

with the wagon, and when we were all settled in our places they pushed us out into deep water, and the current swept us downstream. This time Carlos set a leisurely stroke, and, with Rufino guiding us always where the stream was strongest, our progress down the river was fast and easy.

Twice we saw flocks of green parrots conducting their squawking arguments in the treetops, and among the other varieties of birds and waterfowl I liked best the big white storks in their swift, low flight across the water.

Once we heard an excited, high-pitched jabbering coming from the forest.

It was a troop of monkeys passing the time of day, and from the volume of noise I imagined there were hundreds of them; but Walter said they probably did not number fifty, for they were the noisiest creatures in the jungle.

The little Brazilian had great fun pointing out the alligators to his wife. She hated the brutes, and gave a horrified wriggle every time she saw one, but he kept giving her a resounding slap, and went off into peals of laughter at her discomfort. I asked Walter what was tickling him, and he replied that the little man was telling his wife that if the canoe upset the men would not get gobbled up, because there was enough of her to keep the alligators busy while we swam all the way to Descalvados. The trip passed off without that unfortunate contingency arising and we arrived back before midday after a most enjoyable journey.

AN important social function took place on the night following our rescue of the Bolivians. It was a dance to celebrate the end of the spell of work in the slaughter-house, and it took place in the shed adjoining the peons' houses. A dance was a customary thing after a long killing, Mac said, and during the past few days they had killed nearly four hundred beefs.

The shed was lit by two oil lamps hanging from the roof, and the band was in a corner. The best corner, too, for in it were several bottles of booze, from which the players assiduously refreshed themselves. The band numbered three instrumentalists, and they variously performed on a concertina, a guitar, and a native drum. The concertina player was the key man; he used no music and his repertoire seemed limited, but he was a rare worker, and put all he knew into his playing. The guitar was game to follow anything the concertina started, and was always with him at the finish. But the drummer had the best job; he was able to thump his drum with one hand and to drink his fire-water with the other, a definite advantage over his brother instrumentalists.

The dance floor was just the natural earth, but things had not had time to liven up when we first arrived, and only two or three couples were dancing. They were doing a hoppy sort of one-step which did not appear very difficult, and, encouraged by Walter and Mac, I chanced my arm, or rather my foot, and winked at a dusky bride in the corner. She rewarded me with a coy smile from ear to ear, and we were off. She was a charming creature, dressed very simply in a sack, with two holes for her arms and one for her head, and she suffered from that complaint about which, we are informed, her best friend could not tell her. I apologised each time I trod on her bare feet, but she only grinned, so apparently it did not matter. When the

band felt thirsty they stopped playing and I thanked my partner and went outside for a breath of fresh air.

Soon afterwards they had a general dance with a swinging chorus, where the men and women stood on opposite sides and jigged backwards and forwards in time to the music.

This, and the exhilarating effects of the liquor, soon put some life into the festivities, so that when the very large Bolivian woman appeared in the doorway she was greeted with such a shout that she hastily withdrew and contented herself with looking in through the window.

I had two more dances, thanks to Mac's prompting, and discovered that my first partner was not alone in her affliction. It was getting unbearably hot in the room, and when he suggested that it was time to go I was pleased to agree. Things never got into full swing until after he and Walter had gone, Mac said, for the men felt a constraint in their presence, and were afraid to really let themselves go.

We heard in the morning that the dance was a great success, and had only terminated at a late hour when the concertina player fell down and was unable to get up again.

I HAD been wondering for some days past about returning home. Having to be back in England by the first week in April, and it then being the middle of February, I could not afford to lose much more time. Mac said there had not been a launch down to Corumbá for some considerable time, and he was expecting one daily; that was reassuring news, and much as I regretted leaving the fazenda all things must come to an end sometime, and I proposed to depart on the first available boat.

Meanwhile, Walter was preparing for another canoe trip, and, of course, I was anxious to go with him. Another killing was planned for the following week, and many head of cattle would need to be rounded up for the purpose. But the flood water was so deep that horsemen could no longer go roaming all over the campo in search of a herd; the position of the cattle would have to be located by canoe, and conditions studied to judge the best route for riders to follow. The trip would take two days, he said, and it looked like being my farewell to the campo.

We made an early start, the party again consisting of Rufino, Carlos, Walter and myself in the big canoe, with little Pietro and another of the gang in a smaller one.

For five or six miles we paddled downstream, and then turned off along a narrow creek which brought us to the home of a family of river Indians. One of them was carrying a bow and arrows, and I remarked on the fact to Walter. To my surprise he told me that it was a common means of fishing in shallow water, and that a spear was frequently used too.

I suggested a demonstration, thinking that the posed body of the Indian aiming his arrow at a fish would make a splendid picture; but Walter seemed doubtful of the native's willingness to submit to a photograph. His doubts were well founded, too, for when the Indian understood what was wanted he was most reluctant to do anything of the sort and looked at my camera with sullen suspicion.

(To be continued next week)

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