, will at once make their appearance, as if they rose from the bosom of the waters. These fellows lead a merry life on shore, where they find no lack of boon companions. The dice-box rattles all day in the taverns, and the guitar begins to tinkle as the sun goes down. Brawls are kindled among them over their wine, blood is shed, and the murderer takes refuge in the keys. Sometimes one of these fellows who ventures on shore with too much money lies stark and stiff by the roadside the next morning.

"The three young savages chose the village of Guanes, situated on the river of that name, as the place of their retreat. It lies, as I have already I think mentioned, near the farther extremity of Las Vegas. Here they contrived to exchange their prison dresses for checked shirts and pantaloons, with broad-brimmed straw hats – the usual garb of the country people. They subsisted easily and lived in a manner quite to their taste among the lazy settlers. They fished a little in the streams, knocked down game in the uncultivated lands, loitered about the taverns, slept in the shade, and, when pressed by the harder necessity than usual, lent a hand in gathering and curing tobacco. I never heard that they did any harm while they remained is this part of the country; at all events, I believe they behaved themselves quite as unexceptionally, to say the least, as the rest of the inhabitants.

"Our government occasionally sends commissioners to make the circuit of the island, and to clear it of runaway criminals and of vagabonds who can give no account of themselves. The idea is a good one, in my opinion, for by this means a rogue is kept in the place where

he was born and where his character is known, and when convicts who have escaped from justice repeat their crimes, they are carried back to punishment. After the three Indians had been for several months in the neighborhood of Guanes, certain of these magistrates arrived at that village. The Indians were informed against by a herdsman with whom they had some dispute. They were seized and brought before the commissioners. It appeared that they were not ancient inhabitants of the place, and they could show no passport from any other; it was, therefore, concluded that they could not be there for any good purpose. They were accordingly sent, with a guard, to Havana, where they were immediately recognized as the fugitives. They were remanded to prison, loaded with heavier chains, and condemned to severer tasks.

"Their old patron, the good Bishop Tres Palacios, was dead; there was nobody to intercede in their behalf. The prisoners bore their fate with a kind of sullen resignation, but their keepers knew little of what was passing in their minds. They had been brought back from what they most loved – idleness and liberty – to what they most hated – labor and imprisonment.The indignities with which they had been treated roused in their bosoms all the spirit of their race and filled them with an intense thirst for revenge. Their confinement was short, and it was soon rumored in Havana that they had again escaped from the Arsenal. On the second morning after their escape, a traveller, passing between Mantua and Guanes a little after sunrise, was stopped by a scene of horror and desolation. A crowd of people of all colors had gathered around the smoking ruins of a cluster of cottages which had been fired in the night. The trees by which they were once overshadowed had been scorched and seared in the fierce flame, and their half-burned leaves were dropping in the faces of those who stood below. The earth around was stained with blood, and the prints of knees and feet strongly pressed into it showed that a mortal struggle had been there. Several bodies of men, women, and children, marked with deep gashes, lay near. They had evidently been slain in the endeavor to escape by flight, for the expression of horror and fear yet stood on the faces of the dead. One or two among the group, who seemed to have been more successful in their attempts to escape and whose features were yet convulsed by fright, were telling in an agitated, incoherent manner the story of several men of hideous appearances and supernatural strength and swiftness who had put the firebrand to their houses just at daybreak and slaughtered the inmates without pity.

Bryant, William Cullen. “Story of the Island of Cuba.” *Complete Stories.* Edited by Frank Gado. Hartford, VT: Antoca Press, 2014. pp. 115-142.

made by cattle, intersecting in all directions. They were now obliged to ride one behind another, and as they ascended a little declivity they found it difficult to urge their horses between the close trunks and encroaching branches. At length one of the *monteros* made a sign for the party to stop.

" 'Here, gentlemen,' said he, 'you must dismount; the forest beyond this place will not admit of the passing of a horse and rider. And here lies a poor beast that has been ridden hard to-day, and who, if he could speak, would thank the woods for being so thick; his master could get him no farther.' As he spoke, he broke off a twig from one of the shrubs, and stripping it of the leaves, turned to the side of the path, and with a smart stroke, started up from a kind of a recess a horse covered with sweat and half-dried foam. 'This, perhaps,' continued he, 'is the horse that carried the fellow you are looking for. He has neither saddle nor bridle, and yet his back shows that he has been sat upon by a heavy rider.'

"The party pressed round to get a sight of the animal, a shaggy, wild-looking creature with a heavy, tangled mane on both sides of his neck, a long forelock hanging between the eyes, and a sweeping tail. He stretched himself for a moment, then snorted, broke through the bushes, and was out of sight.

" 'That is the Indian's horse,' said another *montero*, the same who had seen him carrying off the young woman and had showed his traces to the pursuers; 'the very beast on whose back I saw him this morning. I would swear to him before the *Alcalde*. I fancy the rider cannot be far off.' All the party were of the same opinion. A short consultation was held in which it was agreed that an attempt should be made to recover the young woman without letting loose their dogs until the rescue was effected, for fear that they might attack the captive also. They then dismounted, left the horses in the care of some negroes, and began to thread the more intricate mazes of the forest.

"They soon heard at a distance the baying of the hound whom they had let off at setting out, and proceeding for two or three miles in that direction, they came to a lofty precipice, not far from the bottom of which grew a cluster of branching trees of great height. At the foot of these trees the dog was whimpering and barking, and occasionally springing against the trunks. The party were perplexed at this circumstance; they looked up into the boughs for a solution of the mystery but could discover nothing. They called off the animal

and attempted to make him recover the track which they supposed he had lost, but in vain; he immediately returned to the spot. The face of the precipice was smooth, perpendicular, nearly thirty feet in height, and quite as impossible to scale without the assistance of a ladder as the wall of a house. It stood at several paces from the trees in front, so that it seemed nobody could pass from them to its summit. Along the steeps to the right and left of it rose a thick undergrowth of young trees, filled up with thorny and interwoven vines, of that species which we call *uñas de gato*, or cat's-claws, and which formed an impenetrable barrier, stretching to a great distance on either hand and without any opening through which the outlaw could have passed with his captive. Somebody suggested that, as one of the trees was easily climbed, he might have concealed himself among the leaves and boughs of its top. A *montero* immediately sprang into it, ascended out of sight among the foliage, and called out to those below that there was no living thing in the tree but himself.

"They now became convinced that the hound had been misled by a false scent, and some proposed to go back to the place where the Indian's horse was found lying and let slip another dog upon his track. As for Aguarda, it is scarcely possible to describe his chagrin at being thus cruelly disappointed when he thought himself just upon the point of rescuing from a dreadful fate the being he most loved. The cur shall never deceive anybody else in this manner,' said he, and levelled his musket to blow out the creature's brains, when one of his companions held his arm, and pointed to where the *montero*, who had descended half-way down the tree, began to walk along one of its branches that bent with his weight to a horizontal position until, coming to the summit of the perpendicular rock at the foot of which the whole party stood, he leaped upon the top of it. The mystery was now cleared up. It was evident to all that the savage had climbed the tree with his prize and passed along the branches to the precipice before them. Aguarda caught the poor animal whose life he was just about to take and caressed it in a transport of joy.

"The *monteros* drew their *machetes*, the sharp broadswords which they usually carry about with them, and proceeded to cut a passage through the thorny and tangled fence of creeping vines on the side where it seemed thinnest and most pervious. This they did with great dexterity and quickness, and in a few minutes had formed a kind of arched passage, through which the company passed by a short circuit

to the summit of the precipice. A negro carried thither the hound, and the animal was no sooner put to the ground than he recovered the track of the outlaw, darted off like lightning, and was out of sight. In a few minutes they heard him uttering a sharp and frequent bark, a sure signal that he had found the object of his pursuit. The party rushed forward and soon issued into an open glade in the forest, where the sun came in from above and a spring welled out from a stony basin and lost itself in thick grass. At the farther end of the glade rose the rocky side of a mountain, seamed obliquely with a *quebrada*, or deep ravine. The savage was seen retreating to a huge rock of stone at the foot of the mountain while the dog was running round him in swift circles and barking incessantly. You know, perhaps, that it is impossible for the runaways of our island to kill one of those nimble and quick-sighted animals without the advantage of a rock at their back. The savage, as soon as he saw his pursuers, took to flight. He sprang up the side of the mountain and disappeared over the ravine amid a shower of balls. The fierce dogs, heretofore kept in leashes, were let slip after him, but they were soon stopped by precipices which they did not venture to descend.

"The first thought of Aguarda was to look for Anita de Pereira. She was found gagged with one of her own handkerchiefs, her delicate arms pinioned, and one of them tied fast to a tree in the edge of the glade where the savage had secured her until he could kill the dog that was giving his enemies notice of his retreat. Her lover cut the cords by which she was bound and received her thanks and tears in his bosom. That night was a happy one at the house of old Pereira, and the event of that day hastened, by a fortnight at least, the ceremony that crowned the wishes of Aguarda.

"This escape of the bandit seemed to embolden him in the commission of his atrocities. I have heard many people express the opinion that all the murders, burnings, and destruction of herds committed by him and his companions during the whole time they remained in the Vuelta Abajo did not equal those committed by this man alone in the Vuelta Arriba. In addition to the price set by government upon his head, the proprietors of different *haciendas* in the island, abandoned through fear of him, offered large rewards for his death or apprehension.

"Yet this man, in the midst of his hatred of the people of the island and the bloody deeds with which he gratified his thirst for revenge,

seems to have still felt some of those natural sympathies which attach us to our race and to have yearned after the pleasure of seeing a human face and hearing a human voice in peace and kindness. A short time after the adventure of Anita de Pereira he stole a little child, a daughter of a *balomer* who lived in a small hamlet between San Lorenzo and La Calidad. He kept her with him several months, treating her with great kindness, feeding her with the abundant wild fruits of the country and with the flesh of cattle which he slew on the *haciendas*. After several attempts she was at length taken from him, but not until she had contracted a strong attachment for Taito Perico, as he had taught her to call him.

"In the rescue of the little girl the savage was wounded in the thigh, a circumstance which, though it increased his shyness, did not diminish his ferocity. A little more than seven months after his first appearance in the Vuelta Arriba, a company of about thirty children from the inland city of Puerto Principe went out to gather the wild fruit we call *marañones* in the fields a little more than two miles distant from the town. It was then the month of June, and the fruit hung in its golden and ruddy ripeness on the low shrubs which, mingled with others of different species, overspread a considerable tract of land. Among the children was a fine boy, about eight years of age, named José Maria de Rodriguez. They were all busily engaged in plucking the fruit, in discovering the places where it grew in the greatest abundance, and in jostling each other away from it when discovered, and the air rung with their cheerful voices and innocent laughter. All at once one of them screamed out, 'El Indio! el Indio!' and the troop scattered off like a flock of paroquets at the discharge of a gun. José Maria stood near a clump of bushes, and thinking they afforded him sufficient concealment, crouched under them close to the ground. The savage, as ill luck would have it, rode to the spot where the boy lay trembling and powerless with fear and, observing him, checked his horse, stooped toward him, took him up by one arm, and, placing him on the animal before him, rode off to the woods.

"The mother of José Maria was a widow lady of distinction in Puerto Principe; he was her only son, and she was frantic at his loss. Her brother, Don Agostin Arias – who, I remember, was at that time an officer of the militia of Cuba, a gentleman of the true stamp and of that courage which shows itself not in words but in deeds – came to her house opposite the church of La Soledad, comforted her by

representing that the Indian had not hitherto shown any disposition to destroy his captive, and pledged himself to restore her child. On the first day all endeavor to discover the track of the robber was fruitless. On the third, however, news was brought that he had been several times seen on the sides of the mountain, which then went by the name of Loma de Cubitas, whose conical summit, clothed with lofty woods to its highest peak, is seen at a distance of eight leagues from Puerto Principe. Arias immediately gave notice to an acquaintance of the name of Cespedes, a *valenton*, as we call those men who plume themselves upon the possession of extraordinary valor, and who had offered to accompany him in his undertaking to rescue the child. They set off on horseback, armed with guns and pistols, taking with them a negro who carried a weapon of the kind we call a *desjarretadera*, a steel blade in the form of a crescent, fixed in a long handle like that of a lance and used to hamstring the wild and furious animals of the herds.

"They arrived at the mountain of Cubitas, and after penetrating a little way into the old woods on its breast, dismounted, gave their horses in charge to the negro, and separated in search of the child-stealer, with an agreement that he who first heard the report of the other's gun should immediately come to his assistance. Arias had not proceeded far when he heard Cespedes discharge his piece, whether by accident, as he afterward alleged, in springing over the channel of the brook, or whether it was that his valorous soul was assailed by the ignoble passion of fear, I can not say, but the people of Puerto Principe were uncharitable enough to believe the latter. Arias turned immediately, when, as if by a miracle, he saw his nephew near him, almost at his side, sitting against the trunk of a tree, his feet bare, torn with thorns, and covered with blood.

"Arias checked the half-uttered exclamation that rose to the lips of the boy and ordered him to show him where the Indian was. He pointed up the mountain, and Arias proceeded as cautiously and as softly as possible in that direction. He soon beheld him, apparently just risen from his seat on the ground. Alarmed, doubtlessly, by the report of the gun, and still more by the noise made by the steps of Arias, he turned his face in that direction. He saw his enemy with his musket levelled – but he saw no more, for Arias fired at that instant, and the savage fell to the ground. He did not, however, let go his weapon, and, in the agony and weakness of dissolution, still seemed striving to collect his strength that he might not die passively and unavenged,

and lying as he did on the slope of the mountain, with his feet toward its base, he grasped his lance in both his hands and held it before him, pointed toward his slayer. Cespedes and the negro came up to him almost at the same moment with Arias. The former valiantly sent another ball through him with one of his pistols, and the latter gave him a stroke on the face with his houghing-knife – but he had already received his death-wound.

"It was now the hour of five in the afternoon. They laid the dead body on the back of the horse which the negro had ridden, left the mountain – which has ever since borne the name of Loma del Indio in memory of the exploits of Arias – and returned to Puerto Principe, whither they arrived at ten in the evening. The body was exposed in the principal square of the city. Multitudes, of all ages, sexes, and ranks, carrying lanterns, torches, and candles, crowded to look at it, and the day broke before all the spectators had dispersed.

"I was then in Puerto Principe and was drawn by the general curiosity to witness the spectacle. I shall never forget St. Anthony's day – the day on which the Indian was killed – the thirteenth of June, I believe, in the year 1807, and the impression that sight made upon me still remains as vivid as on that night. The slain was a youth, it might be of nineteen years, of low stature, but of the marks of great strength. Shoulders of uncommon breadth; a large head, covered with coal-black hair closely shredded; round, prominent, and glaring eyes; high-arched eyebrows; a hooked nose; a brawny neck; large, muscular arms and legs; feet and hands as delicately formed as those of the ladies of our own nation – such is the picture of his person. He had on a pair of short, loose trousers, and wore a cord passing through the wound in his thigh as a kind of seton, an expedient suggested, probably, by the rude surgery of his native country.

As the mingled crowd stooped over the body to examine it, I remember well the expression of awe that stole over their features and the subdued tones in which they spoke to each other; and the fuller or fainter light thrown upon the dark face and glassy eyes of the dead as they approached and retired. Before I withdrew I saw the body nearly covered with drops of wax and tallow from the multitude of lights that had been held over it.

"The next day the boy José Maria and the little girl I have before mentioned were examined before a judicial tribunal to identify the person of the slain and to justify Arias in putting him to death. The

examination was satisfactory, and the body was ordered to be hung in the public square and [then] to be drawn and quartered. A gibbet was erected, but while the ceremony of suspension was performing, the pulley by which the body was raised gave way suddenly, and it fell to the ground. The multitudes, who were not yet cured of the superstitious belief of the connection of the Indian with the powers of darkness, recoiled with shrieks and groans, and fell in heaps upon each other.

"A second attempt was made, with better success. The body was afterward dragged at the heels of a horse to a field without the city, where it was dismembered. The trunk was buried in the earth, the hands and legs set up in the public ways, and the head enclosed in an iron cage and fixed upon a pole in the neighboring village of Tanima, and the country delivered forever from the fear of one who had made such waste of human life.

"José Maria de Rodriguez is now an ecclesiastic of note in Puerto Principe, and curate of the church of La Soledad. I ought not to conceal from you that many suppose that the Indians who for three years committed such frightful ravages were of the tribe of Guachmangos, a fierce, untamable nation of Mexico, and that by some unknown means they had found their way to the island. I know not that there is any other reason for this belief than their fierceness, but I know that there is no other way of accounting for what became of those three savages from Florida than by supposing them to have been the ravagers in question."

Here ends the story of my host of the coffee plantation. It is strange enough in some of its particulars – almost to a degree of incredibility – but it rests not on the credit of my host alone. It was confirmed to me by many other inhabitants of the island, and in its substantial particulars is matter of history.

The Whirlwind

WHEN I last visited the country beyond the Alleghanies, I travelled from Wheeling to Lexington on horseback in order to contemplate more at my leisure the beautiful scenery of that interesting region. On my way I fell in with a person, also on horseback, going in the same direction, who seemed inclined to join company with me – an arrangement to which, as I had already travelled a considerable distance alone, I felt no particular aversion. He was apparently about forty-five years of age, of a spare, athletic make, and a sallow, almost a swarthy, complexion. His eyes were of a dull hazel; they lay deep in their sockets and were surrounded by circles of a darker tinge than the rest of his face. Above them a pair of low, horizontal, coal-black eyebrows gave an inexpressibly hard and ascetic air to his countenance. He wore a black bombazette coat, the tight sleeves of which set off to great advantage his lean arms, the large joints of his elbows, his big wrists, and the heavy hands with which he grasped his beechen switch and the reins of his bridle. The remainder of his apparel consisted of a well-saved hat in that state of respectable rustiness in which that article is kept by decent people who do not often indulge themselves in the luxury of a new one, pepper-and-salt-colored satinet pantaloons over which were drawn a pair of rust-colored boots, a black-silk waistcoat, and a scanty white cravat, the sharp, spear-like ends of which projected in different directions from under his brown throat. He bestrode a tall, strong limbed, lean, black horse; across the saddle hung a well-filled portmanteau, and from under the pommel peeped a bit of sheepskin dressed with wool on, placed there to prevent the animal's back from being chafed with the journey.

He returned a civil answer to my salutation, with a broad and prolonged enunciation of the vowel sounds and a melancholy quaver of the voice. The tones, however, were full, mellow, and evidently cultivated. If I had previously any doubt of his vocation, it was now removed, and I instantly set him down for an itinerant preacher of the Baptist or Methodist persuasion. Adapting my conversation to his supposed profession, I inquired of him the state of religion in those

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and now they wanted to go there out of pure fright. But though there was plenty of room in the carriage, she crammed it full of bandboxes and unwashed clothes, to show the impossibility of the thing, and said she depended on seeing them in Alabama next season.

Before breakfast-time not a stranger was left in the house. Doctor Nervy was one of the first who run off. And though there has been but one case in the neighbourhood since, and that five miles distant, not a soul has come to the Spaw.

What is to become of my farm and the fine house I do not know. I suppose neighbour Cross must have both.

On looking about the rooms, and at the various rubbish which had been left, I found, in one where the reading-party used to meet by themselves, a great pile of papers, making, I should say, many quires of foolscap. I thought, though they had been left as good for nothing, and were of no use to me, they might turn to some account. But I resolved to have the speculation all to myself; and on talking to Eli, he thought there would be no harm in seeing what the papers were worth. They have not been inquired after in two weeks, and I do not know whose they are; so I conclude they belong to me. If you will give any thing for them, I will trust to you to fix the price. I am an unfortunate man; and every trifle will help me that I can come by in an honest way. There were other scraps and blotted papers about the house, and some love-letters and verses; but I take it for granted they are not worth any thing.

Your very humble servant,

SHARON CLAPP

The Skeleton's Cave

Chapter I

Qual è quella ruina che, nel fianco
Di quà da Trento, l'Adige percosse.
O per tremuoto, o per sostegno manco,
Che, da cima del monte onde si mosse,
Al piano è si la rocca discoscesa,
Ch' alcuna via darebbe a chi su fosse—
Cotal di quel burrato era la scesa.

— DANTE, *Inferno*

WE HOLD our existence at the mercy of the elements; the life of man is a state of continual vigilance against their warfare. The heats of noon would wither him like the severed herb; the chills and dews of night would fill his bones with pain; the winter frost would extinguish life in an hour; the hail would smite him to death, did he not seek shelter and protection against them. His clothing is the perpetual armour he wears for his defence, and his dwelling the fortress to which he retreats for safety. Yet even there the elements attack him; the winds overthrow his habitation; the waters sweep it away. The fire that warmed and brightened it within seizes upon its walls and consumes it, with his wretched family. The earth, where she seems to spread a paradise for his abode, sends up death in exhalations from her bosom, and the heavens dart down lightnings to destroy him. The drought consumes the harvests on which he relied for sustenance; or the rains cause the green corn to "rot ere its youth attains a beard." A sudden blast ingulfs him in the waters of the lake or bay from which he seeks his food; a false step or a broken twig precipitates him from the tree which he had climbed for its fruit; oaks falling in the storm, rocks toppling down from the precipices are so many dangers which beset his life. Even his erect attitude is a continual affront to the great law of gravitation, which is sometimes fatally avenged when he loses the balance preserved by

constant care and falls on a hard surface. The very arts on which lie relies for protection from the unkindness of the elements betray him to the fate he would avoid, in some moment of negligence or by some misdirection of skill, and he perishes miserably by his own inventions. Amid these various causes of accidental death which thus surround us at every moment, it is only wonderful that their proper effect is not oftener produced – so admirably has the Framer of the universe adapted the faculties by which man provides for his safety to the perils of the condition in which he is placed. Yet there are situations in which all his skill and strength are vain to protect him from a violent death by some unexpected chance which executes upon him a sentence as severe and inflexible as the most pitiless tyranny of human despotism. But I began with the intention of relating a story, and I will not by my reflections anticipate the catastrophe of my narrative.

One pleasant summer morning a party of three persons set out from a French settlement in the western region of the United States to visit a remarkable cavern in its vicinity. They had already proceeded for the distance of about three miles through the tall original forest, along a path so rarely trodden that it required all their attention to keep its track. They now perceived through the trees the sunshine at a distance, and as they drew nearer they saw that it came down into a kind of natural opening at the foot of a steep precipice. At every step the vast wall seemed to rise higher and higher; its seams and fissures and inequalities became more and more distinct; and far up, nearly midway from the bottom, appeared a dark opening under an impending crag.

The precipice seemed between two and three hundred feet in height, and quite perpendicular. At its base, the earth for several rods around was heaped with loose fragments of rock which had evidently been detached from the principal mass and shivered to pieces in the fall. A few trees, among which were the black walnut and the slippery-elm, and here and there an oak, grew scattered among the rocks and attested by their dwarfish stature the ungrateful soil in which they had taken root. But the wild grape vines which trailed along the ground and sent out their branches to overrun the trees around them showed by their immense size how much they delighted in the warmth of the rocks and the sunshine. The celastrus also here and there had wound its strong rings round and round the trunks and the boughs till they died in its embrace and then clothed the leafless branches in a thick

drapery of its own foliage. Into this open space the party at length emerged from the forest and for a moment stopped.

"Yonder is the Skeleton's Cave," said one of them, who stood a little in front of the rest. As he spoke he raised his arm and pointed to the dark opening in the precipice already mentioned.

The speaker was an aged man, of spare figure and a mild, subdued expression of countenance. Whoever looked at his thin gray hairs, his stooping form, and the emaciated hand which he extended might have taken him for one who had passed the Scripture limit of threescore years and ten, but a glance at his clear and bright hazel eye would have induced the observer to set him down at some five years younger. A broad-brimmed palmetto hat shaded his venerable features from the sun, and his black gown and rosary denoted him to be an ecclesiastic of the Romish faith. The two persons whom he addressed were much younger.

One of them was in the prime of manhood and personal strength, rather tall and of a vigorous make. He wore a hunting-cap, from the lower edge of which curled a profusion of strong dark hair, rather too long for the usual mode in the Atlantic States, shading a fresh-coloured countenance lighted by a pair of full black eyes, the expression of which was compounded of boldness and good-humour. His dress was a blue frock-coat trimmed with yellow fringe and bound by a sash at the waist, deer-skin pantaloons, and deer-skin mocasins. He carried a short rifle on his left shoulder and wore on his left side a leathern bag of rather ample dimensions, and on his right a powder-flask. It was evident that he was either a hunter by occupation or at least one who made hunting his principal amusement – and there was something in his air and the neatness of his garb and equipments that bespoke the latter.

On the arm of this person leaned the third individual of the party, a young woman apparently about nineteen or twenty years of age, slender and graceful as a youthful student of the classic poets might imagine a wood-nymph. She was plainly attired in a straw hat and a dress of russet-colour, fitted for a ramble through that wild forest. The faces of her two companions were decidedly French in their physiognomy; hers was as decidedly Anglo-American. Her brown hair was parted away from a forehead of exceeding fairness, more compressed on the sides than is usual with the natives of England, and showing in the profile that approach to the Grecian outline which is remarked among their descendants in America. To complete the picture, imagine a quiet blue

eye, features delicately moulded, and just colour enough on her cheek to make it interesting to watch its changes as it deepened or grew paler with the varying and flitting emotions which slight cause will call up in a youthful maiden's bosom.

Notwithstanding this difference of national physiognomy, there was nothing peculiar in her accent as she answered the old man who had just spoken.

"I see the mouth of the cave, but how are we to reach it, Father Ambrose? I perceive no way of getting to it without wings, either from the bottom or the top of the precipice."

"Look a few rods to the right, Emily. Do you see that pile of broken rocks reaching up to the middle of the precipice, looking as if a huge column of that mighty wall had been shivered into a pyramid of fragments? Our path lies that way."

"I see it, Father," returned the fair questioner, "but when we arrive at the top, it appears to me we shall be no nearer the cave than we now are."

"From the top of that pile you may perceive a horizontal seam in the precipice extending to the mouth of the cave. Along that line – though you cannot discern it from the place where we stand – is a safe and broad footing, leading to our place of destination. Do you see, Le Maire," continued Father Ambrose, addressing himself to his other companion, "do you see that eagle sitting so composedly on a bough of that leafless tree which seems a mere shrub on the brow of the precipice directly over the cavern? Nay, never lift your rifle, my good friend; the bird is beyond your reach, and you will only waste your powder. The superfluous rains which fall on the highlands beyond are collected in the hollow over which hangs the tree I showed you, and pour down the face of the rock directly over the entrance of the cave. Generally, you will see the bed of that hollow perfectly dry, as it is at present, but during a violent shower, or after several days' rain, there descends from that spot a sheet of water, white as snow, deafening with its noise the quiet solitudes around us and rivalling in beauty some of the cascades that tumble from the cliffs of the Alps. But let us proceed."

The old man led the party to the pile of rocks which he had pointed out to their notice and began to ascend from one huge block to another with an agility scarcely impaired by age. They could now perceive that human steps had trodden that rough path before them; in some places the ancient moss was effaced from the stones, and in

others their surfaces had been worn smooth. Emily was about to follow her venerable conductor, when Le Maire offered to assist her.

"Nay, uncle," said she, "I know you are the politest of men, but I think your rifle will give you trouble enough. I have often heard you call it your wife, so I beg you will wait on Madame Le Maire and leave me to make the best of my way by myself. I am not now to take my first lesson in climbing rocks, as you well know."

"Well, if this rifle be my spouse," rejoined the hunter, "I will say that it is not every wife who has so devoted a husband, nor every husband who is fortunate enough to possess so true a wife. She has another good quality – she never speaks but when she is bid, and then always to the point. I only wish for your sake, since I am not permitted to assist you, that Henry Danville were here. I think we should see the wildness of the paces that carry you so lightly over these rocks a little chastised while the young gentleman tenderly and respectfully handed you up this rude staircase, too rude for such delicate feet. Ah, I beg pardon, I forgot that you had quarrelled. Well, it is only a lover's quarrel, and the reconciliation will be the happier for being delayed so long. Henry is a worthy lad and an excellent marksman."

A heroine in a modern novel would have turned back this raillery with a smart or proud reply, but Emily was of too sincere and ingenuous a nature to answer a jest on a subject in which her heart was so deeply interested. Her cheek burned with a blush of the deepest crimson as she turned away without speaking and fled up the rocks. But though she spoke not, a tumult of images and feelings passed rapidly through her mind. One vivid picture of the past after another came before her recollection, and one well-known form and face were present in them all. She saw Henry Danville as when she first beheld and was struck with his frank, intelligent aspect and graceful manners: respectful, attentive, eager to attract her notice and fearing to displease; then again as the accepted and delighted lover; and finally, as he was now, offended, cold, and estranged. A rustic ball rose before her imagination: a young stranger from the Atlantic States appears among the revellers; the phrases of the gay and animated conversation she held with him again vibrate on her ear; and again she sees Henry standing aloof, and looking gloomy and unhappy. She remembered how she had undertaken to discipline him for this unreasonable jealousy by appearing charmed with her new acquaintance and accepting his civilities with affected pleasure – how he had taken fire at this, had withdrawn himself from