

# THE LADY AND THE EARTHQUAKE

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WITH PICTURES BY CHARLES J. POST



PASAQUIMENTO, in its loneliness, lies close under the shadow of the Peruvian Andes, with its roadstead wide open to the beat of the sea. When the norther blows, no man passes between the shipping and the shore. But the mind of a man is so constituted that, when evils are equal, the place where he is not is the place

where he would be, and it was therefore in no cheerful mood that one twilight I stood on the quay, gazing off through the dusk at my vessel uneasily pitching on the long rollers that swept down from the north. I was turning to go, when a man in loose, brown linen, with his hand clutching the rim of his Panama hat, literally blew down the quay, and rounded up under my lee, as it were, with a high, pleasant-voiced "*Buenas tardes, Señor.*"

I turned at his speech, and looked down into the dark, handsome face of a man of perhaps forty. Short, graceful, and far from thick-set, there was something about his resolute but kindly face and the carriage of his shoulders that gave an instant impression of firmness. By his walk I had known him at once as a sailor.

I replied to his greeting, but in English. His face lighted up.

"You go not aboard to-night, Señor Capitan," he said politely. "Me likewise. Too rough like the devil. *Zut!* what is the odd? 'T is more better to remain with some nice peoples. Me, I have the little engage'. So I say: 'Wait! I go down-

ward to the shore one mineet to see my little sheep—how she shall stand the roughness.' Behol' her—Portuguese." He pointed seaward, where a small, full-rigged brig was rolling her heavy-laden bows under. "Ver' well. She is of much safeness; likewise me, if I remain at the distance. So I remain; and we make the night, eh?"

I began to explain my situation, but with the first words he seized my hand, exclaiming:

"Ah! you a-r-re Capitan Jarvees! I have hear' about you. Happy to make the acquaint'. I shall make you to meet some nice peoples. You shall forget the lonesomeness." I did.

He had linked his arm in mine and started to mount the steep road to the upper town as soon as he had learned my identity, and long before we reached the Fonda Pascala, where he told me he purposed to dine, he had unburdened himself of his heart's desire: he wished to marry the Señora Pascala.

"And I sail not from Pasaquimento before it is accomplish'," he added as he paused at the entrance to the inn. "Longly or shortly, it shall make not the difference; I own my little sheep. And now you shall see the señora and approve. Come in and behol'."

We passed through the great outer room, with its variegated-colored throng, and entered a smaller apartment opening upon the patio. I had barely taken my seat when he leaned toward me, whispering:

"How have I tell you, Capitan? At your convenience, without the quickness to be so impolite, kindly advance your eyes over the shoulder backward. 'T is she."



Drawn by Charles J. Post

"HE HAD LINKED HIS ARM IN MINE"

It was not necessary, for even as he finished, the chatelaine of the fonda, jingling her keys and smiling a welcome, was standing before us, and, with true Spanish courtesy, was bestowing upon us her house and all it contained. She was tall and dark, and wholly charming.

Captain Miranda was on his feet, extending his hand.

"If the heart be include', Señora?" he queried in a tone that was cunningly compounded of humility and bravado.

She met him on his own ground; her face fell in lines of sad sincerity.

"Alas! Señor," she murmured, "'t is for so long time been dead—those heart! So much troub'—with mens!" She stifled a murmur that seemed suspiciously like a giggle, but reappeared as a sigh as she asked almost tenderly: "You ver' hongry, Señor? You want some nice supper?"

Shaking his head, the captain sank back into his chair.

"I eat no more," he declared; "'t is

more better to die when the heart is broke'."

"Tha' 's how I think, me," murmured the señora.

She slipped away quietly, leaving me dubious about the chances for supper; but Captain Miranda drew his chair up to the table with the air of a good trencherman, turning a smiling face to me.

"How you like?" he asked gaily.

"She is charming," I answered—"charming. I could fall in love with her myself."

He shook hands with me with much feeling.

"She is ver' *simpatica*," he declared.

"I noticed that," I assured him, and he shook hands again.

She was also forgetful to a degree, I concluded later, when I noticed in her no surprise at the inroads the captain made in her really excellent supper. She bustled in and out of the room, smiling, chattering, and ordering her maids about with a

familiar sharpness that still carried with it no sting. And when we were nearing the end, she seated herself at our table, tenderly solicitous lest we rise with appetite still unsatisfied.

It was then that three gentlemen drew near, and greeting Captain Miranda with the greatest cordiality and being introduced to me, after the pleasant Spanish custom seated themselves near at hand "to see us eat." The captain kicked me under the table, and by that sign I knew that the three were the rivals of whom he had spoken on his way to the fonda. They were Passos, whom I already knew unfavorably as a customs officer; Schwartz, a German, understood to be a wine-grower from the interior; and Barzilla, who had the appearance of a small politician, with all the abundant leisure of his class. Certainly he was always underfoot at the Fonda Pascala, I found. It was due to Schwartz and me that English was spoken.

Our talk was general, the genial conversation of intimate friends, till Passos fired the train by asking Captain Miranda how long he intended to linger on in Pasaquimento. "You are loaded," he said; "why wait? You will get the gales off the Horn. They will not be pleasant."

Captain Miranda glanced up at him. For a moment he hesitated.

"I wait till those orange-blossoms shall flower," he then said, and glanced at the señora.

Passos laughed—a laugh that jarred with a sneer.

"They will be late this year," he replied, and winked at his friends.

"So?" queried Captain Miranda. He poured out a glass of wine, and, facing the company, continued: "'T is best to explain—we going get married together, the Señora Pascala and me. But when? With swiftness, I say; but she declare when I shall return. But when shall that be? *Caramba!* am I a prophet! No, Señores. So I remain till all shall be conclude'. I ask you, Señores, to drink to the ver' great happiness of the Señora Pascala."

No one of the three heeded his suggestion; they were staring angrily or reproachfully at the Señora Pascala herself, who sat in demure silence, a shadow of apprehension on her downcast face.

The silence seemed to grow, became at

length unbearable, and lifting her eyes, the señora caught a flitting glimpse of the concentrated gaze fixed upon her. She covered her face with her hands and laughed hysterically.

"'T is ver' sudden," she murmured. "I get some confusion, with so many peoples regarding me."

"Sudden, Maria Pascala?" reproachfully demanded Passos. "Is it sudden that you have promised to marry somebody?"

"I mean not *ver'* sudden," was her ready emendation.

"It is already ten months," retorted Passos.

"A year," broke in Schwartz.

"Two," said Barzilla, with triumph. "Shall not the first be greatest? Two years she has promised to marry me."

"Those fault have long time since been confess', and penance done for them," said Captain Miranda, dryly, and from behind the señora's hands escaped an unmistakable giggle. The face of Passos flushed angrily. He leaned across the table and tapped it with his finger for attention, as he said:

"Maria Pascala, look at me!" He paused a moment, then angrily repeated: "Look at me, Maria Pascala!"

The slender, brown fingers hiding the downcast face spread ever so little.

"Yas, Señor," obediently murmured the Señora Pascala.

Passos shrugged his shoulders, hesitated, then raised a warning finger.

"Maria Pascala, listen," he said. "You remember the day of the fête of St. Michael? You remember?"

The señora thought intently.

"I think—yas; oh, to be sure!" she replied. "'T was ver' nice day. I went to mass, an' stay to watch those procession. 'T was ver' nice, yas."

"And you stop by the big tree in the plaza because of the great heat; and when you turn around quick because some one step soft behind you, there was me, to surprise you; and you jump and squeal a little. You remember that?"

"Yas, 't was so—like you say. La! la! you rec'lect ver' nice!" she added admiringly. "Me, I have the poor rec'lection." She sighed deeply. "What you do for that mem'ry, Señor Passos?"

But the questioner was not to be diverted; he went on relentlessly.



Drawn by Charles J. Post

“IS IT SUDDEN THAT YOU HAVE PROMISED TO MARRY SOMEBODY?”

“And so I speak low, so nobody shall hear me, and ask will you marry with me; and you say—remember, Maria Pascala, you just been to that mass—you say what, Maria Pascala?”

She considered long, the dark little head downcast, the slender fingers closed above the eyes again. She sighed deeply.

“Alas! ’t is true; ’t is so—like what you say,” she murmured. “I think I must be going get creazy, me. I get ol’ ver’ fast—so much troub’.”

“Ah!” exclaimed Passos, and leaning back in his chair, gazed triumphantly across the table at Captain Miranda; but Barzilla gave that placid gentleman no chance to reply; he had broken into a tumultuous stream of Spanish when the German thumped the table with his fist.

“Pardon me, sir,” he began. “I—”

The señora clapped her hands to her ears, and, laughing wildly, sprang to her feet.

“You all going want make me get creazy?” she cried. “Yas, ’t is so; ’t is true: I say just like you all say. But, Señores, when one lady say yas to so many mens, how she mean? She mean *no*. She

don’ want get married with *nobuddy*.” She looked at them triumphantly through tears as she stepped slowly backward. “Yas, tha’ ’s how ’t is. She just speak so because the heart is dead to her. You un’stand? She is so sorry for that dead heart she try love ever’buddy all alike. And she *succeed*. Tha’ ’s how ’t is, yas.” She beamed upon them tenderly in her all-embracing love, then with a look of dismay darted forward and tilted the empty wine-bottles. “Ah! la!” she cried in a voice of anguish, “what I do? Let you get ver’ thirsty with so much talk!” She looked at Passos in sad triumph. “Did I not tell you, Señor, I rec’lect ver’ poor? Behol’!” She shook the empty bottles before his eyes and darted away to refill them.

Captain Miranda leaned across the table and shook hands with his dejected comrades. His own face was calm, but sympathetic.

“Señores,” he said kindly, “I have the great pity, me; but you un’stand how ’t is? I shall explain. You know Pasaquimento; she is dull to greatest extreme. So the señora get lonesome; she makes some ex-



citements for herself. Is it not natural? *Diabolo*, yes! To have some excitements when the life is lonesome is necessaire. So the señora shall listen to some señores, and laugh and look at them with the eyes cast down, and *mebbe* say some words because the heart is *simpatica*. Shall she be always still like the log? No, Señores. 'T is not the nature. But is it still necessaire to marry all? *Zut!* no! But, Señores, you shall be invite' when we get married with each other." He stretched forth his arm to shake hands again, but it dropped to the table unnoticed.

I am no Spanish student, but it needed even less knowledge than I have to understand the wrath that broke forth at his words. Through all the din Captain Miranda sat calmly unmoved; but just as I was preparing for the shedding of blood, he suddenly smiled, and, drawing a notebook from his pocket, tore three slips of different lengths from a page, and held them up to command silence.

"Behol' the solving, Señores," he said, and turned his back to them. Then facing them once more, he held up his closed fist, from which the tips of the three slips protruded. He stretched forth his hand to Passos, saying: "Have the goodness to choose, Señor."

"For what?" demanded Passos, and drew back.

"For the lott'ry," explained Miranda. "*Como no?* The short paper commands the first choosing; the middle, the secondly; the long, the lastly. 'T is of great fairness. Choose."

They demurred a little, but at length agreeing, in silence began to draw. To Passos had fallen the shortest.

"Aha! 'T is me!" he cried. "I marry her."

Captain Miranda shook his hand warmly. "'T is to congratulate," he explained. "'T is yours, the first choosing—after some trifling affair. Observe, Señores, I make not the drawing. And why? Behol' the explain; 't is of the great fairness. Señor Passos have win the short piece. Ver' good; he shall fight with me the *duello*. If he obtain once again the fine success, the señora is to him. If not, Señor Barzilla shall fight with me; and so forth. Me, I shall have the three fights or one, and no drawing the paper. *Diabolo!* I don' care, me; tha' 's all right. Choose your own weapons, Señores—anything; tha' 's all right. But Señor Passos first."

The three surprised suitors looked at one another in silence, then Passos, with



Drawn by Charles J. Post

"'T IS OF GREAT FAIRNESS. CHOOSE'"



Drawn by Charles J. Post

"THREE STARTED LIKE CONSPIRATORS AT THAT LONG-DRAWN EXCLAMATION"

flushed face, struck the table with his fist.

"'T is nonsent!" he cried. "I—"

"If the señor is afraid," suggested Captain Miranda, "if all the señores are afraid—"

They rose to their feet as if touched by one spring, bowing profoundly to Captain Miranda. He, too, arose.

"When, Señores?" he asked gently.

"Now," snapped Passos, "if the señor is ready."

"Surely," agreed Miranda; "the more quickly, the more better. I—"

All turned guiltily at the sudden opening of a door: it was the señora returning with wine. Demure, with eyes downcast, for all the world like a nun who had renounced the world of men, she advanced to the table, and softly set the bottles there, and brought forth fresh glasses. It was only when she stepped back that she seemed to notice that all were standing in awkward silence. I saw her give a great

start and look wonderingly up into their faces.

"Are the señores not thirsty?" she asked timidly. "Please to be seat'."

In their shuffling hesitation, as she gazed at them, first in innocent surprise, I saw her face slowly change through wonder, surprise, fear, at last to scorn and certain knowledge. It was wonderful acting; for I knew beyond all doubt that the Señora Pascala had been listening behind the closed door.

"A-h-h!" Three started like conspirators at that long-drawn exclamation, but Captain Miranda seemed not to hear; he was busily engaged in bringing the señora a chair. She scornfully waved it aside and stepped back. "Ah!" she repeated, "I un'stand; you señores been getting mad to each other." She laid her hand on Barzilla's arm. "What you mad at, Señor?" she demanded imperiously.

He hesitated, and she gave him a look of scorn, and stepped toward Passos.

"What you mad at?" she asked.

"Not at you, Señora," he answered tenderly.

With a shrug of the shoulders, she looked at Captain Miranda.

"Señor, I ask you what you mad at?" she said.

He smiled gaily.

"Me?" he asked. "Señora, I shall confess all. I am not mad at nobuddy; I am highly delight'. And why? I am going win ver' fine wife."

"Win?" she repeated suspiciously, and paused in deep thought. Then suddenly she lifted her head and fixed him with a look of scorn. "You going fight some duel because I shall not get married with you."

"It—" he began, but she motioned him to be silent.

"I don' ask it; I say it," she explained. "I don' ask nobuddy what mebbe going to get killed to tell me some lies—wicked like that." She shuddered, and stepped back, glancing coldly at her four lovers. "Listen, Señores," she then said. "I speak no more to no mans what going fight some duel. My house shall be closed to him. He shall be to me like somebuddy what is dead." She wheeled and fixed Captain Miranda with her glowing eyes. "Señor Capitan, shall you fight with those?" She waved her hand toward his rivals.

"Señora," he began, "my life—"

She stamped her foot.

"Shall you?" she repeated.

"Señora—"

She pointed to the door.

"There is the door to my house, Señor," she declared. "Be pleased to depart by it."

Captain Miranda turned sadly away. Near the door he paused to look back.

"Adios, Señora," he said gently. "I go. Because why? Because I shall consider my life not that—" he snapped his fingers—"before your h-h-honor and pr-ro-tection."

She turned to Passos almost before the last words had fallen from Captain Miranda's lips.

"And you, Señor?" she demanded.

He bowed gravely.

"I have no wish higher than the se-ñora's commands," he said magnificently.

"Ah!" she exclaimed, and turned to Barzilla. "And you, Señor?"

The answer was of like import, as was also that of Schwartz. With a final "Ah!" the señoira sank into a chair and motioned us to be seated. "'T is nice that mans is gone, nevair to come back no more," she said with a sigh of relief. "He makes me get ver' much frightened, he is so—brave. I am going be afraid all time he kill somebuddy." She smiled upon us gently. "'T is more better to have some mens like you, Señores—gentle like some womens, what don' want tō fight for nothing with nobuddy. But those brave men!" She shrugged her shoulders and sank into pensive thought, heedless of the oppressive silence of her auditors.

On the quay the next morning, as he was putting off to his vessel, I came upon



Drawn by Charles J. Post

"'BECAUSE I SHALL CONSIDER MY LIFE NOT  
THAT . . . BEFORE YOUR H-H-HONOR  
AND PR-RO-TECTION'"





Drawn by Charles J. Post

"BARZILLA HAD BROUGHT HIM GREAT NEWS"

Captain Miranda. He hailed me from a distance in a care-free voice.

"There will be no fight," he said smilingly when I drew near. "I have heard."

I began to condole with him for being forbidden the Fonda Pascala, but he stopped me, with a laugh, gently patting my shoulder.

"Zut!" he cried. "It is nothing. Because why? Because, Señor, I have won. But those!" He emitted a sibilant exclamation of scorn. "How shall she still decide among those? *Caramba!* 't is the same like before—three cats in the dark, all gray."

I, too, was inclined to be of his opinion, having heard what I had after his departure the night before, but I was staggered when, three days later, I met him again, and he told me that Barzilla had brought him great news: Schwartz had been accepted, and had gone home to prepare his hacienda for his bride.

I expressed my sympathy, but he had not lost confidence. He smiled as he said:

"*Caramba!* She is getting them out of the way, Señor. 'T is no more. Something shall soon recall me to her house. Wait, Señor; wait. You shall behold some surprise."

Later in the day, when I met him, I asked him somewhat maliciously if he should sail before the wedding, if it really came to that.

"Yes," he answered thoughtfully. He glanced at me a moment, and then added: "Will the Señor keep my secret?"

"Surely you know I will," was my answer.

Then with glee he told me his plan, if the worst came to pass. In brief, it was to effect a reconciliation with the Señora Pascala, invite the whole party aboard his vessel for a farewell dinner, and then, once they were aboard, sail away with the diners. He would have a priest come off to see a sick man in the fore-castle—to save trouble, he explained, if the señora would marry him. The others he would drop at some port down the coast.



I thought the scheme serious, and told him so, but his only reply was to the effect that he was serious himself, and there the matter rested.

The afternoon was sultry and windless, but having nothing better in view, I went up to the Fonda Pascala to wish the señora much joy. The big, bare main room was deserted save for a slatternly Indian woman, who was lazily brushing up the hearth of the great fireplace, where the llama-drivers from the hills nightly cooked their own suppers. I heard a gurgle of flowing water from the patio in the rear, and took my way thither, seeing nothing at all at first save the silvery glint of the roadstead over the broken top of the wall, and the black hulls of the anchored ships. Through the middle of the court a slender stream rippled, and in the far corner a woman was dipping up water in a calabash. I was turning to go when I caught

a glimpse of the señora's black-and-white plaid dress beyond a low cluster of frangipani.

She received my good wishes with a demurely downcast face that was adorably charming, but when I ventured to say that Schwartz was to be envied, she looked up with the giggle that I had learned to know meant many things difficult to understand.

"You think so?" she asked slyly.

"No man is more to be envied," I declared.

"M-m-m!" she murmured, and glanced skyward. She threw out her arms. "'Tis ver' hot," she said. "You think so?"

I said I did, and mopped my brow.

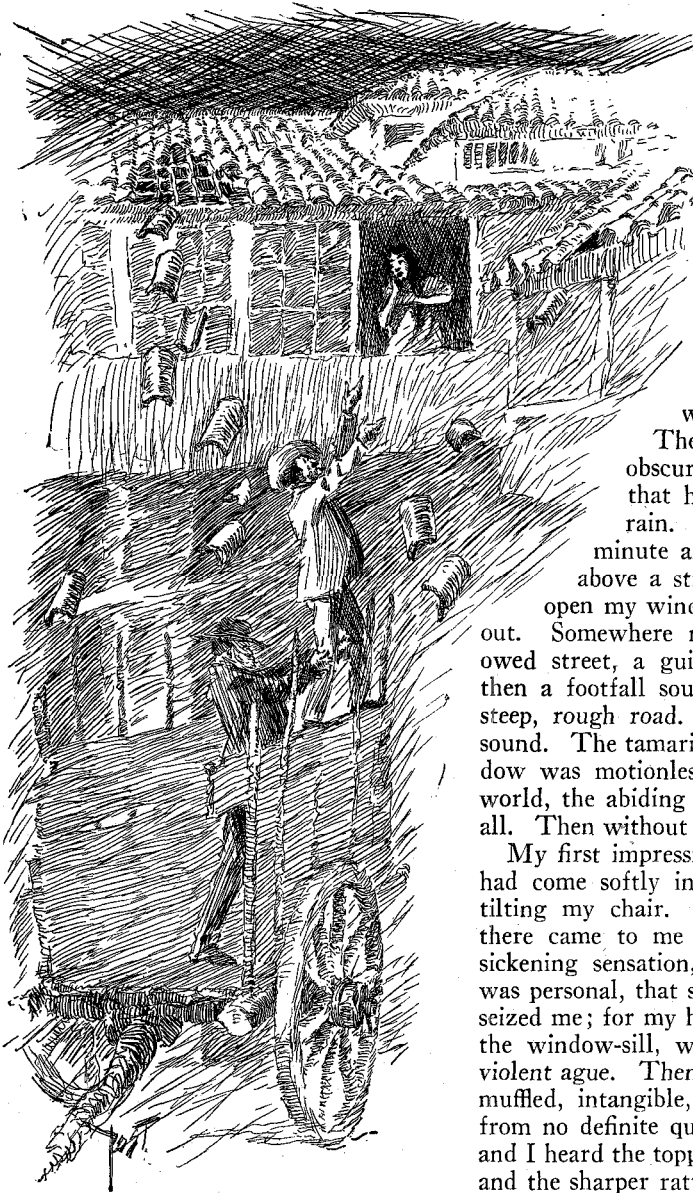
"He is ver' gentle, the Señor Schwartz—like the lamb, don't you think? He would not hurt nobuddy. But some mens!" She shrugged her shoulders.

"Yes, he 's—gentle," I assented dryly, and she laughed with ready comprehension.



Drawn by Charles J. Post

"HE TOLD ME HIS PLAN, IF THE WORST CAME TO PASS"



Drawn by Charles J. Post

"‘COME DOWN, MARIA PASCALA’"

"You see that Capitan Miranda?" she asked. "Well, I make some request of you: tell him he shall not come to my house; it will make me frighten'."

"You told him that yourself,—not to come,—you know," I suggested.

"Surely," she laughed; "tha' 's so. I forget so quick—like I told you."

Was she piqued because Miranda remained angry? Was my message a challenge to him to come? Was she trifling

both with him and with Schwartz? I could not say; but all the afternoon I searched for Miranda to deliver the message, though it seemed in the end withdrawn. But neither in the afternoon, nor yet in the evening, was he anywhere to be found, and earlier than usual, because of the heat, I went to my room.

The moon was full, but obscured by a yellowish haze that had in it no threat of rain. It was more like dust, minute and motionless, floating above a stifling world. I threw open my window-shutter and leaned out. Somewhere near me, in the shadowed street, a guitar tinkled; now and then a footfall sounded unevenly on the steep, rough road. There was no other sound. The tamarind-tree below my window was motionless. The peace of the world, the abiding sense of rest, lay over all. Then without warning it came.

My first impression was that some one had come softly into my room and was tilting my chair. As I turned angrily, there came to me a strange delusion, a sickening sensation, that the disturbance was personal, that some dread disease had seized me; for my hand, still resting upon the window-sill, was shaking as with a violent ague. Then I knew. A rumbling, muffled, intangible, that seemed to come from no definite quarter, filled the night, and I heard the toppling crash of chimneys and the sharper rattle of falling tiles, and suddenly that indescribable horror—the wailing of terrified humanity. It came in waves from every quarter, at first muffled, then shrill or hoarse, as men, women, and children poured forth into the streets. Then I, too, fled.

I ran to the stairs, but they were gone, and so back to my window. The height was not great, and I dropped into a thorny bush, and, picking myself up, ran into the street, and instinctively toward the most open place, the plaza.

It was already crowded, and I remember wondering how they had reached it so

soon. Some were crying, some laughing, and some were silent, with strange, listening faces—waiting in sickening dread for the sound of fresh shocks, I presume. Some were running about, calling for friends.

A man beside me began to try to reassure me; I know I wondered if he saw in my face the signs of fear. It was not a bad one, he said; he had seen far worse right there. I had begun to say any was bad enough when I saw Captain Miranda running past. I did not wait to finish my sentence, but dashed after him. He turned at the touch of my hand on his shoulder, but without pausing.

"The señora," he gasped—"we've got to save her." I had not thought of the señora.

She was at a window above the darkened patio, looking out, and crying over and over again in Spanish: "The stairs are gone! The stairs are gone!"

A fresh tremor came, with the sound of falling tiles, and leaning far over the sill, she broke into an inarticulate scream; but at sight of us coming on the run up under her window, she sank back in sudden silence. I remember I thought she had been struck by a tile.

There was a high-sided cart in a corner of the court, and drawing it under the window, we sprang in. As the one who was much the taller of the two, I know I

thought Providence had chosen me for the rescue; but the captain thought otherwise.

"Steady me!" he commanded, and leaping up on the tall side board, he raised his arms toward the sill, crying: "Come down, Maria Pascala! Come down!"

Her eyes rose above the level of the sill, and she told us in English what she had already cried to the world in her native tongue: "The stairs are gone."

"I shall be your stairs," said Captain Miranda, tenderly. "Come down, Maria Pascala!"

"But I can't find my dress," she replied; "I have the great shame."

"In the presence of death there shall be no shame," cried Captain Miranda. "Come!"

We heard her murmur then—it was hardly more than a whisper:

"But you don't understand: I have got my *night-dress* on."

"It is night, and therefore the more proper," declared the captain, boldly. "Maria Pascala, will you come!"

"You speak so fierce!" she lamented; but she stretched out her arms, and a moment later stood by my side in the cart. But an instant her head clung to Captain Miranda's shoulder as she breathed in his ear: "Now I shall *have* to marry with you—dressed like this. I have the great shame, me."

And marry with him she did.



## TO HER—UNSPOKEN

BY AMELIA JOSEPHINE BURR

GO to him, ah, go to him, and lift your eyes aglow to him;  
 Fear not royally to give whatever he may claim;  
 All your spirit's treasury scruple not to show to him.  
 He is noble; meet him with a pride too high for shame.

Say to him, ah, say to him, that soul and body sway to him;  
 Cast away the cowardice that counsels you to flight,  
 Lest you turn at last to find that you have lost the way to him,  
 Lest you stretch your arms in vain across a starless night.

Be to him, ah, be to him, the key that sets joy free to him;  
 Teach him all the tenderness that only love can know,  
 And if ever there should come a memory of me to him,  
 Bid him judge me gently for the sake of long ago.