



## **Adventures and Conquests of Pizarro**

George Towle

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In the early morning of a warm autumn day, not quite four hundred years ago, three lads, varying in age from thirteen to fifteen, were hurriedly climbing a rough and precipitous mountain road in Central Spain. Every now and then, as they mounted higher, they would look anxiously back to see if they were followed; and, finding they were not, they continued their ascent with brisker steps and more cheerful countenances. Once in a while they came to a spot where an opening in the dense and luxuriant forest exposed to their view the broad plain, still veiled by a soft morning haze, which they had left a few hours before. Here they would stop, and strain their eyes in the direction they had come, as if to discern any pursuing figures who might appear in the road far below, which, so high were they above it, seemed like a narrow yellow thread winding amid the expanse of green.

They were stalwart, dark-featured youths, with stout sinews and sturdy limbs, and serious, resolute faces; wearing the same rude apparel, which consisted of a coarse shirt, a loose jacket, short wide breeches fastened at the knees, rude sandals on their feet, and large, coarsely-woven woolen caps on their heads. Each carried a bundle on a stick, which he swung across his shoulder. As they pressed upward, they spoke but little: they not only wished to save their breath for the long tramp before them, but their thoughts were so deeply absorbed in their serious situation, that they were not disposed to be talkative.

At last they reached a steep and rugged cliff, the summit of which was almost bare, and from which, over the tops of the thick forest, they could clearly see the plain stretched out for miles till it faded near the misty horizon. They were tired and hungry; and, despite the danger of pursuit, they resolved to rest a while on this convenient crag. Throwing down their bundles, and lying upon the patches of moss which here and there covered the rock, they proceeded to discuss such a breakfast as their resources permitted. They took from their bundles some coarse bread and raw onions, a few bunches of grapes which they had picked by the road, and some chestnuts; and these homely viands were quickly disposed of. Then one of them produced a small can, and, running to a mountain brook which leaped madly over a little chasm nearby, filled it with deliciously cold water, and brought it to his companions, who drank of it eagerly. Refreshed by their simple morning meal, the three lads, lying at full length on the patches of moss, turned their faces instinctively towards the plain, and pointed out to each other the spots familiar to them all...



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