

**A BRAZILIAN MYSTIC,
BEING THE LIFE
AND MIRACLES OF
ANTONIO CONSELHEIRO**

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A Brazilian mystic, being the life and miracles of Antonio Conselheiro by R. B. Cunninghame
Graham

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R. B. CUNNINGHAME GRAHAM

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THE LIFE AND MIRACLES OF
ANTONIO CONSELHEIRO

BY

R. B. CUNNINGHAME GRAHAM

'Adeus, compa, e adeus matto
Adeus, casa onde morci!
Ja' que é forçoso partir
Algum dia te verei!"
Brazilian N'hymn.

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1920

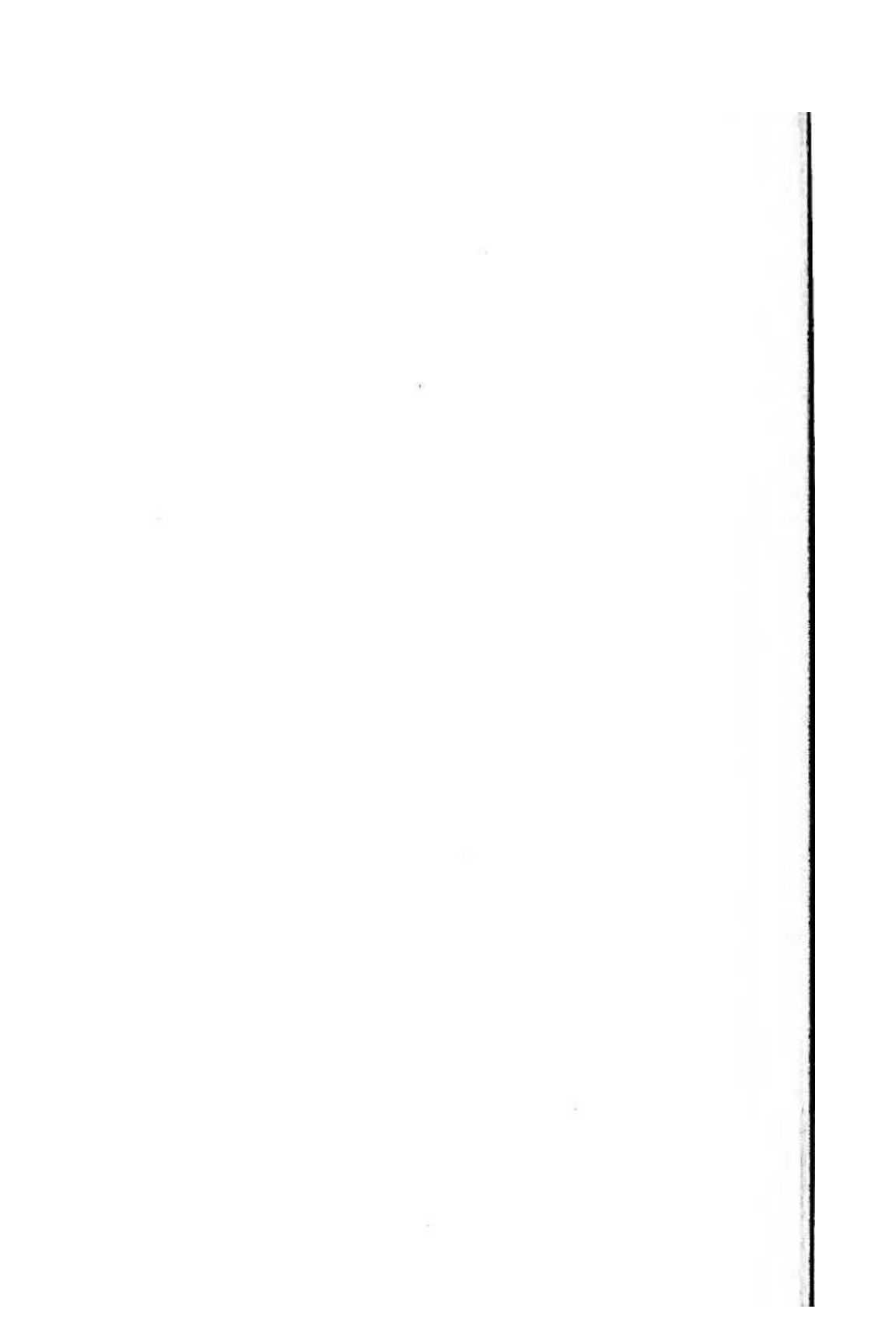
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TO
MY VALUED FRIEND
DON JOSÉ MARIA BRACERAS



PREFACE

SOME years ago, when he was President, after having read some tales of mine about the Gauchos, the late Colonel Roosevelt wrote a letter to me. In it he said: "What you and Hudson have done for South America, many have done for our frontiersmen in Texas, Arizona, and New Mexico. Others have written of the Mexican frontiersmen, and written well about them. No one, as far as I know," so he said, "has touched the subject of the frontiersmen of Brazil. Why don't you do it? for you have been there, know them, and speak their lingo. The field is open to you."

I was duly flattered and turned the question over in my mind; then forgot all about it. Things of importance, such as going out to dinner and endeavouring to arrive neither too early nor too late, but just exactly to descend before the door at the right moment—that is to say two or three minutes before eight—came in between the Brazilian frontiersman and my memory, as they are apt to do in civilised society. The years went by, with each one certifying his fellow that had passed, in blameless endeavour, such as that I have described.

Then came the war, and on my passage out to Uruguay, I found myself one morning entering the harbour of Bahia, on the Brazilian coast. The sea was

oily; "Portuguese men-of-war" hoisted their fairy little sails, and as the vessel slowed down to half speed, passing the ruinous old fort at the entrance of the bay, backed by a grove of coco-palms looking like ostrich feathers, she put up shoals of flying fish that swept along the surface of the waves, just as a flock of swallows sweep across a field.

The red-roofed city, with its spires and convents, its tall old houses, those in the lower part reaching up almost to the foundations of the houses on the cliff, was unrolled, as it were, in a gigantic cinematograph as the ship steamed into the bay. Eight or ten German vessels were interned and rode at anchor, blistering in the sun. Fleets of the curious catamarans, known as jangadas in Brazil, were making out to sea. Their occupants sat upon a little stool, on the three logs that constitute the embarkation, with feet almost awash, whilst the white-pointed little sails gave the jangadas an air of copying the nautilus.

Myriads of islands dotted the surface of the vast inlet, the houses on them painted sky-blue and pink or a pale yellow colour. So fair the scene was from the vessel's deck, it seemed that one had come into a land so peaceful that it was quite impossible there could exist in it evil or malice, hatred and envy, or any of the vices or the crimes that curse humanity. One understood the feelings of the apostles when they wished to build their tabernacles; only the difficulty of finding an Elias or a Moses worth while to build a shanty for, restrained one from incontinently taking up some land and starting in to build.

I stood still gazing, when a voice beside me broke

the spell, bringing me back again to reality, or the illusion of reality that we delude ourselves is life.

"Friend Don Roberto," said the voice, "what things have happened in Bahia! and that not long ago. Scarcely two hundred miles from where we stand took place the rising of Antonio Conselheiro, the last of the Gnostics, who defied all the Brazilian forces for a year or so, and was eventually slain with all his followers. The episode took place not more than five-and-twenty years ago; you ought to read and then to write about it, for it was made by Providence on purpose for you, and is well fitted to your pen."

I turned and saw my friend Braceras standing by my side, dressed in immaculate white duck. He wore a jipi-japa hat, that must have cost him at the least a hundred dollars. His small and well-arched feet, encased in neat buckskin shoes, showed him a Spaniard of the Spaniards from old Castile, just where it borders on Vizcaya, and the race is purest of the pure. He had the easy manners and the complete immunity from self-preoccupation that makes a man the equal of a king, and just as much at home with fishermen, with cattle-drovers, or any other class of men, as if he were one of them. His hands were nervous, and his blue-black hair was just beginning to turn grey, whilst his dark eyes, his bushy eyebrows, and his closely-shaven face, gave him the look of an ecclesiastic, though not of those whose function is but to say Mass and eat his dinner, as the old adage goes. The name of Conselheiro was known to me but vaguely, although I knew religious movements had been continuous in Brazil since the discovery. I listened to the story, and,