ROMANCES OF REAL LIFE.

A NEW YORK newspaper man recently interviewed several prominent citizens with the purpose in view of securing material for stories of adventures outside the domain of fiction. Among those secured there were two that will be particularly interesting to *Freeman's Journal* readers, the narrators being no less personages than ex-Mayor and Mrs. William R. Grace.

"During one of the revolutions that almost yearly convulse some of the South American republics," said ex-Mayor William R. Grace. "I was in Peru. This revolution terminated at the battle of La Palma in a victory for the revolutionary army over the Government forces.

"The country was infested in all directions by large bands of robbers. They were principally escaped convicts who took advantage of the disturbed condition of the country and the lack of strong and organised government to rob and plunder, and even murder, those unfortunate travellers whom pursuit of business caused to cross their path. In company with two friends, William Lapsley and William Waterhouse, forming a triumvirate of three Williams, I started out from Callao to try to get inside the Government lines, and, if possible, see something of the manœuvres of the rival armies, which were then face to face in the vicinity of Chirrilos, each with one wing resting upon the sea and the other protected from flank attack by the high hills, which as spurs from the great range of the Andes, closely approach the sea. We were well mounted, and took a circuitous route through what is known as La Morte, which is a thickly wooded country lying contiguous to the valley of the Rimac. That night we camped on the banks of a silver stream. After an ideal forest meal composed of savoury fish from the brook at our feet, game that we had bagged on our journey, and luscious fruit which flourished in profusion on every side, we dropped into slumber. Bright and early next morning we broke up our camp and in good heart started on our way, knowing that we would soon reach the position held by the Government forces. The country was so densely wooded that it seemed at times as if we should be unable to get our horses through, and while picking our way carefully along we dropped upon a band of robbers at breakfast. The surprise was mutual. It was too late for us to retreat, and though we were armed to the teeth, it was futile to make any resistance against so superior a force, while to surrender passively would be to invite spoliation and murder. Equal to the emergency, one of my friends whispered in my ear. 'Grace, the best thing we can do is to offer to join these fellows at breakfast. They probably have something of the virtue of hospitality in their souls. Anyway it's our only chance.' So putting on a bold face, simulating confidence we by no means felt, we rode boldly into the camp. Leaping lightly off his horse, my friend grasped the hand of the most villanous-looking of the robbers, whom he supposed to be the chief. We imitated his example. Our geniality had such an effect on them that we were soon sworn friends, as thick as thieves, in fact. They invited us to breakfast, and we accepted the invitation with alacrity, and to our great surprise when the meal was over they handed around some cigars, which were really prime, being stolen, I suppose, from some cavalier or caravan, treating us altogether with great courtesy and consideration, wishing us a prosperous journey and long life and happiness. As soon as we were out of their view we put the spurs to our horses, not because we were afraid, but because we wanted to.—The very best result we could have hoped for was to get off with our lives (and be left stranded in the wilderness far beyond the bounds of civilisation). To save our horses, which were richly caparisoned and really valuable, and our jewellery and money, were really unexpected strokes of good fortune.

"About fourteen miles off the coast of Peru, the Chincha Islands, formerly the main guano deposits of the world, jut out of the water. They are very small and exposed to the full sweep of the ocean, except on the east side. The channels between the islands and the mainland are studded with rocks and reefs, which in calm weather are covered with water. If the weather is at all tempestuous the seas boil and foam over these rocks, and make a heavy surf around the islands, rendering navigation dangerous, and at times totally impracticable.

"In the year 1855 I founded a business house on one of these islands, and my business took me afloat a great deal; in fact I lived afloat on a store-ship connected with my establishment. I was constantly being rowed from one place to another, and was daily obliged to pass around what was known in those parts as 'Cape Horn.' The consequence was that I got to know that passage thoroughly, and was not afraid to go through it in very stormy weather. One day, during a heavy gale, it became necessary for me to go around 'Cape Horn,' and I put out in a small boat with two expert oarsmen as crew. I steered. We were getting along very well, and were over a spot where I had never seen a rock, when the boat was lifted up and dashed down with fearful violence. Many a time I knew I had passed over that place in perfect safety, and it was only the extra heavy wind that had laid it bare and wrecked our boat. Several times I was in imminent danger of being thrown upon the rocks, but, fortunately, being lightly clad, after a desperate struggle I managed to reach a point known as the Large Buoy, where vessels were in the habit of loading from shoots. Being much exhausted, it was a long time before I could make myself heard above the noise of the rolling waters breaking against the iron-bound coast, but finally I attracted the attention of a vessel's crew, and was soon afterwards rescued. The two men, my crew, were never afterwards heard of. Although much stronger swimmers than myself, the seas that spared me carried them to their long account.

"In 1880, with Mrs. Grace and two of my daughters, I was on board the steamer Seawanhaka, in the East River, bound for our home at Great Neck, on Long Island. We were sitting on deck together when a loud explosion took place, and fire immediately broke out in the forward part of the ship. At first the impulse was to rush downstairs, but after hastily conferring with my wife we decided to get out on the after deck. There we saw many persons trying to pull the life-preservers out of the racks in which they were fastened to the awning deck. Mrs. Grace at once saw the folly of attempting to extract the life-preservers in that way, and, jumping up on one of the settees, she pulled the slats down instead of trying to get each one out singly. I followed her example, and others followed mine, and in a moment the ship was covered with life-preservers, which were put on with all speed. A moment later I heard my wife saying to an old man, 'Why don't you put on a life-preserver?' The old man was Abraham Duryea, the father of the Duryeas who established the starch factory at Glencoe. He was then eighty-three years old. He responded, 'I can't put on a life-preserver because I have got only one arm.' Mrs. Grace then said, 'I'll put a life-preserver on for you.' As soon as she had done this, I tied it on his back, and so tightly that when the old man turned up on Sunken Meadow, he had his cane fastened in his life-preserver.

"My wife being sick at the time, we determined to stick to the ship as long as possible. The vessel was burning very rapidly, and the smoke enveloped us and the flames surrounded us. Judge O'Gorman came along and gallantly offered to take charge of one of my daughters, which he did, and landed her safely in New York. My younger daughter remained in my care. She was very much frightened, while her mother was so cool that, after emptying a handbag of a valuable pair of earrings and 500dols., she threw it away, saying that she didn't want to be encumbered with any extra weight. I stowed my wife and daughter behind the monkey rail. I stood on the outside so as to assist people overboard and to prevent them from interfering with my wife and daughter. In some incomprehensible way, however, a very stout woman crowded herself in the narrow space where they were, and they all got jammed together, in imminent danger of being held there until, when the flames came far enough, they would be burned to death. By the exertion of superhuman power, Mrs. Grace lifted her over the side and into the water. We remained by the boat until her nose stuck in the mud of Sunken Meadow, when the flames drove my wife overboard. My daughter was so frightened that she refused to follow, and I had to throw her over, when I followed to support her, telling her that a girl with good strong Christian faith ought to die, if necessary, gladly and calmly.

"Mrs. Grace had been carried away by the tide, which runs very swiftly near Hell's Gate. I called out to her, "Don't attempt to swim,' but her plunge had slightly dazed her (she told me afterwards that she had not expected to go under water with a life-preserver on), and she did'nt hear me. Just then a boat came along and picked her up. She told them to wait for me and her daughter. They said there was no room, and indeed there was none, twelve or fourteen persons being crowded into a small boat, which was, in addition, almost half full of water, and with ready resource she promptly unshipped the oar with which the occupants were propelling the boat, giving us a chance to come up. I handed in my daughter and climbed in myself. I immediately began to bail out the boat—I think with my hat, was it not?' said Mr. Grace, turning to his wife, who had in the meantime entered the room.

"No," responded Mrs. Grace; "it was with a tin vessel you found in the bottom of the boat. You had lost your hat.

Mr. Grace continued:—

"One woman who stood alongside of my wife on the stern of that vessel was too thoroughly dazed to leave it, and we saw her burned to death. We were the only family having any number on board that escaped without the loss of at least one member. Sixty-seven lives were lost. From our little place of Great Neck alone eleven persons lost their lives.

"Mr. Duryea advertised, expressing a desire to reward the lady who had fastened the life-preserver on him. He got twenty-four answers. Happening to tell the incident to some friends, it reached the ears of Mr. Duryea, who hastened to our house, and burst into tears at the sight of my wife.

"Mrs. Grace can tell you a much better story of adventure than any I have related, if she will," continued Mr. Grace, turning to his wife. Mrs. Grace thought she wouldn't—didn't care to—but finally related the following thrilling story:

"When we were living in Peru, South America, about twenty five years ago, I was ill with fever, the only remedy for which was change of air. The doctors accordingly ordered me to the Chincha Islands, where I went on board a store-ship. I had been there only two days when the Spaniards arrived and took possession of the islands and the shipping, without the formality, I believe, of a declaration of war. Of course we were very much surprised, but had to submit. They found on the islands 300 convicts, all murderers, who were working in the guano mines. They did not propose to take charge of all these rascals, and so they sent them to the nearest seaport town, Pisco All communication was cut off between the islands and the mainland. I was most anxious to get back to Callao to rejoin my family, and in the morning a gentleman told me that if I could dress and pack my luggage in half an hour he could get a passage for me on a steamer. We went in a little rowboat some distance out on the Pacific Ocean to an English steamer, whose captain had not heard of this trouble. Then we went to this port called Pisco, and the authorities there wanted the captain to take these 300 convicts to Callao, the seaport of Lima, the capital, as they had no place to keep them. The captain being an Englishman, and knowing Mr. Grace, although he was unknown to me, consulted me as to whether he should take them, saying that he would be well paid. I unhesitatingly condemned the project, saying that I knew something of the character and the record of these men, and that they were thoroughly bad. Then he said that he would not take them. However, when we were ready to leave Pisco, 165 of these convicts were brought on board, with a guard of only fifteen soldiers, and the convicts were not in irons. The captain gave them hot soup and joked with them to keep them in a good humour. The soldiers sent their prisoners aft, and made them come out one by one to be counted. In the mean time I had gone down stairs to prepare for luncheon, when I heard the rush of men across the deck. A tremendous tumult ensued. I heard the clashing of bayonets and the firing of guns,