

HOPE

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Hope by R. B. Cunninghame Graham

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TO

SANTIAGO PEREZ TRIANA

(MINISTER OF COLUMBIA)

WRITER, PATRIOT AND FRIEND

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PREFACE

TO HORSEMEN AND OTHERS

"TYNE hope, tyne a'!" the Scottish proverb says, and it is right, for hope is like a northern hawthorn bush, late flowering but continuing long in bloom.

There is an element of speculation in it which faith quite lacks.

Thus, faith is for youth, hope for middle life, and charity, which only comes when faith and hope are dead, for age.

Sometimes, indeed, hope and her half-sister faith run almost into one another.

I remember once, in the Republic of the Banda Oriental del Uruguay, close to the frontier of Brazil, we came, my partner and myself, driving a troop of horses, to what in South America is called a "pass," that is, a ford. What was the river's name I cannot tell without an atlas, and that would be to put a slight upon my memory, so I refrain; but the

ford was "El Paso de los Novillós," and to get to it you had to ride down through a wood of "espinillo de olór."

The trail that we followed to the pass was steep and sandy, and cut by the passage of the animals into deep ruts, leaving long hummocks here and there, called "albardones" (that is, pack-saddles), on which grew thorny shrubs. Great cactuses with their flat leaves, looking like gigantic seeds of honesty, white, gaunt, and sear, stood here and there, and seemed to guard the road. They had an almost human look, and report said, not very long before we passed, a band of robbers had stripped themselves, and standing naked by the whitish stems, were so invisible that they were able quietly to kill some travellers, who rode right into them before they were aware. Therefore we rode with care, hitching our pistols now and then round nearer to our hands as we urged on the troop, swinging our whips about our heads, and pressing close upon the driven horses to prevent their cutting back or separating when they came to the "pass." Humming-birds fluttered like gigantic day-moths hung poised, with a thin whir of wings invisible, so that they seemed all body,