The Virgin of the Sun

By

H. R. Haggard

DEDICATION

My Dear Little,

Some five-and-thirty years ago it was our custom to discuss many matters, among them, I think, the history and romance of the vanished Empires of Central America.

In memory of those far-off days will you accept a tale that deals with one of them, that of the marvellous Incas of Peru; with the legend also that, long before the Spanish Conquerors entered on their mission of robbery and ruin, there in that undiscovered land lived and died a White God risen from the sea?

Ever sincerely yours, H. Rider Haggard. Ditchingham, Oct. 24, 1921.

James Stanley Little, Esq.

INTRODUCTORY

There are some who find great interest, and even consolation, amid the worries and anxieties of life in the collection of relics of the past, drift or long-sunk treasures that the sea of time has washed up upon our modern shore.

The great collectors are not of this class. Having large sums at their disposal, these acquire any rarity that comes upon the market and add it to their store which in due course, perhaps immediately upon their deaths, also will be put upon the market and pass to the possession of other connoisseurs. Nor are the dealers who buy to sell again and thus grow wealthy. Nor are the agents of museums in many lands, who purchase for the national benefit things that are gathered together in certain great public buildings which perhaps, some day, though the thought makes one shiver, will be looted or given to the flames by enemies or by furious, thieving mobs.

Those that this Editor has in mind, from one of whom indeed he obtained the history printed in these pages, belong to a quite different category, men of small means often, who collect old things, for the most part at out-of-the-way sales or privately, because they love them, and

sometimes sell them again because they must. Frequently these old things appeal, not because of any intrinsic value that they may have, not even for their beauty, for they may be quite unattractive even to the cultivated eye, but rather for their associations. Such folk love to reflect upon and to speculate about the long-dead individuals who have owned the relics, who have supped their soup from the worn Elizabethan spoon, who have sat at the rickety oak table found in a kitchen or an out-house, or upon the broken, ancient chair. They love to think of the little children whose skilful, tired hands wrought the faded sampler and whose bright eyes smarted over its innumerable stitches.

Who, for instance, was the May Shore ("Fairy" broidered in a bracket underneath, was her pet name), who finished yonder elaborate example on her tenth birthday, the 1st of May--doubtless that is where she got her name--in the year 1702, and on what far shore does she keep her birthdays now? None will ever know. She has vanished into the great sea of mystery whence she came, and there she lives and has her being, forgotten upon earth, or sleeps and sleeps and sleeps. Did she die young or old, married or single? Did she ever set her children to work other samplers, or had she none? was she happy or unhappy, was she homely or beautiful? Was she a sinner or a saint? Again none will ever know. She was born on the 1st of May, 1692, and certainly she died on some date unrecorded. So far as human knowledge goes that is all her history, just as much or as little as will be left of most of us who breathe to-day when this earth has completed two hundred and eighteen more revolutions round the sun.

But the kind of collector alluded to can best be exemplified in the individual instance of him from whom the manuscript was obtained, of which a somewhat modernized version is printed on these pages. He has been dead some years, leaving no kin; and under his will, such of his motley treasures as it cared to accept went to a local museum, while the rest and his other property were sold for the benefit of a mystical brotherhood, for the old fellow was a kind of spiritualist. Therefore, there is no harm in giving his plebeian name, which was Potts. Mr. Potts had a small draper's shop in an undistinguished and rarely visited country town in the east of England, which shop he ran with the help of an assistant almost as old and peculiar as himself. Whether he made anything out of it or whether he lived upon private means is now unknown and does not matter. Anyway, when there was something of antiquarian interest or value to be bought, generally he had the money to pay for it, though at times, in order to do so, he was forced to sell something else. Indeed these were the only occasions when it was possible to purchase anything, indifferent hosiery excepted, from Mr. Potts.

Now, I, the Editor, who also love old things, and to whom therefore Mr. Potts was a sympathetic soul, was aware of this fact and entered into an arrangement with the peculiar assistant to whom I have alluded, to advise me of such crises which arose whenever the local bank called Mr. Potts's attention to the state of his account. Thus it came about that one day I received the following letter:--

Sir,

The Guv'nor has gone a bust upon some cracked china, the ugliest that ever I saw though no judge. So if you want to get that old tall clock at the first price or any other of his rubbish, I think now is your chance. Anyhow, keep this dark as per agreement.

Your obedient, Tom.

(He always signed himself Tom, I suppose to mystify, although I believe his real name was Betterly.)

The result of this epistle was a long and disagreeable bicycle ride in wet autumn weather, and a visit to the shop of Mr. Potts. Tom, alias Betterly, who was trying to sell some mysterious undergarments to a fat old woman, caught sight of me, the Editor aforesaid, and winked. In a shadowed corner of the shop sat Mr. Potts himself upon a high stool, a wizened little old man with a bent back, a bald head, and a hooked nose upon which were set a pair of enormous horn-rimmed spectacles that accentuated his general resemblance to an owl perched upon the edge of its nest-hole. He was busily engaged in doing nothing, and in staring into nothingness as, according to Tom, was his habit when communing with what he, Tom, called his "dratted speerits."

"Customer!" said Tom in a harsh voice. "Sorry to disturb you at your prayers, Guv'nor, but not having two pair of hands I can't serve a

crowd," meaning the old woman of the undergarments and myself.

Mr. Potts slid off his stool and prepared for action. When he saw, however, who the customer was he bristled--that is the only word for it. The truth is that although between us there was an inward and spiritual sympathy, there was also an outward and visible hostility. Twice I had outbid Mr. Potts at a local auction for articles which he desired. Moreover, after the fashion of every good collector he felt it to be his duty to hate me as another collector. Lastly, several times I had offered him smaller sums for antiques upon which he set a certain monetary value. It is true that long ago I had given up this bargaining for the reason that Mr. Potts would never take less than he asked. Indeed he followed the example of the vendor of the Sibylline books in ancient Rome. He did not destroy the goods indeed after the fashion of that person and demand the price of all of them for the one that remained, but invariably he put up his figure by 10 per cent. and nothing would induce him to take off one farthing.

"What do you want, sir?" he said grumpily. "Vests, hose, collars, or socks?"

"Oh, socks, I think," I replied at hazard, thinking that they would be easiest to carry, whereupon Mr. Potts produced some peculiarly objectionable and shapeless woollen articles which he almost threw at me, saying that they were all he had in stock. Now I detest woollen socks and never wear them. Still, I made a purchase, thinking with

sympathy of my old gardener whose feet they would soon be scratching, and while the parcel was being tied up, said in an insinuating voice, "Anything fresh upstairs, Mr. Potts?"

"No, sir," he answered shortly, "at least, not much, and if there were what's the use of showing them to you after the business about that clock?"

"It was £15 you wanted for it, Mr. Potts?" I asked.

"No, sir, it was £17 and now it's 10 per cent. on to that; you can work out the sum for yourself."

"Well, let's have another look at it, Mr. Potts," I replied humbly, whereon with a grunt and a muttered injunction to Tom to mind the shop, he led the way upstairs.

Now the house in which Mr. Potts dwelt had once been of considerable pretensions and was very, very old, Elizabethan, I should think, although it had been refronted with a horrible stucco to suit modern tastes. The oak staircase was good though narrow, and led to numerous small rooms upon two floors above, some of which rooms were panelled and had oak beams, now whitewashed like the panelling--at least they had once been whitewashed, probably in the last generation.

These rooms were literally crammed with every sort of old furniture,

most of it decrepit, though for many of the articles dealers would have given a good price. But at dealers Mr. Potts drew the line; not one of them had ever set a foot upon that oaken stair. To the attics the place was filled with this furniture and other articles such as books, china, samplers with the glass broken, and I know not what besides, piled in heaps upon the floor. Indeed where Mr. Potts slept was a mystery; either it must have been under the counter in his shop, or perhaps at nights he inhabited a worm-eaten Jacobean bedstead which stood in an attic, for I observed a kind of pathway to it running through a number of legless chairs, also some dirty blankets between the moth-riddled curtains.

Not far from this bedstead, propped in an intoxicated way against the sloping wall of the old house, stood the clock which I desired. It was one of the first "regulator" clocks with a wooden pendulum, used by the maker himself to check the time-keeping of all his other clocks, and enclosed in a chaste and perfect mahogany case of the very best style of its period. So beautiful was it, indeed, that it had been an instance of "love at first sight" between us, and although there was an estrangement on the matter of settlements, or in other words over the question of price, now I felt that never more could that clock and I be parted.

So I agreed to give old Potts the £20 or, to be accurate, £18 14s. which he asked on the 10 per cent. rise principle, thankful in my heart that he had not made it more, and prepared to go. As I turned, however, my eye fell upon a large chest of the almost indestructible yellow cypress wood of which were made, it is said, the doors of St. Peter's at Rome

that stood for eight hundred years and, for aught I know, are still standing, as good as on the day when they were put up.

"Marriage coffer," said Potts, answering my unspoken question.

"Italian, about 1600?" I suggested.

"May be so, or perhaps Dutch made by Italian artists; but older than that, for somebody has burnt 1597 on the lid with a hot iron. Not for sale, not for sale at all, much too good to sell. Just you look inside it, the old key is tied to the spring lock. Never saw such poker-work in my life. Gods and goddesses and I don't know what; and Venus sitting in the middle in a wreath of flowers with nothing on, and holding two hearts in her hands, which shows that it was a marriage chest. Once it was full of some bride's outfit, sheets and linen and clothes, and God knows what. I wonder where she has got to to-day. Some place where the moth don't eat clothes, I hope. Bought it at the break-up of an ancient family who fled to Norfolk on the revocation of the Edict of Nantes--Huguenot, of course. Years ago, years ago! Haven't looked into it for many years, indeed, but think there's nothing there but rubbish now."

Thus he mumbled on while he found and untied the old key. The spring lock had grown stiff from disuse and want of oil, but at length it turned and reopened the chest revealing the poker-work glories on the inner side of the lid and elsewhere. Glories they were indeed, never had

I seen such artistry of the sort.

"Can't see it properly," muttered Potts, "windows want washing, haven't been done since my wife died, and that's twenty years ago. Miss her very much, of course, but thank God there's no spring-cleaning now. The things I've seen broken in spring-cleaning! yes, and lost, too. It was after one of them that I told my wife that now I understood why the Mahomedans declare that women have no souls. When she came to understand
what I meant, which it took her a long time to do, we had a row, a regular row, and she threw a Dresden figure at my head. Luckily I caught it, having been a cricketer when young. Well, she's gone now, and no doubt heaven's a tidier place than it used to be--that is, if they will stand her rummagings there, which I doubt. Look at that Venus, ain't she a beauty? Might have been done by Titian when his paints ran out, and he had to take to a hot iron to express his art. What, you can't see her well? Wait a bit and I'll get a lantern. Can't have a naked candle here--things too valuable; no money could buy them again. My wife and I had another row about naked candles, or it may have been a paraffin lamp. You sit in that old prayer-stool and look at the work."

Off he went crawling down the dusky stairs and leaving me wondering what Mrs. Potts, of whom now I heard for the first time, could have been like. An aggravating woman, I felt sure, for upon whatever points men differ, as to "spring-cleaning" they are all of one mind. No doubt he was better without her, for what did that dried-up old artist want with

a wife?

Dismissing Mrs. Potts from my mind, which, to tell the truth, seemed to have no room for her shadowy and hypothetical entity, I fell to examining the chest. Oh! it was lovely. In two minutes the clock was deposed and that chest became the sultana in my seraglio of beauteous things. The clock had only been the light love of an hour. Here was the eternal queen, that is, unless there existed a still better chest somewhere else, and I should happen to find it. Meanwhile, whatever price that old slave-dealer Potts wanted for it, must be paid to him even if I had to overdraw my somewhat slender account. Seraglios, of whatever sort, it must be remembered, are expensive luxuries of the rich indeed, though, if of antiques, they can be sold again, which cannot be said of the human kind for who wants to buy a lot of antique frumps?

There were plenty of things in the chest, such as some odds and ends of tapestry and old clothes of a Queen Anne character, put here, no doubt, for preservation, as moth does not like this cypress wood. Also there were some books and a mysterious bundle tied up in a curious shawl with stripes of colour running through it. That bundle excited me, and I drew the fringes of the shawl apart and looked in. So far as I could see it contained another dress of rich colours, also a thick packet of what looked like parchment, badly prepared and much rotted upon one side as though by damp, which parchment appeared to be covered with faint black-letter writing, done by some careless scribe with poor ink that had faded very much. There were other things, too, within the shawl,

such as a box made of some red foreign wood, but I had not time to investigate further for just then I heard old Potts's foot upon the stair, and thought it best to replace the bundle. He arrived with the lantern and by its light we examined the chest and the poker work.

"Very nice," I said, "very nice, though a good deal knocked about."

"Yes, sir," he replied with sarcasm, "I suppose you'd like to see it neat and new after four hundred years of wear, and if so, I think I can tell you where you can get one to your liking. I made the designs for it myself five years ago for a fellow who wanted to learn how to manufacture antiques. He's in quod now and his antiques are for sale cheap. I helped to put him there to get him out of the way as a danger to Society."

"What's the price?" I asked with airy detachment.

"Haven't I told you it ain't for sale. Wait till I'm dead and come and buy it at my auction. No, you won't, though, for it's going somewhere else."

I made no answer but continued my examination while Potts took his seat on the prayer-stool and seemed to go off into one of his fits of abstraction.

"Well," I said at length when decency told me that I could remain no

longer, "if you won't sell it's no use my looking. No doubt you want to keep it for a richer man, and of course you are quite right. Will you arrange with the carrier about sending the clock, Mr. Potts, and I will let you have a cheque. Now I must be off, as I've ten miles to ride and it will be dark in an hour."

"Stop where you are," said Potts in a hollow voice. "What's a ride in the dark compared with a matter like this, even if you haven't a lamp and get hauled before your own bench? Stop where you are, I'm listening to something."

So I stopped and began to fill my pipe.

"Put that pipe away," said Potts, coming out of his reverie, "pipes mean matches; no matches here."

I obeyed, and he went on thinking till at last what between the chest and the worm-eaten Jacobean bed and old Potts on the prayer-stool, I began to feel as if I were being mesmerized. At length he rose and said in the same hollow voice:

"Young man, you may have that chest, and the price is £50. Now for heaven's sake don't offer me £40, or it will be £100 before you leave this room."

"With the contents?" I said casually.

"Yes, with the contents. It's the contents I'm told you are to have."

"Look here, Potts," I said, exasperated, "what the devil do you mean? There's no one in this room except you and me, so who can have told you anything unless it was old Tom downstairs."

"Tom," he said with unutterable sarcasm, "Tom! Perhaps you mean the mawkin that was put up to scare birds from the peas in the garden, for it has more in its head than Tom. No one here? Oh! what fools some men are. Why, the place is thick with them."

"Thick with whom?"

"Who? why, ghosts, of course, as you would call them in your ignorance. Spirits of the dead I name them. Beautiful enough, too, some of them. Look at that one there," and he lifted the lantern and pointed to a pile of old bed posts of Chippendale design.

"Good day, Potts," I said hastily.

"Stop where you are," repeated Potts. "You don't believe me yet, but when you are as old as I am you will remember my words and believe--more than I do and see--clearer than I do, because it's in your soul, yes, the seed is in your soul, though as yet it is choked by the world, the flesh, and the devil. Wait till your sins have brought you trouble; wait

till the fires of trouble have burned the flesh away; wait till you have sought Light and found Light and live in Light, then you will believe; then you will see."

All this he said very solemnly, and standing there in that dusky room surrounded by the wreck of things that once had been dear to dead men and women, waving the lantern in his hand and staring--at what was he staring?--really old Potts looked most impressive. His twisted shape and ugly countenance became spiritual; he was one who had "found Light and lived in Light."

"You won't believe me," he went on, "but I pass on to you what a woman has been telling me. She's a queer sort of woman; I never saw her like before, a foreigner and dark-hued with strange rich garments and something on her head. There, that, that," and he pointed through the dirty window-place to the crescent of a young moon which appeared in the sky. "A fine figure of a woman," he went on, "and oh! heaven, what eyes--I never saw such eyes before. Big and tender, something like those of the deer in the park yonder. Proud, too, she is, one who has ruled, and a lady, though foreign. Well, I never fell in love before, but I feel like it now, and so would you, young man, if you could see her, and so I think did someone else in his day."

"What did she say to you?" I asked, for by now I was interested enough. Who wouldn't be when old Potts took to describing beautiful women?

"It's a little difficult to tell you for she spoke in a strange tongue, and I had to translate it in my head, as it were. But this is the gist of it. That you were to have that chest and what was in it. There's a writing there, she says, or part of a writing for some has gone--rotted away. You are to read that writing or to get it read and to print it so that the world may read it also. She said that 'Hubert' wishes you to do so. I am sure the name was Hubert, though she also spoke of him with some other title which I do not understand. That's all I can remember, except something about a city, yes, a City of Gold and a last great battle in which Hubert fell, covered with glory and conquering. I understood that she wanted to talk about that because it isn't in the writing, but you interrupted and of course she's gone. Yes, the price is £50 and not a farthing less, but you can pay it when you like for I know you're as honest as most, and whether you pay it or not, you must have that chest and what's in it and no one else."

"All right," I said, "but don't trust it to the carrier. I'll send a cart for it to-morrow morning. Lock it now and give me the key."

In due course the chest arrived, and I examined the bundle for the other contents do not matter, although some of them were interesting. Pinned inside the shawl I found a paper, undated and unsigned, but which from the character and style of the writing was, I should say, penned by a lady about sixty years ago. It ran thus:--

"My late father, who was such a great traveller in his young days and so fond of exploring strange places, brought these things home from one of his journeys before his marriage, I think from South America. He told me once that the dress was found upon the body of a woman in a tomb and that she must have been a great lady, for she was surrounded by a number of other women, perhaps her servants who were brought to be buried with her here when they died. They were all seated about a stone table at the end of which were the remains of a man. My father saw the bodies near the ruins of some forest city, in the tomb over which was heaped a great mound of earth. That of the lady, which had a kind of shroud made of the skins of long-wooled sheep wrapped about it as though to preserve the dress beneath, had been embalmed in some way, which the natives of the place, wherever it was, told him showed that she was royal. The others were mere skeletons, held together by the skin, but the man had a long fair beard and hair still hanging to his skull, and by his side was a great cross-hilted sword that crumbled to fragments when it was touched, except the hilt and the knob of amber upon it which had turned almost black with age. I think my father said that the packet of skins or parchment of which the underside is badly rotted with damp was set under the feet of the man. He told me that he gave those who found the tomb a great deal of money for the dress, gold ornaments, and emerald necklace, as nothing so perfect had been found before, and the cloth is all worked with gold thread. My father told me, too, that he did not wish the things to be sold."

This was the end of the writing.

Having read it I examined the dress. It was of a sort that I had never seen before, though experts to whom I have shown it say that it is certainly South American of a very early date, and like the ornaments, probably pre-Inca Peruvian. It is full of rich colours such as I have seen in old Indian shawls which give a general effect of crimson. This crimson robe clearly was worn over a skirt of linen that had a purple border. In the box that I have spoken of were the ornaments, all of plain dull gold: a waist-band; a circlet of gold for the head from which rose the crescent of the young moon and a necklace of emeralds, uncut stones now much flawed, for what reason I do not know, but polished and set rather roughly in red gold. Also there were two rings. Round one of these a bit of paper was wrapped upon which was written, in another hand, probably that of the father of the writer of the memorandum:--

"Taken from the first finger of the right hand of a lady's mummy which I am sorry, in our circumstances, it was quite impossible to carry away."

This ring is a broad band of gold with a flat bezel upon which something was once engraved that owing to long and hard wear now cannot be distinguished. In short, it appears to be a signet of old European make but of what age and from what country it is impossible to determine. The other ring was in a small leathery pouch, elaborately embroidered in gold thread or very thin wire, which I suppose was part of the lady's costume. It is like a very massive wedding ring, but six or eight times

as thick, and engraved all over with an embossed conventional design of what look like stars with rays round them, or possibly petalled flowers. Lastly there was the sword-hilt, of which presently.

Such were the trinkets, if so they may be called. They are of little value intrinsically except for their weight in gold, because, as I have said, the emeralds are flawed as though they have been through a fire or some other unknown cause. Moreover, there is about them nothing of the grace and charm of ancient Egyptian jewellery; evidently they belonged to a ruder age and civilization. Yet they had, and still have, to my imagining, a certain dignity of their own.

Also--here I became infected with the spirit of the peculiar Potts--without doubt these things were rich in human associations. Who had worn that dress of crimson with the crosses worked on it in gold wire (they cannot have been Christian crosses), and the purple-bordered skirt underneath, and the emerald necklace and the golden circlet from which rose the crescent of the young moon? Apparently a mummy in a tomb,
the mummy of some long-dead lady of a strange and alien race. Was she such a one as that old lunatic Potts had dreamed he saw standing before him in the filthy, cumbered upper-chamber of a ruinous house in an England market town, I wondered, one with great eyes like to those of a doe and a regal bearing?

No, that was nonsense. Potts had lived with shadows until he believed in

shadows that came out of his own imagination and into it returned again. Still, she was a woman of some sort, and apparently she had a lover or a husband, a man with a great fair beard. How at this date, which must have been remote, did a golden-bearded man come to foregather with a woman who wore such robes and ornaments as these? And that sword hilt, worn smooth by handling and with an amber knob? Whence came it? To my mind--this was before expert examination confirmed my view--it looked very Norse. I had read the Sagas and I remembered a tale recovered in them of some bold Norsemen who about the years eight or nine hundred had wandered to the coast of what is known now to be America--I think a certain Eric was their captain. Could the fair-haired man in the grave have been one of these?

Thus I speculated before I looked at the pile of parchments so evidently prepared from sheep skins by one who had only a very rudimentary knowledge of how to work such stuff, not knowing that in those parchments was hid the answer to many of my questions. To these I turned last of all, for we all shrink from parchments; their contents are generally so dull. There was a great bundle of them that had been lashed together with a kind of straw rope, fine straw that reminded me of that used to make Panama hats. But this had rotted underneath together with all the bottom part of the parchments, many sheets of them, of which only fragments remained, covered with dry mould and crumbling. Therefore the rope was easy to remove and beneath it, holding the sheets in place, was only some stout and comparatively modern string--it had a red thread in it that marked it as navy cord of an old pattern.

I slipped these fastenings off and lifted a blank piece of skin set upon the top. Beneath appeared the first sheet of parchment, closely, very closely covered with small "black-letter" writing, so faint and faded that even if I were able to read black-letter, which I cannot, of it I could have made nothing at all. The thing was hopeless. Doubtless in that writing lay the key to the mystery, but it could never be deciphered by me or any one else. The lady with the eyes like a deer had appeared to old Potts in vain; in vain had she bidden him to hand over this manuscript to me.

So I thought at the time, not knowing the resources of science. Afterwards, however, I took that huge bundle to a friend, a learned friend whose business in life it was and is, to deal with and to decipher old manuscripts.

"Looks pretty hopeless," he said, after staring at these. "Still, let's have a try; one never knows till one tries."

Then he went to a cupboard in his muniment room and produced a bottle full of some straw-coloured fluid into which he dipped an ordinary painting brush. This charged brush he rubbed backwards and forwards over the first lines of the writing and waited. Within a minute, before my astonished eyes, that faint, indistinguishable script turned coal-black, as black as though it had been written with the best modern ink yesterday.

"It's all right," he said triumphantly, "it's vegetable ink, and this stuff has the power to bring it up as it was on the day when it was used. It will stay like that for a fortnight and then fade away again. Your manuscript is pretty ancient, my friend, time of Richard II, I should say, but I can read it easily enough. Look, it begins, 'I, Hubert de Hastings, write this in the land of Tavantinsuyu, far from England where I was born, whither I shall never more return, being a wanderer as the rune upon the sword of my ancestor, Thorgrimmer, foretold that I should be, which sword my mother gave me on the day of the burning of Hastings by the French,' and so on." Here he stopped.

"Then for heaven's sake, do read it," I said.

"My dear friend," he answered, "it looks to me as though it would mean several months' work, and forgive me for saying that I am paid a salary for my time. Now I'll tell you what you have to do. All this stuff must be treated, sheet by sheet, and when it turns black it must be photographed before the writing fades once more. Then a skilled person--so-and-so, or so-and-so, are two names that occur to me--must be employed to decipher it again, sheet by sheet. It will cost you money, but I should say that it was worth while. Where the devil is, or was, the land of Tavantinsuyu?"

"I know," I answered, glad to be able to show myself superior to my learned friend in one humble instance. "Tavantinsuyu was the native name

for the Empire of Peru before the Spanish Invasion. But how did this Hubert get there in the time of Richard II? That is some centuries earlier than Pizarro set foot upon its shores."

"Go and find out," he answered. "It will amuse you for quite a long while and perhaps the results may meet the expenses of decipherment, if they are worth publishing. I expect they are not, but then, I have read so many old manuscripts and found most of them so jolly dull."

Well, that business was accomplished at a cost that I do not like to record, and here are the results, more or less modernised, since often Hubert of Hastings expressed himself in a queer and archaic fashion. Also sometimes he used Indian words as though he had talked the tongue of these Peruvians, or rather the Chanca variety of it, so long that he had begun to forget his own language. Myself I have found his story very romantic and interesting, and I hope that some others will be of the same opinion. Let them judge.

But oh, I do wonder what was the end of it, some of which doubtless was recorded on the rotted sheets though of course there can have been no account of the great battle in which he fell, since Quilla could not write at all, least of all in English, though I suppose she survived it and him.

The only hint of that end is to be found in old Potts's dream or vision, and what is the worth of dreams and visions?