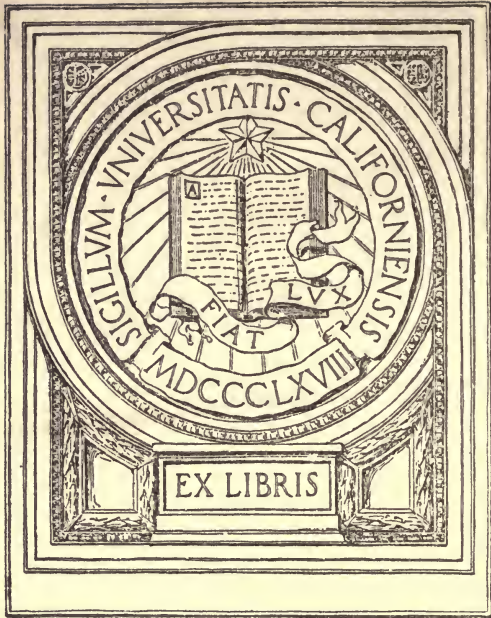




THE TOLTEC SAVIOR

A
HISTORIC
ROMANCE
OF
ANCIENT
MEXICO

By *Mrs* John Ellsworth Graham



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QUETZALCOHUATL—THE TOLTEC SAVIOR

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A HISTORICAL ROMANCE OF
ANCIENT MEXICO

BY

MRS. JOHN ELLSWORTH GRAHAM

[Sarah Melissa Cary Downing]



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The Toltec Savior.

TO
THE ILLUSTRIOUS AND PROGRESSIVE PRESIDENT OF
THE MEXICAN REPUBLIC,
GENERAL PORFIRIO DIAZ,
I RESPECTFULLY
DEDICATE THIS BOOK.

Mrs. John Ellsworth Graham.

PREFACE.

Previous to the Greek invasion, ancient Egyptians knew nothing whatever of the valuable uses of iron; the peculiar formation of the soil of Egypt produced none of that mineral, but they were adepts in the manipulation of copper and tin to make bronze, tempered in a certain manner, with which they cut and carved rocks of adamantine properties.

In Mexico there are mountains of iron, but the highly civilized and progressive Toltecs knew none of its uses; not one bar, blade or bolt of iron can be found in the ancient ruins of Mexico, Central or South America. They also knew the secret of preparing a cement impervious to decay known only to the ancient Egyptians (which with the above mentioned bronze is now a lost art) with which they lined mammoth reservoirs or zonotes which were first paved with cobble-tones, then cemented together, which remain as the beds of lakes in Mexico today.

And Palpan heights herein mentioned was situated upon the hill of Guadalupe at the City of Mexico and the cavern of the Toltec prophet Hueman was located upon a rugged mountain directly opposite, from which led a stone stairway down into the beautiful onyx palace con-

taining the enormous treasures of the Toltecs, which were the accumulation of centuries of tributes awaiting the messenger from Sunland, were buried by an earthquake which changed the topography of that portion of the country and the location of the vast treasures have never been found; perhaps they may yet be discovered in some labyrinth like that of Crete which Virgil immortalized in these words:

“And as the Cretan labyrinth of old
With wandering ways and many a winding fold
Involved the weary feet without redress
In a round error which denied recess;
Not far from thence, he graved the wondrous maze
A thousand doors, a thousand winding ways.”

—Author

THE TOLTEC SAVIOR.

CHAPTER I.

HUEMAN* the aged Toltec prophet leaned heavily upon his staff as he gazed earnestly and admiringly upon the beautiful vale of Tollantzingo clothed in the weird and mysterious light of the pale full moon; some latent forces of his feeble frame were called into action, his staff fell ringing upon the solid floor of stone unheeded as he raised his long thin arms beseechingly toward heaven and fixed his dark deep flashing eyes upon the orb of night exclaiming—"Tezcatliquina, may you never shine upon fair Tollan in ruins! while I yet live;" then turned his enraptured gaze upon the evening star in all its brilliancy and murmured softly "Quetzalcoahtl, oh aid me to change the threatened destiny of our noble race." A thin veil of ether draped the face of night as if in sorrow, and a low wailing requiem of belated zephyrs whispered through the beckoning branches a dreary No!

The aged priest shivered and sank tremblingly down beside his staff at the entrance to his cavern home, where he read the story of the stars, and at the base of which

* See full list of names in Appendix.

he rehearsed the destiny of those whose horoscope he was pleased to reveal. A clear ringing thrush-like voice awoke his solemn reverie and he slowly descended the hewn stairway and welcomed a beautiful Toltec maiden who exclaimed banteringly, "Oh, Hueman, why linger here in solitude when our beautiful city is aglow with festivities; come, my father awaits us at the gate to the moat, and his skiff will soon bear us across. You observe that I have ventured here alone that you could not find heart to refuse to accompany me."

"Who could refuse so fair a pleader? Not myself, although feeble with age; what impulse urged you to remember me to-night, fair Xochitl, when there are so many gallant youths in the Tollan kingdom who would gladly follow wherever you may lead or haste to do your bidding at whatever sacrifice?"

"Dear Hueman, there is no brave in Tollantzingo to-night, who can interest me for a moment, while you will kindly spare me a few treasured words for my hungry soul to feast upon. I have wondered that you did not give me some gentle hint that you had read the stars for me and knew the secret joy my bosom hides which I fear will bubble forth at times and sound the tocsin of its beatitude to the world—and yet to you, Hueman, I owe the marvelous curb you call discretion, which in infancy you patiently explained me how to use. Oh, how I love to linger on the manly vision that enthalls my soul, my wildest heights and depths of perfect love are being sweetly realized, and I daily compare him to the noblest, worthiest and most exalted of our proud ancestors in whose history I am so deeply interested, and of whose worthy exploits I may not learn except from you, and can I, dare I hope that in the near future this one great boon may be granted me?"

“Yes, dear Xochitl, tomorrow, if the Supreme Deity so wills it, I shall begin to tell you all of the incidents of note regarding our favored ancestors whose biographies I have compiled from indisputable records handed down from the remotest period of Toltec reign, and I have named it the “Teoamoxtli,” and I am daily adding all of the events which transpire worthy of record, that future generations may know that for long centuries we were a mighty and favored race, but alas, the corroding rust of retrogression has already cast its debasing influence abroad Tollan, and I fear there are but few who will appreciate the value of my years of ceaseless toil in their behalf, for a spirit of levity and wanton prodigality marks the present era destroying the loyal spirit and earnest purpose which marked the prosperous days gone by; but, gentle maiden, your half revealed heart’s treasure is almost a rebuke to my sense of penetration, and I fear me that my soul is not pure enough or pruned of evil thought, despite my daily care and constant wish to be more sanctified, but, dear winsome child, I would you had not taken life so seriously as yet, my plans for you, of which I had not sought your august wish, are half matured, and I had hoped you were as yet all fancy free, but you are wise beyond your years and sensible, and woe be unto all this threatened race if virgin youth refuse to aid in saving their proud nation from decay!”

“Dear Hueman, I fear you take too sad a view of all our present surroundings, everything looks so prosperous to me, and it is moons and moons since our reserved braves have been called into united action against our forceful enemies; our harvests are abundant and our fruit trees are laden, and good Tlaloc has showered generous rain upon our kingdom, and all seems prosperous and well. I fear that you are growing ill from continually

brooding over the language of the stars—do strive to forget it all as we hasten to the brilliance and gaiety of our charming Tollantzingo.”

“I will for your sake strive to do so, Xochitl, but the scenes which will be enacted tonight will carry my indignant soul back over the ages to him, the self-martyred Savior! who gave up all, all, that the memory of his noble sacrifice might live as a beacon-light fixed in the heavens to guide the Toltec nation into paths of justice and truth, and inspire them to greater deeds, as he longed for them to progress with time.”

“It has, and does inspire them, Hueman; the play is so vitally tragic, but the king chooses a poor leading actor for such an imposing character in allowing his clumsy brother Maxtlatzin to carry out that sacred role—I have heard so many murmurs of dissent.”

“Oh, Xochitl, would that were the only blunder the haughty Tecpantcaltzin makes! He is daily adding fuel to dissensions by his indifference to the public needs while we are enjoying days of prosperity and abundant harvests, and this is of greater moment to us all than the feeble portrayal of our sacred drama now.” They entered the canoe which was manned by Papantzin, the father of Xochitl, and as they neared the opposite shore they were met by two of the king’s guards who exclaimed:

“We gladly salute you, oh good prophet Hueman, and congratulate you upon your timely appearance, just at the precise moment when you are most necessary to the king and all of his assembled multitude; Prince Maxtlatzin is taken ill of a fever and is unable to carry out the program for tonight’s entertainment, and no one but your worthy self can know the part as well, and the king bids you hasten to the palace and prepare to lead in the sacred play.”

For a moment only the aged priest hesitated, for his soul was galled at the imperative command from the usurper alien king, but his loyal heart yearned toward those misguided subjects assembled in willing and respectful obedience to the annual invitation to witness the important drama. His thin lips moved convulsively while an urging spirit battled bravely and at last triumphantly; he knew there were mighty forces struggling within him that called into action would make the revered Savior of the Toltec nation live again; with an inspired and gentle countenance he answered in a firm impassioned voice—"Yes, I do know the play, and will undertake the portrayal of the sacred martyr."

A low thrilling murmur of applause fell from the lips of the Toltec maiden, and was echoed by her father and the guards as they led the way to the palace through spacious grounds luxuriant with rare and beautiful flowers exhaling sweet aroma which the gentle zephyrs lifted and carried away.

"Oh, Hueman, Hueman, what would I not give to have one peep, *just one*, into the golden garden of the Sun-god!"

"Your wish shall be granted. Guards, move on and await our coming at the threshold of the palace. Follow me, Papantzin, with your child." He turned abruptly from the main pathway entering a narrow and more secluded one banked high on either side with stunted hedges over which trailing roses reared their shy delicate faces, and breathed forth a delicious welcome. A clump of hedge, more dense than that which lined the graveled walk, reared itself against a solid wall of masonry where the path curved and glided toward the sheeny waters of the moon-kissed moat.

The prophet drew a deep sigh, and his gentle hushed

voice quavered as he exclaimed: "Long years have passed carrying the burden of their joys and sorrows into eternity since my feet have trodden this sequestered way, and he whose misguided rule retards the progression of Tollan to-day knows not of this secret entrance to the golden garden of the sun-god. I command you, my friends, to keep the knowledge of this privilege which I grant you now, locked securely in your bosoms. *We are three.*" He tore the clinging tendrils of the matted hedge aside carefully, revealing naught to the wondering gaze of his two guests but a solid wall of stone, a continuation of which surrounded that particular portion of the palace grounds; he placed his right shoulder firmly against a certain portion of the smooth wall and exclaimed in a low pathetic and impressive tone—"Quetzalcoatl, in thy sacred name I demand entrance to the golden garden of the sun-god." Slowly the stone rolled away, revealing a bent and aged guard who startled with upraised hands and voice thick with emotion and alarm cried out, "Hueman, the gods be praised—and now the time has come!"

"No, no, not yet, Zantzintl, lead the way, I am obeying the fulfillment of a prophecy." He beckoned his friends to follow, and the revolving rock swung noiselessly back into place disclosing no apparent seam in the perfect masonry.

For a moment the blazing scene dazzled the wondering gaze of the beholders, made brilliant by myriads of cucuyous that clung to the golden statues of former kings that stood majestically among the plants and shrubbery cunningly devised of threads and leaves and stalks of gold; every choice blossom, every form of grain, each blade of grass and trailing vines fruit-laden, were there reproduced in shining gleaming gold. Spellbound, Xochitl gazed and gazed in speechless awe and admira-

tion until the prophet aroused her with these words: "Fair maiden, could you ever tire of reveling here?"

"Not—no good Hueman, not if he whom I love were here to share my ecstasy which is incomplete without him." A look of annoyance crossed the face of the aged prophet, and he impatiently turned toward the guard saying, "Zantzintl, lead us through the temple, and we will then depart." The temple foundation was made of beautifully carved onyx, and the sides and roof were made of sheets of solid gold.

"Yonder, Xochitl, on the side toward the rising sun is a mysterious panel upon which is inscribed in oracles and enigmas the welcoming message of the Sun-god when he makes his arrival, and it reveals also the hidden labyrinth where the treasure-house is situated. To the casual eye it tells naught, to this alien king it is a blank—but when the last rays of dying day light up this blazing edifice each word stands forth clear and legible to him who knows. Zantzintl, the hand of time has seared your locks with silver and enfeebled your once stalwart frame and your successor must soon be sworn in."

"Yes, Hueman, and may I suggest to you and our brotherhood the name of my son? He is worthy, good Hueman, and will be faithful unto death! even as I."

"Well and good—he shall have the appointment, and I, too, needs must find a successor who will carry the secrets of the Toltec royal line in his bosom even as I have done, and he is one whom you well know, my nearest, dearest kin, brave young Topiltzin. Xochitl, how your dark glowing eyes do sparkle, and with what joy your bosom heaves at sight of all this splendor, and dear, I fondly believe that you will one day willingly become possessed of the gracious privilege of roaming in this wonderful and beautiful garden at will. The entrance

from here to the palace is gorgeous beyond compare, and I trust that some day I may lead you hither in triumph." A wave of crimson diffused the expressive features of the excited maiden who glanced up shyly into her father's fondly beaming countenance.

"Zantzintl, does the king often wander here of late?"

"Some days pass by without his presence here."

"Has he ever seemed to see, suspect or strive to search a secret here?"

"No, honored prophet, never; he comes when his brain is clouded thick and heavy with wine, and gloats over his golden possessions, and compares his ungainly figure to those superb forms, outlined in chiseled gold, of our proud ancestral kings, whose unsullied lives should be an endless reproof to him."

"Zantzintl, keeper of the golden gods, be ever alert and on your guard! Never allow him to conjecture here. Prattle of the wonderful achievements which former kings have wrought, and encourage him to attempt a repetition of their gracious acts that his narrow, sordid soul may possibly expand sufficiently to receive and appreciate the value of a noble sacrifice; entertain him most assiduously until each visit here is ended."

"Have no fear of my becoming unworthy of my calling, wise Hueman, I shall never cease to remember my solemn oath, and should I be compelled through infirmity to relinquish my position to my favored son he too shall—through my instructions—merit the exalted position which I now hold."

"It is well, Zantzintl, we will now depart, adieu."

Then they emerged from the golden garden of the gods, and the prophet carefully trained the creeping vines and tendrils across the secret entrance and led the favored pair back to the public gateway to the palace, where they

joined the eager crowd that parted respectfully for the stately prophet to pass, and his step grew firmer each moment as he neared the palace door.

The burden of the play was the death of the Toltec Savior, the immortal Quetzalcoatl: he had reigned many centuries previously, and under his judicious management the Toltecs had prospered more than they had ever done since the days of Votan, the renowned discoverer of the continent inhabited by the untutored peaceful Maya race.

Previous to his coronation he had carefully studied the kingdom's needs and planned to supply them, and through his instructions the city of Tollantzingo became a fairyland of beauty, and a monument of architecture enduring as the chiseled rocks of which they were composed; he taught them to prepare rafts upon which were arranged beautiful floating gardens containing choicest and most beautiful flowers, also vegetables of many varieties. He learned the symbols and enigmas of divine worship by especial dispensation from the great high priest, a privilege accorded to no other king since the reign of Votan.

He added to the system of canals for irrigating purposes, and planned massive stone bridges across deep ravines and plunging streams; he sent colonies of missionaries to the far north to civilize the natives of that portion of the continent that their progressive influence might be felt the length and breadth of the land; he made a law that the Toltecs should never destroy their exalted prestige by mingling through marriage with any other nation, that if through surprise or accident, such a calamity did occur that the progeny of such a union should be put to death. He admonished them to be consistent and moderate in all things, to advance in every science,

and allow no branch of progression to decay, and fearlessly follow and abide by the old religion and the sacred laws of *justice* and *truth*, and he repeatedly warned them of the terrible fate that overcame the near-by continent inhabited by a mighty race of warring giants—of whom the powerful Quinimas were descendants—who were punished by the Supreme Deity who could no longer tolerate their avaricious wickedness, and sent a fearful cataclysm which buried them and their land forever beneath the waves of the ocean.

He repeatedly warned them against the fearful consequence of hostility and avarice, and cautioned them to be provident of the tribute to the messenger from Sunland, and to arbitrate every grievance peacefully that their worthy example should forever please the Supreme Deity that they need never then fear that his judgment would be visited upon them to their annihilation.

To the secret brotherhood, of whom he was chief, he dedicated all of his personal wealth, and every wall of their magnificent underground palace halls were marked by his generous munificence. When the end of his reign drew near, which had extended over the usual period of fifty-two years, he became inspired of a firm resolve to leave a lasting impression upon his subjects which would always encourage them to observe and uphold the laws and create a feeling of veneration in their bosoms for the sciences and progression, and prove to them the immortality of the soul.

He carefully kept up the records of his people, and every portion of the kingdom felt the infinite wisdom of his flourishing reign which was marked by the most abject devotion of his subjects who worshipped him as a god.

During the early part of his reign he planned four min-

ature temples, which were erected upon his palace grounds upon grassy knolls banked with flowers.

One was made of odoriferous wood which was painted an emerald color in imitation of waves, and within it was placed Tlaloc, the god of rain.

The second one was made of coral, of a deep, rich hue, and within it was placed Huitzilopochtli, the god of war, to which was given great tribute and offerings to insure peace in the kingdom.

The third one was made of pale pink ocean shells, riveted with gold upon slabs of odoriferous wood, and within it was placed Tezcatlipoca, the sun-god, which was more revered than any other god, representing the gate-keeper to Sunland, the abode of the Supreme Deity.

The fourth one was made of the most beautiful feathers secured upon broad bands of cotton cloth, sewed together with fibres of maguey, and within it was placed the idol Tonacatexuhtli, the sun flame.

A hush intense fell upon the assembled multitude who waited with baited breath the appearance of the prophet, for it was soon whispered about that he would take the part of the Toltec Savior.

With stern majestic tread and grand imposing mien, the prophet advanced upon the scene while a low murmur of applause rippled through the impatient crowd that was soon hushed with expectancy.

He wore a long, white flowing robe, heavily and richly embroidered with threads of silver and gold; his long frosted hair fell in loose ringlets about his massive shoulders and nestled upon his heaving bosom mingling with his sweeping beard.

When he reached the center of the arena he bowed kindly to the eager multitude, who heartily cheered his presence, drowning the strains of music, until he motion-

ed them to be still, and the music sank to a low sweet melody; in a commanding voice, he exclaimed: "Bring hither my *tepetlacalli* which is prepared for me"—as he uttered these words the guards departed, and the twelve gods and goddesses advanced to do him honor. Tezcatlipoca, the sun-god, wore a heavily embroidered yellow robe and carried a flagellum in his hand, and upon his head he wore a minature sun of gold; his principal office was to judge the dead by his divine goodness, and to rule over the kingdom of Sunland into which the souls of the good were admitted.

Tezcatliquina, the moon-god, wore a robe of white, heavily embroidered in silver threads, and wore a dial of silver upon his head and carried a rod of silver in his right hand, and wore wide armlets of silver upon each wrist.

Huitzilopochtli, the god of war, wore a red robe, a coronet of beautiful feathers, and carried a trident of gold in his right hand and wore armlets of gold upon each wrist, and double necklaces of gold set with beautiful gems about his throat.

Tlaloc, the god of rain, wore a robe of pale green, trimmed heavily with fringe of a deeper shade and a crown of lilies upon his head, and carried a wonderfully woven basket to which was attached two chains, one of which he held aloft with his right hand, and with his left he pressed the other chain to his bosom; the unique basket appeared to be formed of large and beautiful plumes, and within it was the human-headed soul-bird.

Apizteotl, the god of hunger, wore a robe of pale blue trimmed with leaves and threads of silver and gold, and carried a vase of gold in his right hand which contained the charm of life.

Xochiquetzalli, the god of love, wore a robe of rose-

colored pink and a crown of roses, wide armlets of gold upon each wrist, and a beautiful necklace of gold with long pendants set with precious gems. The goddesses were all dressed in white robes heavily embroidered in silver and gold with deep fringe of the same extending from the left shoulder diagonally across to the right hip, and wore precious jewels of every description.

The moment the guards returned with a handsomely carved receptacle of onyx, Quetzalpetlatzin, the wife of Quetzalcohuatl, rushed upon the scene exclaiming as she knelt in supplication: "Oh, no, no! not that—send it away, the time is not yet arrived." "Peace, my good woman, let not your soul be troubled, the spirit of the Supreme Deity urges me and I shall cheerfully obey the welcome mandate from on high."

"No, no, not yet, my own! the holy spirit is lenient, is patient, kind, merciful—*oh, be thou thus to me!*—spare me a few more years of earthly joy; come, let us wander once again among the temples and in the golden garden of the sun god."

"Nay, tempt me not, this is the accepted time, were no allurements left behind I had made no sacrifice."

Overcome by the utter hopelessness of her plea the queen sank fainting at his feet, and was tenderly lifted and borne away by the guards whom the king commanded to carry her to the palace, and he gazed lingeringly and lovingly upon the still beautiful face, and then he bowed his head as if in meek submission to the invisible forces that urged him on, then raising his impassioned voice in pleading supplication he exclaimed: "Oh, thou Supreme Deity! Who wisely rules the universe; who holds the heavens in space and supplies the wants of earth, let not our beloved race forget that I gladly give up my life to save the children of our faith from misguided rule; may

they for many generations yet to come continue the good labor of advancement in Honor, Justice and Truth; may their souls never become diseased with ignorance! nor their heads bowed with Shame—let them neglect no art nor forget one science. Forever united may they become a staunch insurmountable barrier between ignorance and vice until their just laws and divine precepts shall peacefully conquer every nation and tongue which will effectually obliterate the cruel necessity of war. Oh, Thou Ruler of the infinite, we beseech Thee inspire each and every one to do Thy will cheerfully, to be contented with their lot and never strive through vain-glory or levity to aspire beyond it. May I thus prove to them that the *soul cannot die* though the heart be destroyed.

Now I shall lay me down into a deep sleep which shall last for four days. Into Thy gracious keeping, oh thou Supreme Deity, I commend my spirit.” As his solemn voice died away he gracefully gathered his robe about him and entered the sepulchre and folded his thin hands restfully across his placid bosom, and the curtain fell amid gentle strains of music soft and sweet as zephyrs.

The pent up feeling of the multitude at length found voice in cheers that reverberated throughout the rose-crowned vale. In the following scene he arose, and with enraptured countenance exclaimed: “Beloved children, the pathway which leads the immortal spirit to the Sun is beautiful beyond description of mortal tongue; but remember all evil spirits are forever barred from those realms of perfect life, it is not your lips which may commune with those exalted gods, but your thoughts alone. Now let the silent voices of your soul breathe no evil thought, prune them of every foul desire and you will raise an insurmountable barrier about your being which shall be made manifest to all with whom your associa-

tions bear you. In my beautiful dream from which I am just awakened I am proud to tell you that my soul held communion with the spirit from the Sun and these were his impressive words which he sent as a message to you all—"Raise the standard of your being beyond the limit of being born again by keeping your thoughts pure and your feet will never stray into evil ways nor your hands wreak vengeance for fancied wrongs; make the voices of your soul *harmonious* and a stranger to anger." He then bade the guards gather together all of his precious gems and mounted jewels and shining bars of gold which they placed before him and he then dismissed them, and bearing heavily against a revolving rock he disclosed a secret passage which led to an open door where two priests met him in a large and beautiful room. With great care and labor they removed the enormous pile of shining gold and glittering gems to a secure underground chamber which was piled high with massive golden and silver bars. When the task was accomplished he returned alone to the palace grounds and entered each one of his temples alternately wherein he prayed long and earnestly; then he emerged and sang in a low sweet thrilling tone:

My temple of rich feathers torn from many a birdling's
breast.

And shells the ocean waves have kissed I leave for other
guests;

My corals always blushing in the moonlight or the sun,
With my treasures and my palaces I am forever done;
I go to hang a diamond bright in dome of heaven afar,
Will cheer you with its guardian light the glorious even-
ing star.

As the last strains died away he raised his hands in

benediction and bade his sorrowing friends adieu as king, and then he commanded the guards to bring the timbers. Meanwhile the great high priest and the other priests in line came and bade him an affectionate adieu amid groans and lamentations as the funeral pyre grew higher and still higher aided by his skilful willing hands; when it was completed he signaled a guard to bring a flaming ember and himself applied the torch on every side, and then mounted the burning structure, and in an attitude of prayer he remained resignedly awaiting his doom.

During the lapse of those fearful moments, a bevy of beautiful birds of paradise hovered around the funeral pyre until his spirit fled! then they softly fluttered their dazzling wings and soared with the spirit away to the heavenly house of the gods where it remained for seven days and then became fixed in the heavens and was ever after called Quetzalcoatl, the evening star; it was worshipped as an assurance from the Toltec Savior that his guardian spirit was near and ever watchful to provide the faithful ones with the alluring promise of life eternal and a beacon, lighting up the path to the heavens, it being the first gateway on the journey to Sunland.

So vivid and terribly real did the prophet portray the tragical drama that shrieks and groans rang from the excited multitude, and their fears and demonstrations knew no bounds until the noble Hueman again appeared before them unharmed; then the swaying crowd as with one voice cheered itself hoarse with admiration and applause. Never before in all the history of the impressive play had an actor received such an ovation. It was triumphant, and when the feast which followed was ended a grand concourse of admiring friends carried the prophet upon their shoulders in a rose embowered canopy, made

from branches of the cedar tree, to the base of his cavern home.

The narrow soul of King Tecpantcaltzin was galled and resentful toward the tremendous outburst of passion exhibited toward the prophet as he mentally compared the thin wave of applause which yearly greeted the efforts of his brother Maxtlatzin, who had long been privileged to enact the important role. A spasm of fear contracted his heart and brain as he too well remembered to what sovereign rights the Toltec prophet belonged; he scourged his brain with regret when he was reminded that he alone was to blame for calling the aged and beloved priest into such marked prominence; one thought alone was reassuring to him, he knew full well that the loyal Toltec soul housed in the bosom of the prophet loved peace far more than princely honors or kingly privileges, and he formed a mental resolution to close any further avenue to public favor for noble Hueman in the future.

CHAPTER II.

"I have come to tell you, dear Hueman, that the burden of speech in Tollantzingo today is your wonderfully realistic portrayal of our sacred drama which inspired the nation anew and awakened latent energies in the hitherto dormant bosoms of our people, and they declare openly that no other actor can again officiate at the feast of the lights while you are able to do so."

"That privilege, dear Xochitl, is not as the public wishes, but as the king wills."

"Surely he can never be so blind and selfish as to force the tame efforts of clumsy Maxtlatzin upon us again after we have seen what an impressive power can be gathered from the part properly portrayed."

"It will do no good to trouble over the affair now, a year will soon have passed and great changes can develop in so many moons."

"True, indeed, wise Hueman, I am rebuked for giving too much weight to things so utterly beyond my control; but the beautiful burden of the play and its exalted influence was never made so manifest as now; you aroused deeper concern in the bosoms of our people and made clearer the purport of the sacrifice which our Savior voluntarily underwent. Each moment my yearning desire grows stronger to learn more of our progressive ancestors, and this is one of the impelling forces which brought me here, and I humbly trust that you are in the

mood to extend to my hungry waiting soul the rare treat which you promised at yestereventide."

"Certainly, child, your hunger shall be appeased, and gratified, and I fondly believe that you will cheerfully cast aside any selfish motive which may now enthrall you as a beguiling whim and nobly, loyally devote your thoughts and wishes to perpetuate the newly awakened interest in the minds of our people."

"Oh, Hueman, do you really wish to convince me that I have any possible power to exert in that direction?"

"Yes, child, within you lives the hope of our nation."

"Dear Hueman, your seriousness alarms me—but I am ready and willing to do my part if I can clearly see the way."

"You are verging upon the sacred path, and all that will be required of you is within your power to fulfill; do you imagine for one moment that I would have led another maiden in this whole kingdom into the sealed, sequestered and forbidden golden garden of the sun-god? Did I not assure the faithful old guard that I was fulfilling a prophesy?"

"You did, Hueman, and I have wondered at my temerity in making the request which was but the impulse of the moment."

"It was an impulse which I planted in your soul at the proper time and place, and your wish was mine which you gave voice to."

"Oh, what marvelous power you possess, dear Hueman, and your voice has the soothing cadence of the sighing winds which lull me to sleep, and I am proud to do your bidding at whatever sacrifice."

"Sacrifice! sacrifice, child, do you realize what you are saying?"

"I believe that I do, Hueman, I trust you so implicitly

that I will not entertain one doubtful thought regarding your wishes which would seem like sacrilege were I to do so."

"Remember this, Xochitl, I have your welfare at heart always, even as I have that of my nearest kin, but my country first of all! to promote its welfare the gods may do with me what they will."

"You are excited, dear Hueman, and it were better that we abandon the traditions of our ancestors."

"Tradition! No, it is history!"

"Pardon me, dear Hueman, the expression is a general one, I believe."

"Yes, he who does not care to emulate those noble deeds, whose cobwebbed brain shuts out an honest soul, has endeavored to impress upon his subjects the false belief that the 'Teoamoxtli' is tradition! he is too dwarfed and cramped in mind to conceive the fact that those brilliant scintillating souls existed in the flesh. I will now read to you from those truthful records; you see that I have them here and was just adding the facts pertaining to the feast of the lights. I will now proceed to inform you of the contents of the Teoamoxtli.

The advent of Votan, our first ancestor, upon these shores was a thousand and fifty-eight years previous to the reign of our Savior, Quetzalcoatl, who was the last sovereign to bear that sacred name. He found the country inhabited exclusively by Mayas, many of whom were giants, and they spoke a universal tongue. Their ships landed near the mouth of the Usumasinta River, and they remained there for a period of four years; there were about fifty in number, and they at once began the task of learning the manner of speech of the dusky natives who never ceased to admire the fair complexion of their guests, who taught them many civilizing

pursuits which they learned with alacrity. The giants were called Quinimas on account of their height, averaging from eight and one-half to nine feet; they existed upon raw flesh, roots, berries and herbs, and were clothed in loin-cloths of pelt, they wandered in tribes and dwelt in huts made of branches.

Votan after the stated time returned to his native land, and in due time brought a colony of seven ship-loads, including all classes of artisans, for he had become aware of the fact that this new discovery was wonderful in natural resources. In reply to the inquisitive natives as to whence he came, he told them that he came from near a land where the people had attempted to build a tower to the heavens and that the Supreme Deity had confused their tongues so they could not understand each other and were unable to proceed with the wonderful structure which remained as a menace to sacrilegious undertakings.

He incited in the breasts of the powerful Quinimas a desire to hand down to posterity enduring monuments of their wonderful strength, and he taught them how to build great pyramids after the manner of those in his native land, having a sepulchral enclosure within them. He founded the cities of Palenque, Tulha, Tsequil and Mayapan and Itzmal, naming them in honor of the chiefs whose tribes assisted them in their construction. During this time he encouraged others to make immense excavations for reservoirs floored with stones cemented together, and when they marveled and demurred at the tremendous task, he assured them that in his own country they had built the largest reservoir ever made by the hand of man to correct the overflow of a mighty river.

The religious belief taught by Votan was upon a monotheistic basis and he had brought four great high priests among their colonists who chose capable ones from

among the natives to whom they taught mysteries, signs and oracles, formalities of religion and forms of government; but the rare distinction vested upon the few necessary to complete the priest-hood caused a mutiny which attempted to overthrow the government and many difficulties arose in consequence.

Sadly disappointed at this unlooked for rebellion, Votan resolved, after a period of thirty years' duration, to separate his monarchy into several divisions; one had for its capital the city of Tulha, another Tsequil, another Mayapan and the fourth Itzmal.

He appointed a prince from among the colonists to preside over them, whose name was prince Zamna, who resided at Mayapan, and the whole country of his kingdom was called Maayha, which name signifies a land without water.

Votan then made a second voyage to his native land and returned with his seven shiploads of new colonists with whom he resolved to locate in another portion of the country in order to facilitate the advance of their civilizing influence.

He had been obliged to leave his native land hurriedly as that country he found suffering from a terrible invasion from which he feared his people would be conquered, and he resolved to remain in the country of his adoption.

The friendly and powerful Quinimas who had roamed over a vast area of the continent, described to Votan the feasibility of travel up the coast which would bring them to the mouth of a mighty river which their ships could enter and travel for quite a distance inland, where there was a natural harbor.

Chief Quinima sent a band of his men overland to meet them at the desired landing place to conduct them into the interior, which they desired to explore; they arrived

and moored their ships at a secure landing place and followed their guides several moons through a vast wilderness until attracted by the beautiful location of a charming valley in which gleamed the placid waters of a chain of lakes, the first of which they named Atechpanomochoch, in honor of the chief whose tribe inhabited the vicinity; there they laid the foundation for a great city which Votan named Tollantzingo and called the surrounding country Tollan.

Desiring to facilitate communication with prince Zamna and further the advance of civilization he sent a band of colonists on to establish themselves midway between Maaya and Tollan; they were sent under the leadership of a prince appointed by Votan named Cukulcan; they founded a city in the new domain which the prince named Huehue-Tlapallan, in honor of the chief whose tribe assisted them in building and improving the country which was called Tlapallan.

The Quinimas were devoted and admiring followers of Votan and affectionately bestowed upon him the name of Quetzalcoatl, which name signifies king and great high ruler over the continent; the colonists they called Toltecs, which name signifies the builders; they electrified the natives with their skill in the manipulation of various metals which abounded in the earth, and from which they formed beautiful ornaments and useful implements with which they were taught to cut and carve mighty rocks from which they constructed enduring edifices.

At Tollantzingo the first sacrificial stone was carved under the direction of Votan and the great high priest, which was named the "Cuaxicalli-Tizoc;" when it was completed they formed a procession led by the great high priest and Votan to one of the towering lava mountains which they named Popocatapetl, where they secured ob-

sidian with which to fashion the sacrificial blade. The second lava mountain they named Ixtaccihuatl, which name signifies wife of the one that furnished the first sacred blade and the third one they named Ciltlaltepētī, which name signifies the witness.

There being no domestic animals to offer up in sacrifice as was customary in his own country, Votan commanded certain of his subjects to bring a serpent, two birds, two butterflies, fruits and flowers to their newly made temple as their first offering to the Supreme Deity upon the Cuaxicalli-Tizoc.

A beautiful and imposing location had been chosen for the erection of two wonderful temples, one of which was dedicated to the Sun and one to the moon with grand ceremonies and feasting.

Underneath these structures were made the sepulchres for the kings and high-priests, and the sacrificial blade which the latter had used was always buried with him as each newly appointed high-priest was commanded to use none but a new blade.

Votan had brought from his native land a kind of paper which he explained was the product of a plant growing there, and he was surprised and pleased to discover a similar plant growing in the vale of Tollantzingo, which he saw could be manipulated to the same important use as that which he had conveyed thither for noting the events which transpired and keeping accounts thereon.

For the two princes Zamna and Cukulcan he formed a code of laws which he commanded them to uphold to the letter as the future prosperity of the nation depended upon them; the first and foremost to be inaugurated was to build immense public storehouses where sufficient quantities of provision and grain should be deposited in order

to provide against the possibility of a famine from drouth or failure of crops.

He wrote three explicit accounts of their discoveries and adventures, one copy of which he forwarded to prince Zamna with the code of laws and one to prince Cukulcan, requesting them to keep adding to those records all events of interest which transpired in their dominions, and the third copy he placed in the keeping of prince Icoatzin at Tollantzingo, whom he had appointed keeper of the accounts and records with the understanding that he should succeed him in power when the term of his office expired, which allotted period was fifty-two years, the same as in his native land.

Under his skillful directions the temples to the sun and moon were built in a gorgeous manner and adorned lavishly. The temple to the sun was roofed with thick plates of gold and the walls were covered in the same manner; in the west wall the architects were instructed to contrive a sliding panel upon which he had inscribed certain signs and oracles in such a marvelous manner that when the sunbeams reached that point it focused them inside the building, weaving golden chains from one point to another, encircling the sun-god and disclosing the inscription clearly, which at other times was quite invisible.

The reason which Votan and the great high priests gave for taking this precaution was the fear that at some future time marauding bands might force an entrance to the well guarded temple and learn the secret of the entrance to the treasure-house, a fact which the panels disclosed.

The temple to the moon was formed similar to that of the sun, but sheets of silver were used to cover the roof

and walls, and the moon-god was made entirely of that pale metal.

Votan never insisted or attempted to force his own language upon the natives and he further gained their reverence and approval by adopting their names for the orb of day and night which were given to those two important representative gods. The sun-god was called Tezcatlipoca and the moon-god Tezcatliquina.

During the time of his last voyage to his native land, Votan informed his followers that, notwithstanding his hurried flight, he had visited the house of the thirteen serpents and that he had traced the origin of the Maya race to the descendants of Imos of the race of Chan, or the serpent; and he impressed upon them the fact that they were favored of the Supreme Deity, inasmuch as he had changed them from serpents into men, and he repeatedly cautioned them against all evil doing lest their souls when free be forced to inhabit the lower animals, descending lower and still lower at each freedom until they again inhabited the body of serpents, and to further impress the terrible menace upon their minds, he provided emblems with a serpent inscribed upon them as a reminder of the probable consequence of evil doing.

A few years previous to his death the renowned explorer was grieved to learn that a tidal wave had wrecked his ships which had been moored several miles from the mouth of the broad river which they named Panuco.

Among the laws which he taught his people to observe was the value of giving to their priests, soldiers and scholars particular distinction and to all professions a share of public esteem, for the despising of any man who labored, however lowly, was taught a crime; all were useful to the kingdom; by this means arts were raised to their highest perfection for the honor which awaited them

mixed with every thought and care for their improvement.

Simplicity was seen in all things as taught by him and the quantity of what he ate or drank was prescribed to him, as well as to all of his subjects by the court physician—for eating and drinking was designed to satisfy the cravings of nature instead of tickling the palate.

“Xochitl, our sacred drama relates the noble life of our Savior and I will not tire you with the details of the manner in which each king carried out the commands and wishes of our noble ancestors, and of the present reign there are occurrences which I feel it a sacred duty to withhold even from you—at least for the present time.”

“It is well, dear Hueman, and I thank you fervently for your patient kindness in reading to me that portion of the records which I most desired to know, and I am proud and glad to be the descendant of such worthy people. Now I must return or my parents will become alarmed at my absence.”

As she hurried away the prophet gazed after her tenderly as he murmured softly, “She is the chosen one of all our kingdom, she knows no frivolity, she interests herself in naught which is harmful and her loyal exalted sentiments are merits worthy of a kingdom—but, ah me, can I manage to overcome the passion which she exhibited—surely it is only a passing whim and must be overcome.”

A dreamy, far away expression crept into the eyes of the prophet as they swept the broad expanse of fertile fields, golden with the ripened grain, and noted the flash of the sickles in the hands of the gleaners, while beyond glistened the stately towers and domes of the walled city of Tollantzingo, making a charming picture in the bright sunlight, imposing and pleasing to the admiring behold-

er ; but a sigh deep and woeful welled from the depths of his troubled bosom as he dwelt upon the fearful fact that not one store-house would be replenished to remain against a time of need as had been done by every previous ruler in order to provide against any possible emergency : but the present ruler disposed of every surplus measure of grain and squandered the proceeds lavishly.

CHAPTER III.

In order to distract his thoughts from the burning indignation which assailed him, he resumed his study of the documents and carefully read the following lines:

TEOAMOXTLI.

I, Hueman, the prophet of Tollantzingo, do hereby certify that all of the foregoing history is correct in every particular so far as the records which are in my possession have related, and from them I have carefully compiled these volumes for the benefit of our glorious nation in whose hearts I would awaken any dormant energy with the ambitious sentiments and heroic motive transmitted by a long line of worthy ancestors. But it is with acute pain and mortification that I behold a spirit of dissension increasing day by day—a rebellious feeling which has not died out although its object was attained by the dethronement of the Toltec king who preceded Tecpantcaltzin, the present ruler, and was brought about by the fact that he neither fostered nor upheld any warlike spirit, nor encouraged the sentiment in any of his subjects further than to keep his army well drilled in case of attack. Many besought him to quiet the hostile demonstrations about him by conquering them by force of arms; the continued altercations finally brought about a council, then, to the astonishment of the king, he became aware of the

fact that one of the high-priests favored the movement; this was a grave situation indeed, and the king commanded my father, who was a great high-priest, to take complete control of the records and to engage trustworthy workmen to build a new treasure-house far enough removed from the present one that the noise of their labor should be unheard—but the first and most important move in that direction which he commanded was that they should take the oath of secrecy which meant death rather than divulge the secret of its location.

When the whole tedious task was at length accomplished they carefully transferred the mammoth hoard of treasures before the dissenters became aware of their designs, for the king foresaw that they meditated extreme and desperate measures and sanctioned by the rebellious high-priest might at any moment attempt to dethrone him and set up an entirely new code of laws.

My father carried out the wishes of the king, who then enlisted among his body guards the workmen who had been employed in the secret mission that no suspicion should be attached to them as they lived in terror of apprehension.

My father was an astronomer and studied the map of the heavens continually, and I have inherited the same eager desire which has grown to be the light of my existence and makes me feared and revered beyond personal malice or mortal stratagem.

The Chichimecas, a cruel and blood-thirsty nation from the far north, having heard of our prosperity through missionaries whom we sent to civilize them and who speak a different tongue, have made their strong-hold at the base of Popocatapetl and are now our covetous and designing enemies, they having conceived the treacherous idea that they might, if aided by other powerful tribes,

overthrow our government, and they were continually making raids upon our people in distant portions of our kingdom. When these facts were laid before our loyal and beloved king, he immediately sent a troop of soldiers to guard our people until they gathered their crops, as all attempts to win and civilize the Chichimecas had signally failed at the expense of many lives; for they have been a menace for years, but recently have become emboldened as our peace-loving king refrained from warring with them, hoping thus by patient example to impress upon their stubborn hearts the wisdom of civilization.

These mild measures were scoffed at by the dissenters who pointed out the fact that their enemies were yearly growing more powerful and more aggressive, but the king fondly hoped that some brave missionaries whom he had recently sent among them would affect an impression which would at least have a restraining influence and he was grieved and horrified to learn from indisputable evidence that they had all been sacrificed!

While the terrible news was being conveyed to the king the dissenters held a meeting denouncing his course as an act of humiliation that he would restrain his well equipped army from attacking and driving the barbarous marauders from out their domain forever. The demonstrations became so formidable that, headed by the rebellious high-priest, they marched to the palace and commanded the gentle, peace-loving king to vacate the throne or remain as a prisoner guest! he chose the former alternative and the grief and mortification broke his kind heart and he died shortly after Tecpantalcztin, who was of alien blood, mounted the throne.

The new king possessed enough warlike ambition to please the dissenters, and in order to arouse and inflame their hearts with cruelty—which he considered a neces-

sary element to impress his importance upon his subjects and also to create a proper respect for him in the breast of his enemies abroad—he commanded that the Cuaxicalli-Tizoc be carved out to receive human sacrifice! that the prisoners they captured should meet the same fate as those who were captured by the enemy; this command was beyond the limit of the dissenters' expectations and the priests remonstrated with him, but he over-ruled their objections with promises of adhering religiously to every other form of government and pointed out that as king he possessed the power to make human sacrifice of prisoners of war. The demoralizing influence of the barbarous executions soon became apparent and appalling!

Upon her death-bed the mother of the newly appointed king sent for my father and confessed to him that the blood of the despised Chichimecas coursed through the veins of her son! and she begged of him to use his influence in his behalf toward leniency on the part of the opposing element in Tollan. She assured him that his fearful acts of cruelty were but the natural outcome of inheritance and that he himself was not aware of the terrible fact.

She, with two other Toltec maidens, had been taken captive by a band of marauding Chichimecas and she had been forced to wed one of the sons of the king and for four years was kept a prisoner among them until rescued.

My father was too wise a counselor to distribute the shameful news among our people which, if known, would have surely caused a civil war to dethrone the usurper who, under the laws of the Toltec Savior, should be put to death. But he carefully noted all of the above facts and placed them among the important records of the new treasure-house. The high-priest who headed the rebellious element was appointed great high-priest and he

arranged a new code of laws which were approved by the king and then they demanded of my father the key to the treasure-house and when they found it empty, or nearly so, they branded him a thief! and they tortured him to wring the secret from him and as a last resort the furious king commanded that he be hurled upon the Cuaxicalli-Tizoc and if he still refused that he should be executed! He had taken the oath of secrecy and he kept his vow.

The new ruler imposed enormous taxes upon the people, declaring that the treasures were stolen and he had no other means of carrying on a war to exterminate or banish the troublesome Chichimecas—but the property of the priests were exempt from taxation as before. He undertook no improvements nor kept up those which had been made by the skill and judgment of our predecessors.

Whether the king and his counselors imagine for a moment that I am possessed of the secret of the new treasure-house I cannot say, for they have never dared to make any demonstrations in regard to it since that fearful day when my aged father refused to betray the trust.

Since my inherited powers were made known—the science of reading the stars—which fact has been demonstrated frequently, they hold me in reverence and fear.

In order to impress upon the minds of those who will inherit these records the manners and customs of the present day, I will state clearly the true condition of our people, and it is with pain and sorrow that I behold the degenerating influence of our boastive profligate king in all portions of our kingdom, and he has not as yet succeeded in conquering or banishing the Chichimecas by adopting their barbarous methods of execution as a menace, which degrading action has produced more bru-

tality in the hearts of some of our people than it has awakened fear in the breasts of the enemy.

My soul grieves to know that the glorious precepts taught by the immortal Quetzalcoatl are rapidly losing their power through the wanton wiles of this alien king—if my plans can only be matured the nation may yet be saved—I would that through my efforts these debasing influences might be arrested.

* * * “Oh good and wise Hueman, prophet of the Tollan kingdom, will you pardon my intrusion? I have come to ask of you a favor: you see this blossom which I hold, it reveals in its tiny cup royal tints stolen from the modest violet, I am sure, in order to disguise the lurking venom hidden there that can destroy reason, can produce death! I love all plants and flowers, you know; love every effort of sublime nature and glory in her superb choice of colors in each tiny blade or towering palm; you have taught me, dear Hueman, the dreadful effects which may be produced by Toloache, but you have never hinted of your knowledge of its opposing spell—was the omission an accident? or did you not wish to teach me that of which I *long* to know.”

“Fair Xochitl, the knowledge of the antidote is an heirloom, a miracle, which mine aged sire bequeathed to me when he saw the inevitable fate which closed about him—I have sworn to divulge it to no one until my powers fail me; then it can only be transmitted to my nearest kin.”

“The gods of Tollantzingo are kinder to me than even you today, Hueman: they led me to a hidden stream concealed by a pyramid of living, breathing emerald. I drank of the wonderful life-giving beverage and all nature smiled approvingly, the whispering leaves of the swaying branches saluted me and the tempting luscious

figs have burst for very joy. Your heart too will be made glad, mine honored friend, when I share with you this wonderful secret which I came, dear Hueman, to barter for thine."

"Daughter of Papantzin, what need have you of the antidote? I warn you to beware of the pernicious effects of Toloache—the little knowledge which I have bestowed upon you of herb-life may prove a detriment to you."

"Hueman, I will unburden *all* to you—I have a rival and a dangerous one!"

"Perchance a rival, fair Xochitl, but not a peer."

"Dear Hueman, I trust you so implicitly, and if the whole world could look upon me through your kindly eyes I had no need of the antidote. My rival is fleet of foot, nimble of tongue, and oh, Hueman, she is beautiful! but oh, so cruel! As I was coming to share with you my secret she met me at the chapel door and vowed that if my lover did not turn to her that his powers should fail him! You know too well, oh, prophet, that there is but one way for her to accomplish the terrible threat, and I fear that she will endeavor to carry it into execution."

"Fear naught, fair maiden, give me her name, and by the power of my art, I will teach the brazen creature that there are mightier forces to combat your wrongs than she can ever understand, take no more heed to her vile threats, tell me her name."

"She is Ezcolotl, the daughter of Hatsutl, and her father is the court physician now, she knows the manner of preparing herbs, but I will heed your mandate, and no longer fear her. Please tarry here, Hueman, until I bring to you a draught which will make your soul rejoice and your eyes sparkle, into each muscle and sinew you will feel the strength of its marvelous exhilaration."

"Away, fair maiden, I await you."

The aged priest's admiring eyes followed her, and he mused: "Ah, how fleet of foot is she, how lithe of limb, methinks I hear seraphim whispers in her wake, the stars, alas, have mapped for her a thorny path, which hovered o'er her birth, and I shall strive through fear alone to save her, and thus perchance the gods will kindly aid me, and then we may avert the menace of her destiny—and if he dares for one brief moment to trifle with her love when I have changed the current of her passion—gods of Tollantzingo aid me to tear him limb from limb! My art is deep, my will is strong, but, oh, my heart is tender, and it grieves my soul to cast one doubtful shadow across her trusting face—I will not force the time and place for them to meet, I leave that also to the gods, and when my nearest dearest kin returns again from the stricken realms of Tula I will unfold my plans to him and share with him the secrets of our race, the time has come. Earth holds the magic three for me to love and cling to my country, my Topiltzin, and sweet Xochitl whose grace and beauty recalls my own sweet gentle love whose spirit guards me ever.

"What, returned so soon? I scarce had swept the doubtful horizon with mine aged vision since your fleeting footsteps died in the distance."

"Oh, thou marvel of wisdom, see, I drink to the health of the prophet of Tollantzingo."

"A thousand thanks, fairer maiden never voiced more pleasing sentiments; what do you drink? Surely your fertile brain has named the virtuous draught."

"Wine of maguey, good sir."

"It is rightly named, I never tasted any cordial half so exhilarating, it tears away the cobwebs which I am convinced have festooned my fancies for many years. I verily believe it has the power to circumvent old tyrant

Time—I am indeed enthused by this sweet balm, and our nation owes you a rich reward for this wonderful discovery, the king must be informed of this without delay, he must reward you handsomely as you so richly deserve to be.”

“Oh, Hueman, I crave no wish to meet the king—I fear him—my trembling feet would falter, and my hands could never bear a draught to him.”

“Go, Xochitl, do my bidding, child; say to your father that I will accompany you after I have sought an audience with him to pave the way, then I will at once return to meet you at your cottage door; do not hesitate or others will seek to claim the honor awaiting you, you may lose your quondam lover and gain a crown, hasten, child, the day will soon be done.”

“Why, say you I may lose my lover, wise Hueman?”

“To *win* and *save* our kingdom! The eyes of our monarch are not dimmed with age nor yet bleared with dissipation. He can but note your supple grace and matchless form. One glance into your melting eyes will set his pulses tingling, even as wine of magney have enraptured mine.”

“I crave not his admiration nor his diadem, not though I were the daughter of ten thousand kings—give me my own true lover chieftain, he, who girds his shield about him with the mottled pelt of the fleetest mountain roe, who beards the gnashing tiger in her lair, and hurls the missiles of war straight to the Chichimeca bosoms unto death.”

“Child, where is your discretion? Methinks, the whispering breezes scarce have carried your cherished vow beyond the horizon of my recall—you are no fickle maid—nature has kindly lent you wisdom far beyond your years, did you not say the gods had led you to the fountain of the wine?”

"I did, Hueman."

"And I have prayed, implored, besought the gods to lead the way if they approved my wishes, and would aid our nation's weal, this is their answer then which you have brought—that rival maiden Ezcolotl shall be summoned to join the procession unto the king and her treacherous palms shall bear a plant of the maguey in honor of your triumph and discovery."

"It is well, Hueman, I will go to do your bidding feeling sure that the king will not fail to observe that Ezcolotl is handsomer far than I, for she is beautiful as day when day is fair."

"Ah, child of dawning wisdom, it is not beauty alone inspires the heart, the influence of a noble soul speaks louder, with a voiceless tongue, awakens deep mysterious power, asserts the truth, binds kindred ties that naught can tear asunder, while beauty would but please the passing gaze."

"Your words are weighed with truth—you touched a tender chord within my soul that echoes thoughts like those. You arouse the hope, I fear, you longed to stay; yes, I will now obey you heart and soul, for surely, good Hueman, your words apply to me as well as him whom we call king."

"Translate them as you will, fair maid—but, oh, be loyal to our country's needs, do not allow one selfish motive to shape or mar your loyalty."

She bowed her head and as she turned to go the prophet rapidly retraced his steps toward the palace while he mused—"it is the answer to my long appeal; the way is made clear without mine intervention, and now I will do my part without regret or fear, and he will give them audience, for the haughty Tecpantcaltzin has yet to refuse e'en one request of mine since he has known my oc-

cult power." As he returned from the interview with his request granted, he chanced to meet the father of Xochitl to whom he said:

"Ah, Papantzin, this moment I was on the way to your abode, I have just completed arrangements with the king, who will permit your charming daughter an audience with him that she may thus make known the wonderful discovery which the gods of Tollantzingo have revealed to her, I warrant you that it will be the means of elevating yourself and household to especial rank and favor; but tell me, Papantzin, who is the presumptuous Toltec chieftain that has dared to whisper love-songs to fair Xochitl?"

"It is your nearest kin, brave General Topiltzin."

"May the Supreme Deity defend her, what proof have you to back this framed assertion?"

"Naught but the echo of his pleading voice oft reaching mine ears, and the effect of his fervent glances that crimson my daughter's truthful face like the blood-red petals of the scarlet rose."

"Oh, would to heaven that I had known this fact before I sought an audience with the king. Ah, now, I see her horoscope more clearly—I willed things otherwise with my blundering persistancy in my blind enthusiasm for my country's weal—how lavishly I extolled to him her charms, striving to arouse infatuation in his breast for her, we love those deserving merits well, but oh, I little dreamed what cruel mischief I was plotting against my nearest, dearest kin."

"What possible harm can come of so courteous an act, Hueman?"

"May the Supreme Deity protect her—he alone knows. I would I had grown pure enough and listed that His sweet spirit had communed with mine and lent me just the least of gentle warnings in his behalf and hers."

“Methinks, you chide yourself unwarranted, Hueman. This task is not a grievous one, and soon may be accomplished, able seer.”

“In that you know not, neither I, but promise, Papantzin, when lunas light clothes hill and vale in subdued splendor, and the still bosom of Atechpanomochocho reflects the starry firmament, bring your fair daughter to the foot of yonder cliff where you will find me waiting, and I will then reveal to you a miracle.”

“Most learned Hueman, I fear you not as man against man, but your cunning sorceries do mock mine understanding, and arouse strange misgivings in my breast.”

“Papantzin, your daughter made known to me a request this day which I will strive to fulfill in a manner acceptable to her, and that is why I bid you come.”

“Then it is well if the maid desires to come, I shall certainly accompany her.”

“Remember then to supply yourselves with plenty of cucuyous, for we shall need their charming lustre to behold the miracle.”

“I shall come prepared with many—but see the little procession awaits us.” The prophet hastened to Xochitl’s side exclaiming—“Why droop and cast down your eyes, fair Xochitl? Throw back your graceful shoulders and arouse an element of courage and indifference within your being.”

“Oh, Hueman, I pray you do me this one great favor—go with the procession and my father to the king and bear the draught.”

“Then he will be displeased and will send a guard to summon you without delay, and many unpleasant difficulties may arise therefrom. Child, now I know your heart, your father told me all, and I will strive to undo

what I so blindly sought to accomplish—in one short hour the duty will be done.”

“Some great and weighty fear is gnawing at my vitals, I would I had not found the sparkling draught, Hueman, *it is an evil omen, that I tremble so!*”

CHAPTER IV.

“Ah, diligent Hueman, your study of the stars has not been for naught; where has this Toltec maid been hidden all these years? How have her parents managed to conceal this shy, beautiful Xochitl. I did not know until this day that General Papantzin possessed a child.”

“She is their only child; her parents taught her at their home instead of sending her to the seminaries to be educated, their cottage nestles at the base of yonder hill.”

“Her beauty delighted mine eyes far more than I had dreamed it possible at your slow speech and her discovery tickled my palate; Papantzin and his family shall indeed be favored of their king.”

“I know they are contented with their lot—perchance a pair of fawns for their corral were not amiss, and bright-hued raiment for the maid and her mother.”

“Hueman, I have not asked your choice of honors for my bestowal, reserve your allegory until I call it forth; it is not for that purpose that I lend you now my willing ear; what say you of the stars? No more dissensions lurk about the throne befouling the air like hissing serpents! Mine enemies fall back before the weapons of mine armies like ripened grain before the gleaming sickle. Break forth in speech, Hueman, here take a tankard of this wine, it will do your stomach good. No? Then by my faith, I do believe you are in love with fair Xochitl, too!”

"In very truth I am in fear for her, oh king; the stars that hovered o'er her birth bespeak great calamities, were unwanted honors forced upon her; spare her your gracious favor—bestow upon her parents what you will—she is but a child, the free winds are her lullaby, the plants and flowers her choicest companions; seek not to trammel her with honors which her spirit does not crave."

"Avaricious and cunning Hueman, to think you can make me feel your dotage! What changed your plea since last you sought my presence? I'll warrant there is more behind this scheme than stars have told—the household of Papantzin are my subjects at my disposal, and I warn you to beware, and do not strive to shape my mind against my will—even you may know without the aid of your art to tell you what the gods have in store for you long before you care to have it known. Confine your reckoning to the language of the stars and your thoughts also."

"King Tecpantcaltzin, I have no fear that you or yours will harm a single hair of my poor silvered head, our gods do first make mad whom they desire to kill; mine eyes are dimmed striving to pierce the dark veil of obscurity that hangs like a funeral pall above Tollan. I must be gone to my cliff-tower house to commune with my beloved children of the skies, as they proudly step into line, for the curtain of night is unfolding."

"Do not forget that tomorrow is a feast day to the war-god Huitzilopochtli, he shall be invoked to avert your threatened curse or 'funeral pall' which none but angry eyes may see above Tollan, and if the gods do first make mad whom they desire to kill that menace may rebound and avert your untimely threat."

"Not mine, but thine!"

"Beware, Hueman, nor strive to pierce me with thorns

of envy torturing you, and now adieu, I trust e'er tomorrow you will have regained your former balance and no longer strive to turn my mind whither your fancy urges."

The aged priest ventured no further remarks and bowed and passed out into the twilight as if the taunting speech had been unheard, but when his hurrying feet had measured the palace grounds, his indignation then found vent and his low magic tones murmured—"and he has dared to threaten me, and twit me of his power—this alien king. That spirit of dark insinuation does not ill become the monster that he is, but in his dreams he shall be troubled, wierd goblins shall leer at him from every side, and he shall neither wake nor sleep, but with the cold beads of perspiration filling every pore may neither find voice nor action until the tardy rays of a new-born day relax his tensioned nerves to responsive action—this much oh King, my art can do *and more*. And it were well for him then to beware!" As he reached the base of the cliff, near the rock stairway leading to his abode he was relieved and gratified to find that his friends were awaiting him.

"Welcome, Papantzin, thrice welcome are you, too, Xochitl; come climb with me this rugged stairway to my domain; are you prepared with plenty of cucuyous to light our way?"

"Yes, Hueman, we have many."

"Then unhouse those living lanterns, Papantzin, let their weird varied hues reveal what this bat-like gloom and uncertainty conceals from us."

"Oh, Hueman, are we three alone? I seem to hear strange whisperings in the air; have you speech with spectral beings here?"

"Pause you a moment, child, until the lanterns glow, there now come nearer, do you not see that star-like wax-

en-hued blossom? You have never known fragrance likened unto this. Observe those leaves more closely; see, their contour shapes a human heart traced clear with veins and arteries.

“A murmur soft and low comes to me o’er the distant hills from out yon low-hung fleecy cloud—the spirit of prophesy is upon me; it is a revelation—I see, I hear, I feel the presence of a *terrible* crisis! The sacrifice was not for *her*, naught can save us. I see my beloved race conquered! They are fleeing before the savage strides of our enemies like a herd of deer before a drove of hungry wolves!

“I see a remnant of our once proud race yoked in slavery! a prey to the resounding lash of the triumphant Chichimecas, they search for the treasures of the Toltecs, but they find them not—see, the blossom is fading—my revelation is done. Here, Xochitl, take these leaves and fading blossoms, and remember that they possess a mysterious leaven of enduring power, for days, weeks and months they will sustain a human life. An infusion of these heart-shaped leaves and star-like waxen-hued blossoms will destroy the dreadful and blighting effects of the innocent appearing but *accursed* Toloache.”

“Dear Hueman, I cannot find words to half express my gratitude to you, and my heart feels lighter, and my hope more secure that I know the antidote.”

“Then keep these secrets locked securely within your bosom, that is all that I require of you to do, and now, good night my friends, may you never have need of the antidote.”

For several hours after the general and his daughter had departed Hueman was communing with the stars until the sound of some great commotion welled up from Tollantzingo, and he sought the highest pinnacle which

the parapet afforded as he exclaimed—"Ha, what sounds are those I hear? It is he, my beloved Topiltzin, returned victorious! The gates of Tollantzingo are flung wide to admit him and his valiant braves; soon he will seek me at our trysting place." * * *

"He comes, goading his tired form with the lash of his eagerness to apprise me of his victory, which he has won. Ah, now, I hear his flute-like call; who but chieftains born can master sounds like those—softly trilled like pleading note of some poor wounded bird—nearer, clearer, louder! Mount you the parapet, my dear Topiltzin, I await you upon the pinnacle."

"My gracious kinsman, you overwhelm me with your confidence. I never thought my feet would press this height, perchance for years to come. To what am I indebted for all this condescension, good Hueman?"

"And are you not deserving? Unbosom your welcome tidings that I, too, may rejoice in the triumph which your honest features cannot hide, and I heard in the lusty notes of your ringing challenging voice."

"We routed the Tezcocans and Xochimilcas, we drove them from the kingdom of Tollan, and have brought six hundred prisoners to the realm."

"Well done, my brave Topiltzin, they harassed our people greatly, and had they joined with the no less brutal Chichimecas they might have caused us serious complications, and you deserve far greater honors for your brave and timely action than this craven king can or will bestow."

"I care not for his honors, which he grudgingly would give, one word of praise from him would gall and sting me like a serpent!"

"I hold the complex and mysterious key to greater power and wealth than he has ever dreamed in all his

wildest flights or fancies, a *secret* kept for many years locked in my bosom, a *secret* which he longs with all of his avaricious soul to know, and it shall be revealed to you, my Topiltzin, before the rising of another sun."

"You speak in parables, Hueman, and make me feel the want of understanding."

"Then, follow me, the cucuyous brought by Papantzin still illumine the cavern."

"Papantzin here!"

"Yes, and fair Xochitl also."

"Oh, Hueman, then do not hesitate, lead me to them—I surely felt some subtle sweetness in the air that warmed my longing heart—I did hesitate some moments near their door but all was dark and still, I am so glad that they are here."

"No, Topiltzin, you did mistake my speech, they have been here, but the hour-glass has thrice emptied since their departure."

"Oh, would to heaven that I had met them here—it were a fitting place wherein to share with you the precious burden of my soul which I have guarded as too sweet, too sacred for mortal ears to hear, but something urges me tonight to tell you all and, list, Hueman, I would not breathe my thoughts upon the zephyrs wing—*I love the sweet Xochitl.*"

"And do you love her well?"

"Love her? Oh, Hueman, do the drooping flowers love the pattering drops of rain, the shivering creatures of earth the warm sunlight, the happy mother her cherished babe? When have I not hungered and thirsted for a glance of love from her dark lustrous eyes, for love of her my feet have never tired on the chase, my ambition never flagged, I have hurled the advancing foes, to flight the tide of battle turned when a sea of poisoned arrows

cleft the air about me; you cannot, wise Hueman, with all of your occult power, measure the height and depth of such a love as mine. It saps my very vitals with feverish joy, it elevates my being, purifies my actions, softens my speech and rings untiring strains of music to my glad and happy soul."

"You have a rival, dear Topiltzin, and he is mighty! He wields the power to order your straight-limbed manly form to feel the sting of death upon the dreaded Cuaxicalli-Tizoc!"

"The king! Gods of Tollantzingo, I implore you forbid."

"Courage, Topiltzin, be brave; here, take some wine I beg of you."

"Courage! think you I have need to renew one dormant sinew in my staunch muscled frame? I, who have battled with and conquered the blood-thirsty invaders when they outnumbered us ten to one—I would tear my loved one from the machination of Tecpantcaltzin were he *thrice* a king."

"I knew that it were better for me to warn you before tomorrow's feast, and it grieves my heart to add that I am now to blame that they have met. I did urge her to make known to him a secret which she had learned was hidden in the heart of the maguey—it is a spring of honey dew delicious to the senses—and for this discovery she does deserve a recompense and all unconscious that she blushed for love of you I took her to the palace and the king."

"And he——"

"Was enraptured of her beauty; I did command the arrant beauty Ezcolotl, the eldest daughter of Hatsutl, to bear in her reluctant palms a plant of the maguey, that the king might see the fruitful acquisition to his posses-

sion, the value of which no one imagined until now, but his eager longing gaze rested only upon Xochitl, and he bade her bring to him another draught of the wine of maguey upon the morrow; he said to me when they had gone, that the household of Papantzin shall now be favored of their king."

"It shall not be! Hueman, I will go at once and arouse my sleeping braves; will take my loved one and flee to some distant portion of our realm and dwell secure until the time arrives for me to mount the throne; *mine* by right of inheritance."

"Oh, Topiltzin, do strive to curb your fearful anger, my beloved kin; within your passionate bosom there is a fount of veneration for the Supreme Deity who governs all of our destinies and would you willingly wound Him by taking your wrongs upon yourself to redress? Ever since your tottering feet first tried to bear you I have taught you to heed the gentle voices of your soul, and to obey that element of mighty power only, and this is the divine secret of your wonderful success in all of your battles of life; do not give way to anger, for you thus menace and destroy that conscious sensitiveness which is your true salvation! Bravely ward off the rebellious spirits that can draw you away from that glorious plane where you can gain strength from every trial and emergency, where through silent mental prayer and the observance of those conditions which I have carefully taught you, that you might be, through its wonderful influence, prevented from bodily injury through any physical or earthly cause. Expand that sublime creative force which emanates from the divinity within you and crowd out all selfish motives and thus render yourself master over circumstances, and ever attract that mighty element which you must carefully nurture to the absolute extermination

of injurious morbidity which can destroy your precious soul. Demand courage, demand patience, demand justice, and be hopeful ever in that boundless fountain of force which *can* and *shall* conquer all of your difficulties. To-night, I will share with you the secret of the hidden store-house which contains all of the vast wealth of the true Toltecs; now follow me, and as you fear the wrath of the Supreme Deity, reveal to no one that which your eyes shall feast upon."

"Oh, Hueman! Hueman! what care I for glittering wealth when my precious one is in danger! Those sparkling gems would madden me like the scintillating eyes of serpents, the very sound of jingling metals would gnash my teeth in misery, and the cold touch of those priceless treasures would startle my sense like the clammy brow of the shrouded dead. I am no sybarite, the sylvian bowers of the tangled wilds can be my home and hers, until this alien king shall be dethroned. How has he not demeaned himself in the eyes of his people? What crime that the fiendish impulse of a barbarous soul can suggest has he left undone? How dare he then insult my pure Xochitl with such low-born love. I tell you this, Hueman, and I swear to keep my vow, that if he *dare* attempt to make her his queen, I will test the value of my acknowledged power to make his throne a very charnel house!"

"My aching heart bleeds for you, my cherished kinsman, would that I could take you in my arms and cradle you to my bosom as in the happy days gone by, when you nestled your soft cheek against my own while I crooned your cares away; how unbearable seemed your little griefs then, and do strive to accept my feeble comfort now—perchance, this be but wasted sorrow—take courage, To-piltzin, you have earned the right to gracious honors from

the king and with the spirit of conquest wreathing your victorious brow, go to the king upon the morrow and await her coming; then declare to him that you are pledged to and wish to wed Xochitl."

"Hueman, your words do give me hope, I will obey you and if he dare to trifle or remonstrate with my vow, the kingdom of Tollan shall be divided! Show me those wondrous treasures for time has leaden wings until the morrow."

"Then follow me, and mark well each footstep down this rock-ribbed hall; see, a firm pressure upon this solid appearing wall of stone, and behold the neatly chiseled entrance to royal marble halls; observe the key, note how cunningly and delusively it is wrought—here take it, Topiltzin, it is yours to guard henceforth, that if aught should happen me you will know the way which leads you hither, and now you understand why it should be guarded well; look which way you will there are tiers on tiers of Toltec wealth, magnificent in ingenious workmanship, elegant in design, copied from nature's glorious handiwork. Are not these halls of massive marble a fit abiding place for the wealth of the Toltec nation?"

"This scene of hidden splendor does outrival all of my wildest dreams of wealth and magnificence; these towering monuments of silver and gold could build a mighty edifice tier upon tier; these jewels are of sufficient quantity to bedeck each maid and mistress in Tollantzingo, and have quantities to spare, of what use is all of this glittering wealth which lies rusting here?"

"These are the garnered treasures of more than a thousand years of Toltec industry; it was the proud ambition of our ancestors to obey the mandates of Votan, the father of our honored nation, who declared that some day a messenger would come from his far off sun-land

home to whom great tributes must be paid, one who would know the symbols and enigmas upon the sliding panels in the temple to the sun, which are now misleading and which you must not fail to have replaced with the instructions leading here, but upon the opposite wall that he may not go wrong for that will correct the pathway, which you must arrange if comes the time when you are vested with the power which you crave, and which you are entitled to by right of inheritance. So many centuries have fullled and waned that I fear the very course across the trackless ocean where once our ancestors dwelt, have been forgotten, and still we wait and watch for the messenger to come. Examine more closely all of these wondrous works of art, see these delicately traced altar-rails, they are all made of solid bars of gold, and those upon the opposite side are silver leaved with gold; all of these vases are of solid gold and every sparkling gem within them has princely worth; see this pyramid of darts with bejeweled hilts, also the cups, platters, spoons and ladles, they are all of solid gold.

Now follow me still further, here is the entrance to the great mines where the precious metals were unearthed, and here now are the relics of the rude implements with which they mined; three centuries have rolled away since these caverns echoed to the pick-axe and shovel.

"The successor to king Icoatzin, the seventh, had this mine, which has the richest gold bearing vein in our kingdom, walled up at a time of a threatened invasion, and many of these gems were also taken from the same rich mine."

"Has not the time arrived when a portion of this fabulous wealth may be summoned into activity and usefulness instead of corroding here?"

"What need have our people of this hidden store? The

uncertainty of peace within our kingdom and without make it impossible for us to work the mines or attempt to do aught but wait until a lineal descendent of the royal line can mount the throne—our fearful oath calls down the wrath of heaven to hide this prize away from alien hands—all this you know, my kin, know also that the fertile fields have not refused to yield abundant harvest; the pressed earth which built the abodes of our ancestors and walled in their cities does the same duty now; yonder eternal mountains afford the massive blocks of adamant with which we tower mighty breast-works that defy the sharpened arrow and pelting sling. Had Tecpantcaltzin and his court an inkling of the magnitude and hiding-place of this vast wealth it would make them idiotic! To such a prodigal lavishness would their folly lead them.

Locked in your bosom and mine the knowledge of this kingly inheritance shall remain until the knell of dissolution is sounded unless you or your progeny or a true royal Toltec mount the throne, but alas, I fear that our beloved nation is tottering upon the very verge of doom! I see it in my study of the heavens and feel it in the sorrow of my soul which I cannot, even through *constant silent mental prayer, overcome.*”

“Yes, Hueman, I will guard the secret with my life! No torturing enemy, nor promised friend shall wrench it from my bosom. A few long hours more must intervene until the king shall by his course decide a problem which involves our nation’s weal, when the edict has gone forth no parlying voice shall then be heeded.”

“Do nothing rash or hasty, I implore you!”

“Why do you chide the spirit of indignation that runs riot in my soul? Could these gleaming emeralds and blood-tinged rubies take unto themselves the hushed voices of our noble sires, methinks, they would rebuke

me, for lingering here when the beloved fawn of my heart's own fold is bleating for fear of the untethered wolf! I thirst not for visions like these which do but mock me, they inspire no patient influence within my bosom and I long for the morrow."

"And I, oh, Topiltzin, I dread the dawning of a new day with an aching heart which has never brooked suspense like this from cause of thine. Oh, listen, I implore you, to the voice of reason, or I fear my taut and tensioned nerves will snap asunder before the beacon fires of a new born day banner the eastern sky; court the wisdom of discretion now and warily as you make all battle moves; tell me of a solitary instance where the flame of blazing anger flaunted in the face of abject tyranny ever accomplished aught but measure for measure—for this burning element in vehement eloquence many have suffered defeat although pleading in behalf of justice and truth. Do not dash into the presence of Tecpantcaltzin like a meddlesome tiger into the arena of death! Bide your time. Methinks the voice of love breathes music in your soul which should curb your anger and lull your chaotic mind with its soporific sweetness—hearken to my suffering and learn what agonies my lips have whitened with that wrenched my very *soul* in twain! Long years ago—eternities they seem to me—I loved a lute-voiced maiden not unlike your own fair, graceful one. I trilled my soft teponaztli beneath her window until the laughing stars sang together. I built stately mansions in the blue realms of ether where she always ruled as queen; her charm chased every lowering cloud athwart my youthful horizon and her glorious eyes mirrored a gentle soul pure as the crystal dew-drop.

One cruel day her dearly loved father, who was a commanding officer, was captured by a band of Chichimecas,

as were also a number of his men, all of whom they tortured cruelly until life was extinct, then they severed their heads and spiked them upon poles which they planted near the gates of Tollantzingo as they dared venture, and when a thoughtless guard recognized the ghastly relic of her father he reverently secured it and carried it to the home of my darling, and when her eyes met the horrible sight her reason forever fled. And I, all unconscious of her dreadful fate, rushed eagerly into her presence at the close of a long chase. Her blank stony-stare maddened, frenzied, overwhelmed me. When I learned its fearful cause, I gathered her into my strong arms and fled with her to this cavern home, no hindering voice retarded me, and here she dwelt for years in the midst of all this royal splendor a prattling queen; her shapely hands caressed these jewels and fashioned that pyramid of darts many times.

One dismal night she went to sleep in my sheltering arms and her gentle spirit renewed its dormant energies in the realms of light beyond; I made her little grave under that massive boulder by the mouth of the buried mine, and it seemed then that the fountain of my tears would never dry.

The gray-haired friends of my youth speak now in whispering tones of my excruciating agony that crushed my proud spirit forever; they look upon me as one linked with supernatural beings, and fear and heed my prophesies; and, oh, when I missed this one fair being, the light of my existence, I sought with eager eyes the blue dome of heaven until she blessed my startled vision with her radiant loveliness mirrored among the stars. And now, my brave Topiltzin, be merciful to yourself and to me, your prestige nor your life amounts to a grain of sand in the eyes of King Tecpantcaltzin nor his counsel-

ors, they would gladly find excuse for crippling all of your power and even deprive you of your existence, and forseeing your remarkable abilities as well as the menace about you, I have taught you the art of war; your influence in this realm can scarce be measured, and they dare not openly accuse you of any grave and sufficient charge to divest you of your power, and yet how gladly they would find some excuse which you must guard against giving."

"Indeed, I have long been well aware of this, Hueman, but it has absolutely no weight with me. My only fear is for my promised bride. Oh, why could she not have remained in sweet seclusion as of yore until she were my own by marriage vows?"

"In that, you do forsooth rebuke me, Topiltzin, and yet that invisible force which places the arm of destiny about us has ordained these things in that you made no confident of me until after I had led her to the king. It is too true, alas, that I now see her horoscope more clearly. I had willed it otherwise with blundering persistancy. Let us now seek repose, my kin, and bide our time until the morrow."

CHAPTER V.

"HEAR you the Huehuetls call, Topiltzin? You are summoned early to the palace. I trust that no unwelcome tidings lurk in that command. Oh, arm yourself with discretion, I implore you, for treachery lingers in every shadow about the throne."

"Fear not for me, my good Hueman, but rather for they who dare molest me, and do not worry. I feel more calm and hopeful in this glorious bath of morning sunshine, and it seems to me that all nature would be tearful were injury hovering over she whom I so dearly love. I have no warning to alarm my senses which to me is a peaceful omen. I shall heed your words, Hueman, even as you desire."

"The gods be praised, my Topiltzin, your words undo my nervous dread. I shall soon be summoned to the palace and will join you there."

The priest gazed proudly upon the stalwart, fast receding form of the agile chieftain and marked the fearless strides and lofty mien until he saw the brazen Ezcolotl following in his wake with flying feet eager to overtake and have speech with him, and a dark forbidding frown gathered upon the prophet's brow, nor was it dispelled until he saw a king's messenger approaching, and he muttered in his accustomed monotone—Yes, he has need of me, I knew full well his dreams would be but troubled ones; yes, I shall go at once, it is none too soon!"

The palace grounds were beautiful with every conceivable device to make them so, tall trees were gorgeously adorned with various flowers which had been cunningly secured upon them with fibres of maguey, some were adorned with roses alone, their fragrance welcome to the balmy air. Many trees were made ones and formed of such heavy timbers that a stalwart man would be secure upon their topmost branches, with every limb and twig garlanded with flowers. A yellow rose bower was prepared for the messenger from the sun, the usual custom. upon each festal day, that he might feel a welcome in the knowledge that he was never forgotten, and the prophet glanced toward it with pleasure marked upon his earnest features, and he remarked to one of the guards that the bower had never appeared so sweetly inviting as this festal day to the war-god Huitzilopochtli.

Upon a nearby temple roof sat jauntily the crimson rose bower prepared for the pretty queen of flowers, who royally received all who were venturesome enough to scale this lofty wall. Sweet strains of sacred music swelled and vibrated the fragrant breeze, and the clear voiced cuycapicque had never sung with such welcome melancholy; thus murmured the observing prophet, as his microscopic eyes devoured each welcome change.

Upon the frescoed walls of the palace outlined by a master hand were hung the portraits of Votan, Quetzalcohuatl and many other kings who had ruled the Toltec race; they were framed in panels of silver and gold, and were garlanded with fresh cut flowers which seemed to invite added lustre to the benign countenances of Tolan's former rulers.

With a shudder of repulsion outlined upon his features the prophet half unconsciously compared them to the present ruler, and he murmured impatiently: "No, no, I

dare not allow myself to dwell upon such thoughts, for that noble element of progression which marked the former's worthy rule is fast retracing its march down the dark lanes of ignorance and vice. Despite my every effort to the contrary, I know that my brow will darken forbodingly, and my voice take on a scornful tone when I enter the presence of the monarch of Tollantzingo, but I shall bury my nails deep into my feverish palms lest I lay violent hands upon his cringing carcass and do him injury.

As the prophet entered, the king with affected pleasure exclaimed: "Welcome, Hueman; welcome, this day shall mark the proudest of my reign—Come hither, Topiltzin, your reward for accomplishing this last great victory shall be this large handsome armor-plate of gold which will shield your brave heart and prove your merit to the world, and here is also another tassel for your cap which has already a shower of emblems marking your victories. Now, summon your valient braves and escort the prisoners to the sacrifice, and then return to the feast and ball."

With a profound bow of thanks and a soldierly salute, the brave young general departed as he was bidden, and the prophet breathed a sigh of relief as his straight colossal form was lost in the distance, and he was rudely awakened from a vision of the future by the rasping voice of the king, who said:

"Hueman, last night a beastly dream disturbed my slumbers, and I suffered all of the torments of the infernal region, and when I arose at break of dawn to breathe the welcome balm of heaven within my garden, a rabbit crossed my path with horns like an elk and bounded away, but did return for the third time, now tell

me by the power of your art, what signifies so strange and unnatural a creature?"

"It is the first of three distinct warnings, and signifies that this dominion of yours King Tecpantcaltzin is doomed!"

"Impossible, each vine and fig-tree in my domain is flourishing; mine armies return victorious, and my people are all thriving and well."

"Then why task my knowledge if you, too, can prophesy?"

"Hueman, are you not mindful to whom you are speaking? Your king, addresses his subject."

"Forsooth, I had forgotten that, this hybrid animal which posed for your especial benefit upset all of my thoughts of kingly rank and file, and I would that it had made its unwelcome appearance upon any day but this; it is surely a forerunner of calamities that will crowd upon you, and I believe that the day is not far distant when you will neither question the intonation of your *subject's* voice nor his manner of speech."

"Hueman, have a care! Only for the eccentricities of age creeping upon you, I would never overlook this arrogance which so ill becomes you, and I trust that when the music of the dancers begins it will have the power to subdue your savage spirit which can emanate from one cause alone. A short time hence the princess will appear to receive the signet of her rank and congratulations."

"What princess?"

"Beautiful Xochitl, the daughter of brave general Pa-pantzin."

"She, a princess?"

"Yes, Hueman; but see, yonder she approaches, so fair and graceful; like a very queen, she carries her proud head."

“Come hither, Princess Xochitl, and receive the brilliant emblem of your newly appointed rank; this priceless necklace so deftly interwoven with precious jewels, befits a queen; these gleaming pendants will rise and fall with each gentle respiration proclaiming to the world the fact that you belong henceforth to the king’s household. Ye courtiers, salute the chosen princess of my realm; now let the voice of music fill the air and the bounteous feast be spread.”

“Hueman, are you entranced? I thought you would be first among those who offer congratulations to the newly appointed princess.”

“Methinks the gracious light of heaven never caressed the brow of a fairer maid than she—“and now, you are indeed a princess, dear Xochitl, but the same *true* loving heart throbs in your breast which has ever responded to noble and unselfish aims; no rich behest nor lavish flattery can destroy the truthful spirit housed within your gentle soul—believe not half your ears must hearken to, nor half your eyes behold—you have yet to learn the selfish motives that lurks in sceptered power which can ruthlessly poise the cup of sorrow to your lips until you drain it to the dregs, but remember that the prophet of Tollantzingo is your staunch friend, ever pleading at the feet of the Supreme Deity in your behalf.”

“Hueman, this sounds to me like treachery! Some hidden compact between you two which has a double meaning disrespectful to me, your Sovereign, it is rank unkindness to mingle words of sadness and distrust into her glad heart now.”

“King Tecpantcaltzin, look into the depths of those dark expressive eyes that mirror her truthful soul and tell me if I did by a single hair’s breadth waver the doubt within her troubled bosom? Does a glad heart sadden

those sweeping lashes that linger upon her rounded cheeks? Does a glad heart heave with unbidden sighs and startle with a sense of danger? Does it tension the nerves and forbode the air she breathes? No fleeting fawn pursued by a hunter's merciless aim ever scented keener need of the secure abiding place of its mother's fold than she."

"Hueman, I verily believe that your brain is wandering, otherwise I would not excuse you for this morbid speech, and I beg of our fair young Princess to make known her feelings upon the subject."

Xochitl raised her soulful eyes to the admiring ones of the king and said:

"King Tecpantcaltzin, I humbly offer you my grateful thanks for these tokens of royal favor which you have this day conferred upon me; I hardly believe that my discovery merits so many honors; my heart never yearned for rank or prestige, but I shall always feel grateful to you for your kindness and generosity this day—to my life-long friend and gentle adviser, Hueman—I owe the inspiration that led my faltering and reluctant footsteps to your throne for recognition of my pleasing discovery."

The face of the king brightened as she modestly made the avowal and he said:

"You have spoken wisely and well and you scarcely realize the benefit of your discovery to our nation, especially valuable in place of wine, and our physicians say that it is quite as nutritious; and as to Hueman in extenuation of his dire forebodings and half-revealed prophecies—which I frankly admit surpass my understanding—I forgive him all of his seeming discourtesy, feeling convinced that the well being of his king and all of his subjects are of moment to him. And now we will hasten to the banquet hall for the festal board is spread."

The aged priest followed the guests slowly and meditatively to the dining hall, musing meanwhile upon the words of Xochitl to the king—ah, sweet Xochitl, the wisdom of your little artless speech averted a cloud, no larger at that auspicious moment than mine interlaced hands and ready palms; but had he dared to give utterance to or insinuate a repetition of his former ignoble threat, that cloud would have gathered a blinding curtain which had covered the entire firmament of his domain. He invites me to his festal-board, draped with the rich fabrics of my royal ancestors and tempting viands of Toltec culinary are displayed upon golden services which the ingenuity of my fore-fathers wrought.

To the right and left of the king are seated his brothers Cauhli and Maxtlatzin, whom he uses as lapstones upon which to vent his anger and malign with curses which he longs to visit upon me—but there beside my own Topiltzin they have seated the newly appointed princess—can this have been accident or design? Has Topiltzin spoken and received acquiescence from the king? If so, his majesty deserves henceforth and shall have a far more exalted place in my opinion than he has previously earned in his whole career; and I have never seen him in such a spirit of exuberant merriment, jokes and peals of laughter drown the sweet strains of music that lend an especial charm to the gorgeous scene.

Fresh cut roses of varied and delicate shades grace the banquet board and festoon the pictures and garland the gleaming pillars. How beautiful and becoming are those richly tinted garments which adorn the fair young princess—a flowing white billowy robe, heavily embroidered in leaves and flowers of silver and gold, across her shoulders flung gracefully—is the mantle of state made from the brilliant breasts of many wildwood songsters

which were wont to pierce the heavens with their careering, tireless wings.

Who can for a moment doubt the look of tenderness and trust which shines in her dark expressive eyes as she blushing meets the answering ones of her beloved Topiltzin—ah, how can I *have been so utterly blind until now*—the king rivets her attention with these words:

“Princess Xochitl, the new found beverage, wine of maguey, has taken unto itself a voice of strength in fermentation and in its forced departure must therefore be provided with another appellation and to you alone remains the choice of names which the fiery draught shall bear.”

“Most gracious king, since you kindly honor me with the bestowal, I would it were called octli, in commemoration of its parentage.”

“How rightly named—even you, wise Hueman, could scarcely find a more deserving title, and each guest shall offer us his criticism in its behalf; I believe that it yields life-giving properties within its sparkling depths.”

We drank the charming octli in mugs of solid gold and each guest proclaimed its merit in laudatory tones and I, too, must confess that it lost naught in fermentation.

After the banquet was over the king’s household retired to their chambers to indulge in rest and slumber for a brief period and while they are thus engaged I may perchance have speech with Topiltzin.

Here in a sequestered corner of the palace grounds twelve dusky warriors with gaily tinted coronets of waving plumes are enjoying their favorite game; with an orange shaped ball of solid rubber which they fling through the center of a chiseled disc of hammered gold blazing with gems which is secured several feet above the earth and gleams mischievously in the midday sun;

they dance, they glide, they whirl, they jostle each other in ecstasy like romping children while preventing the catastrophe of the capricious ball falling to earth. They dare not use a hand to aid it, but must send it back with their knees.

“May the Supreme Deity forefend us, Topiltzin, what causes that angry frown to pleat your brow?”

“Mine indignant lips almost refuse to do my bidding. Come, let us stride the length and breadth of these grounds until I summon strength to tell you all, Hueman; to tell what fearful orders that brutal king has just made known to me.”

“Patience, Topiltzin, the treacherous carnal beast is in my power—and yet were I to smite him with my will into helplessness it would not be just—I would not wield the magic of my art upon any living thing save in defense—speak on my kin, it will aid you to curb your growing wrath to share its weight with me.”

“He did forsooth gladden my heart with an armor-plate of gold, and bade me to his feast, seating me beside my loved one. Oh, how I wished that meal would never end, but when he arose he beckoned me to him, and in commanding and vehement tones bade me summon my victorious braves together and choose therefrom *one thousand* for the sacrifice! Stunned and bewildered, I stood before that beetle-browed inhuman wretch, waging war with that element in my bosom that urged me to clutch his villianous throat and throttle him there and then. Thus you see, Hueman, he placed my would-be confidence beyond the pale of reason. I would not speak my loved one’s name in the presence of that vile and loathsome creature.”

“That brutal order must not, *shall* not be carried into effect; but, too well I see through all of this thinly veiled

strategy, and know his subterfuge. He has made the important discovery which I had been so dumb in learning, and now he would cripple your forces that you may be overpowered by our enemies. Never! Go, call your braves together, even as the unfeeling beast has commanded, and wait until I entreat him to recall those murderous words."

"And if you fail, Hueman, what then?"

"Then I will hasten to the temple walls, mount them and sound the mighty war-gong—the screaming Teohuehuetl! And how gladly will he call upon your staunch brave warriors then, while trembling in the fear of approaching enemies, and when he orders the gates of Toltantzingo to be opened for your army to pass through, hasten to the relief of our besieged missionaries in the far north who have repeatedly besought aid from this wily king. Each runner sent by them he has enlisted into the imperial guards, thus proving clearly that he has not the remotest intention of lending them any assistance whatever. I have remonstrated with him all to no purpose, and it rests with you alone to succor them."

"And what of my loved one, Hueman! I cannot leave her here!"

"Fear not for her, my Topiltzin. I will guard her with my art, and with my life if need be. And when you are far enough from any blabbing tongue reveal that fearful mandate ordered by the king. It is your sacred duty to relieve our imprisoned missionaries who are besieged by savages who will not accept civilization, and who are determined to destroy the noble band. The latest messenger from there besought with tears and prayers for their relief, and assured the king that they could not possibly hold out but for a few moons more."

“And you? Oh, my noble Hueman, what if he seeks to learn by whose authority the war-gong sounds?”

“Trust me for that. In all those bygone centuries it never has been rung amiss, his fear will cancel every forethought, and I will linger in the belfry tower until the city is hushed in slumber that I may retrace my steps unseen. There is no chance for me to be missed in the great excitement which will surely follow.”

“And if he dares harm you, Hueman, I swear by all my hope of heaven that he himself shall feel the sting of death upon the martyr stone!”

“He sees your power increasing day by day, and fears the grave result, as well he may, for tyranny has made a coward of his soul.”

“I will obey your wish, Hueman, and save our noble friends, and my brave men, and may the Supreme Deity guard and protect you and my loved one, and now adieu.”

The aged priest pressed him again and again to his bosom with farewell blessings, and then hastened to the palace where the ball was in progress, and the guests were all crowned and adorned with roses which lent an added charm to the gay and festive scene. They were dancing the favorite areyto, which is danced in circles, and each brave carried some instrument of music upon which he played keeping perfect time with eager feet.

Bright-faced mischievous boys dressed in gaily tinted fabrics and vivid plumes representing birds and butterflies, mounted the flower trees, while men who were dressed as gods laughingly attempted to capture them before they were beyond their grasp. They scaled the miniature temple wall and approached on stilts the rose bower of the fairy queen, who welcomed them within her lofty home and treated them to refreshments which consisted of tobacco mixed with dried rose leaves prepared in husks

of maize. They relished the diversion of vying with each other in sending spiral columns of bluish grey smoke toward the temple dome.

At last the dancers paused their circling feet, and the prophet hastened forward to broach the fearful subject nearest his heart in the very face of all the revelry.

"Ruler of Tollantzingo, will you kindly grant me an interview? It is of the utmost importance, and cannot be postponed a moment more."

"With pleasure, wise Hueman, unless you strive to dampen mine ardor with dreary forebodings yet again."

"The boon I crave is in your own behalf, and for our country's weal. I implore you retract the fearful order you have given to send one thousand of your bravest men to die upon the martyr stone! Can you not realize the extreme folly of such a course? Their welcome shouts of victory have scarcely ceased to reverberate in the vale of Tollantzingo. Your country needs their protecting arms now. Do not forget that you have had the first of three distinct warnings from the Supreme Deity of whose anger I warn you to beware!"

"The god of war, Huitzilopochtli, demands the sacrifice which will offset the *curse* of that hybrid warning which has disturbed me mightily, and I dare not refuse to obey the command revealed to me by the great high priest from the god."

"Who hatched this craven scheme but you? Tell me that graven chunk of gold knows aught of war? Cares aught for peace? Or knows of heaven-sent warnings? As well protest these whitened walls have tongues and ears!"

"Hueman, I am too sorely tried with all your gloom and wasted eloquence. It is better for your peace of mind and mine that you seek your favorite nook and

skirmish with your prowling energies among the stars. Bear this in mind—when once mine orders have gone forth, I King Tecpantcaltzin, *ruler of all of the Tollan kingdom never will retract them for any meddlesome whim.*”

“In very truth I might have known it would be thus had I but stopped to reason with my plea. It is only wise progressive men who change their worthy minds.”

“Hueman, by my faith, I will grant you this request, if by the power of your art you will disclose to me the whereabouts of the wonderful and valuable Toltec treasures?”

“*I am my honored father’s son!*” He dared not raise his guilty eyes to mine, and it were well for him that my waning powers held me in check. On with your dancing whirling feet; keep time to your own stirring melodies, until your tawny cheeks shall blanch in fear and your merry tones tremble at the shrieks of the screaming Teohuehuetl!

Clearly outlined against the darkening rays of dying day stands my brave Topiltzin, his straight, colossal form towering majestically at the head of his valiant army, and above him waves the brilliant ensign, while grouped in fantastic war-garb are his willing braves, their voices hushed in whispers lest one little word be lost that falls from his stern lips. They little dream what ruthless orders called them forth to die a martyrs death! There is but just one way to save them and save our kingdom from civil strife, and if through age I fail, oh, thou Supreme Deity, lend them aid to save themselves.

The niches in these frowning walls were made for nimbler, steadier hands and feet than mine, and I dare not trust my fading eyes to look downward. Upward, onward, one life stands in the balance now to save one thousand

braves! My breath grows faint, I scarce can find where next to move my hands. Oh, nerve me with some latent force for *just one moment more*. My feet are giving way! My hands grasp space. Oh, heaven be praised, I stand beneath the mighty war-alarm! Here are the resounding hammers to ring the clarion peal. Oh, murderous clang! It shrieks like million demons in mine ears, my burning brain I fear will melt and shrivel at its roar.

“Ha, wanton king, methinks e'er this your frivolous mind conceives the value of *one thousand braves!*”

CHAPTER VI.

WHAT wondrous sight is this? The broad bright glare of morning greets mine eyes resplendent in a thousand vivid gleams. Above and around me I see naught but endless space—am I then transported to the realms of spiritland? Ah, no; my aching form forbids the thought. I still am pinned to earth, and this my pallet hard the whole night through has been the tower floor.

My cramped and wearied limbs almost refuse to do my bidding. How deep has been my slumber, no sound of human voice nor sougning winds awoke my grateful calm the whole night through. Perchance my angel loved one hovered near to guard me while I slept, her starry eyes are ever gazing into mine.

I wonder where is he, my troubled Topiltzin? But I must learn if this, my *ruse*, has proved successful.

I must return the very dangerous way I came, praying that no evil eyes will mark my trembling form. Into Thy gracious care I now consign this poor old tottering frame of mine to fall to earth mangled and dead! If all my earthly task is done, or spare me if Thou wilt to labor yet a little more for Thy grand cause.

It is at last accomplished. My willing hands are devoutly raised in the embrace of prayer. Oh, it is sweet to be thus assured that the guardian of the heavens has further need of me on earth. But what is this I hear? Some great commotion has seized the excited populace.

They wail in dire distress and fear! "Ho, Papantzin, what causes all of this great commotion?"

"My child, Hueman, my precious one is gone! Some say she fled at sound of the Teohuehuetl's deafening roar, and others that a dark-browed chieftain who led the invading hosts scaled the parapet and bore her away in his brawny arms. Ezcolotl declares she saw her mount a tiger of the purest white and raise her two arms aloft as if in prayer, while the lithsome, viscious beast growled frantically and reared his glossy head treading the fields or air until lost to view in the ethereal mist of heaven."

"How utterly impossible, Papantzin; what said the king?"

"Did place his royal hands upon her mother's brow and swear that she should be returned to us."

"When saw you last your child, Papantzin?"

"I joined the dancers while she sat by her mother near the king. I saw you enter to have speech with him, and all was joy and happiness until the screeching war-alarm rang through those pillared halls. Men paled and clutched their weapons. Children screamed and rushed frantically to their sheltering mother's arms, women fainted and lay unconscious upon the floor while the king's army surged upon the scene with ready weapons, and the conquering army of Topiltzin rushed through the gates of Tollantzingo. So quickly and fearfully under the terrible menace did these things occur that I did not miss my child for hours perchance. Her mother has gone mad with fear, for when I sought her and my child she neither saw nor heard me. Her eyes are widened in a wordless horror, and even yet no sign has passed her lips. She lives and breathes, but in that awful state which is neither life nor death. Where have you been, Hueman? I sought

you everywhere. At midnight hour I climbed the darkened tower wherein you hold communion with the stars."

"Some mighty spell enthralled me, Papantzin. I know not of a solitary sound since the wild alarm had ceased its dreadful roar until the dawn of day."

"Saw you the king this morn?"

"No, I have just aroused from that strange lethargy. Have you had speech with him?"

"I did at break of day. He staid all night in Palpan tower, from which lofty heights he declared his eyes could sweep for leagues around. Now he has sought his couch to rest I am told."

"On Palpan heights! Well, that is strange indeed that he should venture there to mount that pinnacle in time of war! Methinks there loiters around his throne many with keener eyes than his to pierce the gloom, and many with surer feet than his to climb that cliff."

"Quite true, Hueman, but he was scourged with fear. A runner came into court who declared a million Tezcocans were hurrying down the mountain side to attack us from the north while from the south a horde of Chichimecas crouched beside each sheltering bush and thorn awaiting the onslaught of the Tezcocans in order to make the surprise and consternation more complete."

"I shall return to my cavern home, Papantzin to study these strange things over in solitude. Some plan of speedy action must be found to solve this deep laid mystery and if your child has fled from earth I will tell you when we meet again—if not, I know a certain way to make the dumb ones talk and the deaf ones hear."

"But what of my wife, Hueman? I fear that she never will regain her mind; she stares so idiotically into my eyes, while into hers I fail to see one latent gleam of consciousness."

"And was she thus when first you missed your child?"

"She was, Hueman. No power of speech could move that senseless spell which enveloped her; listless by her side hang both her hands just as I dropped them in my grief long hours ago; the king bade me remain beside her while my command joined with the imperial guards, who are searching the city now from end to end."

"When I return I will mark her symptoms well and lead her wandering thoughts to answer to my call."

"May all the gods of heaven and earth aid you now, Hueman, and oh, I trust that not many hours may elapse before you will return."

"Be patient Papantzin, for just a short time longer."

As he departed the prophet shook his head sadly and murmured, "Oh woe is me, if in the wake of this, my false alarm, such misery must follow—how well they people every shrub and tree, each rock and hedge, with imaginary foes, when the demoniac cries of the war alarm penetrate the very graves of those who perished at its call. Perchance by fate it were not rang amiss, there may have been some marauding hosts advancing near. I fear, and almost hope that Topiltzin in a moment of reckless daring obeyed the urging voice of love that bade him seize the maid and flee! In all of the rush and terror of that crowd it may have been an easy task, one magic word from him would still her fears through all of the coming years with him; but he were rash indeed to take her thus when such a perilous task is his to rescue our besieged people in the far north, who have sacrificed everything in their endeavor to civilize those brutal people to whom knowledge serves only as a fire-brand! But I am mightily puzzled over this new departure of the king—it is very strange indeed, that he should climb the Palpan heights in time of war, too, when the shadowy

veil of night curtained and dimmed our fair Tollan; *can he have done so, has he dared?* No, no, away such thoughts, I will not harbor them—and yet, and yet the dreadful conviction grows upon me, it maddens me with fury which stifles me. *Away—away thou imp of evil thought—the truth of all his evil motives he cannot hide from me; ah, there his messenger is coming now, and I am really curious to know what ugly dream has racked his scheming brain, for by my faith, in all these years he has never had a pleasant one, and when my waning powers refuse to act, who then will tell his wierd, uncanny dreams? In that alone by him I shall be missed, only for this heaven-sent gift of mine how gladly would he close those palace gates against me and rid himself forever of my poor lashing tongue. My well-tried strength has almost deserted me—I must have been faint and weakened nearly unto death upon yonder temple roof, for both my feet seem tethered and my hands do tremble like some culprits; oh, would that I had wings wherewith to fly—this oft-trod path has never seemed so long to measure as this morn!*”

“Welcome, thrice welcome, wise Hueman, your king is in sore need of your prophetic power. Some hours since, as in my garden-plat I wandered forth, a flitting humming-bird with brilliant hues spread forth its tiny lustrous wings, and lo a monstrous spur was then revealed—nor would this strange misshapen creature leave my path—what does it signify, Hueman?”

“It is the second warning! Unto you, there still remains *one other* and when that dreaded one appears, the earth and sky will strive with furies in their power to sweep the Toltec race from out this land.”

“Oh Hueman, Hueman! I swear by all the gods of Tollantzingo, reveal to me for once and if need be the

only time, something beside this overwhelming misfortune and endless misery."

"Then train your eyes to see no *mongrel* creature, your ears *forbid* to hear one hateful sound, *torture* the god of sleep until he brings you all of the fairy dreams for which you crave."

"That were impossible with me, but you, forsooth, might call your art to bear upon these trying things that mock me and make them do your bidding. Now tell me, wise Hueman, by virtue of your marked ability, where has the sweet young princess, fair Xochitl gone?"

"Do you not know?"

"I! That were a cunning way indeed to evade my question. Now Prophet, I *command* you, by the power of my rank, to answer me."

"I cannot say but sir, my *art* will tell me soon. What evil power lamed the tongue and halted the understanding of her mother?"

"How should I know? I leave that to your wondrous skill to learn, there may be things upon this earth which will puzzle even you to unravel?"

"No doubt of that, I am learning every day and glad to learn from every living thing; but remember! there remains just one more sign, when you will tremble at what you sneer today."

"The gods forbid it! My offering to their ire shall be increased tenfold! My deep and fervent devotion shall grow each coming day and that I, too, shall feel a flagellation I have inflicted upon myself the punishment of climbing Palpan heights each rise of morn, or in its gloomy solitude perchance remain the long watches of the night to fast and pray, thus may I hope to assuage the angry powers."

"But do not conjure in your brain commands from that

cold chunk of molded gold wherewith to turn the warrior from his path, the laborer from his fields and parents from their pleading wives and children, to offer up their precious lives in mockery! Turn your eyes which way you will, you behold a mighty power far exceeding yours; crush but one little bud beneath your heel and you cannot command its faultless symmetry to form again; put out the lamp of life from any living thing and you have no art, no science, to make its wonderful mechanism breathe again. You go and drench that senseless thing you call your god in wells of human gore, and what avail the sacrifice! Oh, tear from your eyes that dark, obscuring veil of barbarous ways that blinds them, and has let years go by with shameful stains. Think you the ruler of the universe, who holds the reins of power on high, has riveted the stars in place and draped the clouds about them; sent the glad rays of welcome sunlight from our heaven-creating day wherein to toil; called us down behind the bannered horizon to close the active hours and hush our weary brains with the calm influences of night, think you that He will allow you to go unpunished for the despoliation of humanity? And when you at close of day or rise of morn scale the serried rocks of Palpan heights, feast your eyes upon the majestic array of sublime works which no mortal hands have builded nor mortal brains conceived, then *beware* of Him, who can raze these towering mountains to the vale or *tear the very firmament in twain!*"

"Hueman, your words do deeply move some hidden element within my being which struggles to awaken loftier aims and nobler plans when you are near. Oh, what might I not accomplish had I your spirit that can hold communion with the mysterious realms of starland. My

subjects fear and revere you for that power while I, their ruler, hold not one force to prove myself their king."

"Tecpantcaltzin, now is the accepted time for you to seek out and cultivate the bruised remnant of conscience which was your birthright, and do in every sense as you would they do. Refrain from evil thoughts henceforth, and you will thus erect an impregnable bulwark of defense about you which needs no vice to proclaim its power, nor acts of violence to prove you king."

As the prophet uttered these words he silently withdrew leaving the puzzled king more mystified than ever, and as he was crossing the palace grounds he was accosted by Papantzin thus:

"Hueman, you are indeed forgetting me and mine. This agony of soul is eating up my life! A few more hours like these will force me, too, to sink beneath the load which my shoulders cannot bear. Come, lay your healing hands upon my wife!"

"Then lead me to the place wherein she lies."

"See how still she is, Hueman; no sign of life but gentle respiration; it is evident no fever surges in her veins. What can those staring, senseless eyes behold? They might as well be chiseled orifices of stone, for aught they tell!"

"Your wife is drugged, and nearly unto death! Now mark you well my words—reveal to no one my knowledge of this premeditated crime! I know a charm which will cope with powers like these and conquer them. There was a network of intrigue spread within the palace walls, but the film which covered all this mystery is clear as day to me now. Alas, alas! the wild pernicious drug they dosed her with you know well, it thrives in every broad savanna, dots the dimpled dales and flaunts its trumpet-shaped blossoms in the common hedge-row."

"Oh, not Toloache! Great and merciful Supreme Deity, forbid!"

"It is, I grieve to tell you that I know its blighting power too well to be mistaken. No surer, swifter means but death could seal her tongue."

"Hueman, Hueman! Do drain your potent skill to make her speak; who knows what dreadful danger lurks about our child, and she must know who seized her for they were always inseparable."

"Have you no thought upon whom may rest this double crime?"

"Think, did you say? No, friend, I cannot think of aught but save my wife and child! I implore you to hasten on the spell which will banish all of this dreadful lethargy that I fear may soon end in death! Can I not move you with my stammering speech? You loved our child, Hueman; you led her to the king."

"Too true, alas! *I led her to the king.* I blindly ignored her gentle plea because I fancied then my sense of penetration by far exceeded hers whose soul was allied to some guardian force which protested vainly against the unwanted honor. I will return in good time and bring the antidote; but hearken, Papantzin, if but one little word escape your lips concerning this, no power on earth can save your lives! She has no enemy who would for malice sake strive to destroy the power of her mind, therefore *be on your guard*, and watch her closely until I can return."

As he emerged from the dwelling of Papantzin, a shrinking, skulking form hurried on before him cringing among the shadows in his eagerness to escape unseen; his sandled feet seemed scarce to tread the beaten path in his still flight. The thought that became almost a certainty alarmed the prophet exceedingly that the intruder was a

spy. One sent from the palace, and why? What motive sent him there. Oh, would I could believe that Topiltzin did seize the fair young princess to his breast while fleeing on like furies ride the storm; but if that were true they had not drugged the mother.

Some guardian spirit urges me with speed I cannot make, for all my strength seems weighted down with fears. How beautiful our city gleams from this tall cliff; it lies embedded in this festooned vale like some mammoth jewel with its glistening domes and spiral terraces where blooms the blushing rose and gleams the frescoed walls. The peaceful lake reflects the serried banks of cloud, and far beyond it those belching lava monsters rear their lofty heads and rift the air with clouds of smoke at times rending the grateful calm with threatening roar. They are the outlet to some hidden fires burned deep like mine, but when they do burst forth they sweep all obstacles before their molten lava wall.

Those bright-winged, crested birds that rear and swerve and sing, do mock me in their joyous revelry, and cheer me with their song. These tiny, toiling insects at my feet, perchance have woes to bear and flights to climb that weary their little hearts and blister their hurrying feet, and yet they unite their feeble forces to aid and accomplish results which are truly wonderful.

I must tear my longing gaze from this glorious vale and seek the precious herb that can restore that dormant mind to its wonted energy. How very frail grows this precious herb, and so sensitive that it shrivels in my grasp, but within its verdant folds lies that secret power that can bid the very grip of death release to hold. Now to the rescue! But why does Papantzin advance to meet me thus?

“She is dead, Hueman! No power of thine can save her

now. Ye gods, if I could only weep and melt my burning heart and brain. I scarce can see or hear, or feel, aught but this crushing burden which has rent my very *soul in twain!*"

"And have you left her side since I had speech with you?"

"Yes, Hueman; the king had need of me for a brief period only, and when I returned and laid my hands upon her brow it startled every fibre of my being with the chill and damp of death that glued my hands upon that pallid face. I listened for the fluttering breath that had held the brittle thread of life together, but it was still. *She is dead!* I have no wife, no child, no light, no love; nothing confronts me but eternal, blackest night. Oh, pity me, Hueman, give me, too, some welcome draught that will numb my senses that I, too, may lay down and sleep that peaceful slumber whose awakening is in the life beyond."

"Come, Papantzin, come with me to her couch; she may have only fainted for a spell."

"Think you I do not know what death can do? Her staring eyes are fixed on scenes beyond this mortal sphere; her dear face is pallid with that purplish hue that stabs me to behold. Come my friend and see my misery complete."

"Alas! Your words are true, and it were useless now to talk of saving her, but, see, here upon her cheek and throat and breast are dark and curious stains!"

"I gave her naught, she could not sip one drop of water when I tried repeatedly to arouse her with a cool, refreshing draught long hours ago."

"Come home with me, my friend; these waiting women have been sent to make her ready for her dreamless sleep; come, take my arm, it is stronger even now than yours, and my feet are surer too, although cramped

with age. *But sorrow makes one old, how well I know—* and in just a little time we both shall cross the line between life and death, and what a joy to know that our loved ones are awaiting us in the elysian fields and watching our coming home.”

“Speak on, Hueman, your voice has wondrous soothing for my soul; from its depths there seems to blend a note of woe with mine that brings relief to me.”

“You know full well that I too have suffered, Papantzin, grown old before my time through grief alone—but let us strive to hide our woes. Look yonder on that bank of scurrying clouds; see those gilded tints are burnishing the blue, and see—they take the form of men. They move like martialled hosts upon the field of some great battle. Between us and those lofty heights a flight of birds have poised their fluttering wings and all of the brightest rays of blazing Sol seem focused upon them.”

“Mine eyes can only see the temple dome where hangs the dreaded Teohuehuetl, that rang the knell of doom to all of my happiness. Its deafening shriek and roar has never left mine ears. I want to die, Hueman!”

“Banish that morbid thought until the Supreme Deity wills you to cease your earthly pilgrimage. You are a soldier, Papantzin, and have been victorious until now. Be worthy of those emblems which you wear, my troubled friend, and show your implicit trust in Him who guideth all things well. Here, lay you down and sleep, the sighing of these pitying winds among the branches swaying about my rock-bound dwelling shall murmur of the glorious pathway, walled deep with rare sweet flowers, leading to our far-off sun-land home. Forget all else save the rippling of the waves, the charm of wildwood songsters, the holy hush of peace supreme. Sleep, sleep, sleep!”

Poor stricken soul, my art shall give you gentle slumber

until your heart is soothed and relaxed from the terrible strain which crushed your lofty spirit for a spell. * * *

"And have I slept, Hueman? What empty hours have been crowded into my life, devoid of purpose, when there is so much undone. The daylight gone! I, too, must go, Hueman."

"Not until you refresh yourself with my frugal fare, Papantzin."

"Accept my grateful thanks, good friend, for your proffered hospitality, but really there is a hindrance in my throat, a something that prevents desire for food. My rest upon your couch has proved a source of great relief to me, but until I hear some word from my poor child I cannot eat."

"Then, go and do my bidding quietly, nor listen to nor heed any blabbing tongue. Conceal yourself in some sequestered nook about the palace grounds and wait until the king starts forth for Palpan heights, then follow him, and learn what mock devotion calls him there."

"Hueman, ye gods! I cannot, dare not speak what flashes through my brain at this command. What has your art revealed? Is she, oh, is she there? Fury is making of me a demon! Come what may if this be true!"

"Now, have a care. Look straight into mine eyes. I gave you not one proof of such a thought other than curiosity—now go and do my bidding quietly and then report what you have learned before you do aught else."

"I shall obey you, good Hueman; I shall obey you."

"How sweet and welcome is this silence to me now that he has gone. I will strive to keep my thoughts away from things I dread. Ah, mark the angry heavens how they frown on Tollantzingo; fair luna has no power to pierce the murky veil; anon the growling thunder waves the air and rocks the very earth with threatening

tones, forked lightning rends the very dome of heaven with vicious, darting tongues of flame and plunges deep into the yielding earth as if seeking in its depths some hidden foe.

Stately trees reach forth their leaf-torn arms in mute appeal, swaying in shivering dread of each relentless blast that bends and rends their creaking boughs, hurling them in demoniac glee to beaten earth. Ha, note that fearful hush—gods of the storm in prayer—and now they bellow forth a wild amen! They break the flood-gates of the driving storm and lash their furies on, screaming their voices hoarse in loud reverberation; rain falls in torrents, methinks the very sea lent her aid to deluge this fair vale.

Citadels and dwellings of sun-baked clay are doomed, they will melt and yield before this drenching avalanche. Those shaded walks are rivers now, and on their rushing waves ride branches torn from many a forest tree. Naught can withstand this flood but walls of stone.

This is a glorious night for me. I love the fearful blending of grand nature's forces that proves what they can do; my rock-walled nook affords me grim security where I can mark the lurid flames shoot back the curtain of the gale, revealing in brief magnificence the sweeping waste of waters. Atechpanomochochoch lashes her swelling breast repellantly, smiting the receding shores with fearful energy, while huge waves grumble as they rear their towering, frosted heads and pelt them on the beach.

High up on yonder mountain side and safe, stands Palpan heights, grim wall of stone, sheltered in security from all of this warring of the winds. Ah, methinks, this does mark the fulfillment of the first prophesy—it is the signal of destruction!

And now the storm has lulled her voice to sobbing

tones; the winds abate and whisper of the havoc they have wrought, and caper about the ruins in mirthful ecstasy, gently lifting glistening leaves from shattered boughs in mock comparison. Boreas sleeps and even I, so humbled by his mighty power, am soothed and courted by his magic spell, and will seek my couch to slumber until the breaking of another dawn.

Ah, how the morning light reveals the dreadful havoc of the first fulfillment of the warning! And has that alien monarch yet within his sordid soul words wherewith he dare attempt to scourge me, and will he sneer at what his horoscope revealed to me? Into a deep yawning chasm of iniquity his gloating eyes are staring, but he is too shallow minded to comprehend it, he is like one who is charmed by the wiles of a venomous serpent, nor realizes the danger of its deadly fangs. And all of his fancied strength in fortified halls and muscled braves will melt before his cringing gaze like rising fog in sunlight's searching lustre.

This morning I shall seek him in his gilded halls, will go unbidden, for I must learn if aught is known of sweet Xochitl. I know it will be difficult to pick my way, for there is no place to tread except in guttered halls.

"Hueman, now you have come to acknowledge that I did my people grievous wrong in listening to your plea so oft repeated, and offered up no sacrifice. This day Tlaloc shall have one thousand souls meted out to him with which to appease his avenging wrath and stay the storm which again threatens us."

"And if the invading hosts unite, as has of late been rumored, and Tollantzingo then be walled by seas of human foes, just send your angry rain god Tlaloc to beat them down, to conquer and transfix them with his fireless

eyes, his pulseless arms and senseless stare, and prove his valid worth and boasted might."

"Hueman, those sneering tones become not one so wise, I fain would know what malice and defiance lurks behind your flimsy veil of satire?"

"If flimsy, penetrate it then and benefit your darkened soul with gleams of light."

"Were it not for your grey hairs, Hueman, I'd punish you for all this scorn. But you, like mad Tlaloc, need offerings to appease your ire, and your alert senses shall at once be fed. Last night I stayed at Palpan heights the long hours through, watching the fury of the dreadful storm in fear and prayer."

"Ah, wily king, how well you know what fuel to enflame me with. Think you the shining stars of heaven cannot penetrate those rocky walls that hide your shameful secret from all human eyes? You start in terror and dismay. I touched some chord that shivered your shrinking soul."

"Hueman, you are indeed sagacious in your speech, but arrows flinted with your scorn fall wide the mark to-day; had I obeyed the warning voices of my soul and of my nobles, who bade me offer up a vote of thanks to god Tlaloc, and plead for gentle showers of which Tollan had need, the ruin wrought by this great hurricane would thus have been averted. I was convinced of this until I listened to your foolish counsel, and now behold the misery which darkens every league of my domain."

"Tecpantcaltzin, you are indeed a prey to every passing whim which sways your purposeless ambition, but cannot make of you other than the savage beast you are, thirsting for human gore! Mercy is a stranger unto you who, like a mountain lion when well-fed, lies low watching the gambol of a graceful fawn unconscious of danger un-

til within its reach, when those monstrous paws are raised to mar its beauty and destroy its life!"

"Hueman, speak on, your parables are certainly amusing, but do you know that all of the years which I have reigned were prosperous ones until this baneful spell or smiting arm of fate was poised relentlessly aloft my fair Tollan; these scenes of desolation laugh to scorn my prayerful, pleading voice. Now, my counselors shall be obeyed—revolting though the orders be to me—I have issued them to avoid a mutiny; which dreaded alternate would surely have followed had I not given the forced command, and that would make me less a king."

"You are indeed fool ridden, and by your meek docility and foregone submission they drive or lead you where they will. The Supreme Deity, whom I obey makes me fear to abuse a living thing. You know full well what royal blood flows in my veins dating from the earliest Toltec reign; know, too, that in all of those buried centuries that sacrificial stone was never stained with human blood until now. Our downfall dates from the commencement of your misguided rule. Say, prodigal, what stores have you laid by for times like these? With all of your boasted prosperity, show me just *one* of all our public granaries filled? When famine strikes its deadly fangs upon us, of what avail will be a pyramid of dazzling gems or gold and silver hemmed in by these old walls and they surrounded by united hosts of envious foes? You have been reaping all of these years of which you boast, the harvest sown by my proud ancestors, but scorned to profit by their superior wisdom and prepare for future needs. Prodigals dared not then defile the sanctuaries with debauchery as now, and brutalize our followers' souls with deeds that cannot go unpunished. To appease some latent sense of fear and shame that perchance

rifted their elastic souls for some brief spell, these prodigals seek your willing presence, bowed down with revelations, and demand for some inanimate form molded of gold a sacrifice of human lives, and you, too, steeped in evil deeds, most willingly obey. Pray to your gods, drench them in human gore with all of your barbaric revelry and I will pray to mine, and soon you shall know what fearful curse time has in store for you—then wandering tribes with instincts half untamed will revel in these princely halls, delighting to despoil these works of art which prove what Toltec genius has wrought; these gleaming plates of gold, glittering with gems of priceless worth, will reveal no merit to their barbarous eyes unless perchance to serve as shields to protect their brawny breasts from pelting slings and poisoned arrows.

Undo the monstrous sin which your reckless words have complied with—and save those martyrs doomed by you, for fear of heaven's ire—and save yourself from being shaped and molded by the subtle suggestion of those whose instrument you so willingly seem to be.

Heaven has a charge against you, king shameful, beyond my power to tell—you cannot hide your guilt from me to whom you are an open book with pages smirched and rumped."

"Sir, I fail to catch the purport of your words which are shrouded in deep mystery to me; I have no fear that nations will unite to charge on Tollantzingo, but I do fear the power that Tlaloc can wield and I shall heed his warning. As to your acrimonious prophesies and boasted powers—go with them to the stars and thus relieve your over abundant satire."

"So be it, king only in name; the powers that rule this throne are sceptered not, but with their cunning wiles and mock humility have forever cursed our once proud

nation through your weak and willing vascillation. I go, and when I do return another epoch will have marked the stride of all of my prophesies."

The king sank back relieved at the exit of the fearless priest and prophet who murmured inaudibly, "I go to Papantzin, poor weary soul, and I trust that no harm befell him since we met; how still and dark seems his abode. I shall move cautiously lest I awaken him if he be sleeping, for there is no surer balm for wounded hearts than blessed sleep—and yet methinks I hear a smothered groan and faltering, stumbling footsteps—Ho, Papantzin it is I, your friend, Hueman, come, let me in. And yet he heeds me not. The gods be praised, I can undo the fastenings of the door. What, not asleep? ah well, I am glad that I came for I see now that you are ill. Speak Papantzin, unloose your tongue, this silence grieves me mightily. May heaven forefend! You cannot speak, can only whimper like some new born babe, what evil curse has befallen you? Ah now I see your eyes more clearly, this darkness which has kept so sullenly within, puzzles me completely.

Why do you grope the air with clutching fingers? Ah, your feet too are useless and refused to obey my call because your feeble mind has lost its instinct to guide them. Yes you are tethered by unseen things, your brain is paralysed and your soul is wrapped in lethargy; oh, Papantzin, your features do not relax to show one sign to prove that my voice can penetrate the fearful depths of your unconsciousness."

Ye gods! this is a fearful fate for warrior brave like him! How well with pride, for honors sake, like heroes love to die, would he have given up his life; his hands have never wrought this dreadful change, nor grief—but oh, this added crime reveals to me the degraded machina-

tions of Tecpantcaltzin, whose doomed soul when free must be born again and again and inhabit the lower animal kingdom, lower and still lower, until he becomes that from which his ancestors surely sprang, a serpent! And what a punishment for any spirit that has crossed this vale of tears and tasted joys beyond to be banished hither for evil deeds and forced upon a pilgrimage again to bear the curse of human ills, perchance warped into some frame which the soul can never fit; and those who are fit for heaven shall be free from every evil thought like winsome babes who die in infancy their mission having been to crown the final act for some sweet spirit grown fair enough and pure enough to be welcomed into heaven by Him who rules the universe.

“Oh, selfishness, that cruel blade that severs earth from heaven, has been poised and with a deadly stroke has fallen upon you and yours, dear Papantzin, but he who wields that malignant power now, will yet be forced to crawl upon this earth shunned, despised, hated and feared by man as only venomous reptiles are, nor will the gentle forbearance and leniency of kind heaven forbid the just decree.”

CHAPTER VII.

“ANOTHER storm approaches and the moat has overflowed and sweeps around the threatened walls like some mad river, and there at the base of my cavern home a messenger is waiting. I can scarcely hear his voice above the echo of the storm; ah yes, he is saying—“Oh wise and good priest Hueman, the king is in sore need of you just now, his palace and each temple and all of our dwellings are wall deep in mud and mire and on each foot of earth above the pools a million reptiles leap and toss in revelry. On every roof they squirm about with naught but speedy death before them and will make our city foul with fetid odors; do come and bring your wondrous power to bear against this great affliction; the king requests this special favor.”

“Say to your king, for me, that I have measured every pace between here and there thousands of times and know that it is no further distance here from there; I can well exist without his company but if he does crave mine, say then for me that it is no greater feat to scale this cliff than mounting Palpan heights!”

“Oh it were more than my poor head be worth to carry such a message to the king; may I not clothe your answer in some smoother words, say you are ill and cannot brave the storm?”

“Say what you will, it matters naught to me. Are you not one who was of Papantzin’s command?”

“Yes, alas, bur noble chieftain Papantzin! I was of his command and do you know the dreadful fact that he has perished in the ruins of his desolate home?”

“I know *all* about him, who is your leader now?”

“The remnant of our band has joined the imperial guards—of course you know that one thousand of them were sent to feed the sacrifice”——

“Prodigious fool! One thousand of his bravest men, one thousand of his wisest men *and every soul a Toltec!* Ye gods, ye gods! how *dare* he summon me to appear before him after such a crime! What of your leader now? Can he compare with the lamented Papantzin?”

“Oh Prophet, never. For Papantzin we wandered through the wild lagoon where feet of man had never trod, and in the face of danger braved the foeman’s skill until we wrenched their weapons from their brawny hands and when too sorely pressed, we leaped between the battle ax and his loved form to die for him! But I must go Hueman or the king will reprove my tardy haste, and must I go alone?”

“Yes, and bear my message to him clothed in whatever manner you choose, but the purport must be the same.”

Let him now call upon the power of his counselors who are ever ready to revel with him and mock the solemn truths which emanate from laws beyond their comprehension whereby all miracles of heaven and earth are wrought.

Mysterious force that holds the heavens in space inspiring the faithful few who are marshaled in His grace—and the glorious power from which I draw thoughts deep, earnest and reverential, protect my time-bowed frame and make me feel secure against the evil threats of dastard Tecpantcaltzin, although they do irritate me *in*

their caustic words and tones flashed forth with sneering gestures poisoning the very air he breathes, humiliating him far more than me."

Again a messenger appears—"Halt where you are and tell me if aught has been heard at court of General Topiltzin?"

"This very morn a runner came who did announce that General Topiltzin was making war at Nextalpan far north of our domain and would return with many prisoners. Good priest Hueman, the king was sorely grieved and disappointed when I came alone and he commanded me to tell you that he is very much alarmed and fears your warnings which he scorned to heed until now, and swears by all of the gods of heaven and earth and sea to bring this day into the realm a queen more beautiful than Quetzalcoatl ever shone upon. In this he would consult you, wise Hueman."

"A queen! There is but one—just one fair maid in all Tollan that he dare wed and keep the throne."

"Hueman, I can no longer wait, my heart stands still! my brain is on fire! I go to feast my aching eyes upon my precious child—nay do not seek to hold me—what is my life, or earth, without my child."

"Stay Papantzin, refuse to do my bidding and I will be no more your friend."

"Oh say not thus I implore you, Hueman, without you I am lost! My reason will again flee—unfold some plan to me and I promise to obey you faithfully but oh, my heart and brain are inflamed to bursting"—

"Oh my chieftain! Dear Papantzin! Oh, is this but an apparition?"

"No, no, Pochotl, I was saved by the skill of good Hueman. Come hither, have no fear to mount this cliff, you never yet refused to do my bidding."

"I come with joy to gladly share my fate with yours."

"Welcome Pochotl, I can trust my life with you and all that life holds dear—but ho, Hueman, I pray you do unfold some speedy plan of action."

"For her sweet sake, our dear Xochitl, I will undo my vow and will go once again into the hateful presence of the king, and if he will in part redress this *cruel wrong*, will you then strive to forgive him Papantzin, if he will make your daughter queen?"

"Hueman I cannot, dare not answer now, tell him that I still live, thanks to your gifted power, and say that if he—if he will give me back my child—oh ye gods, Hueman, I cannot curb mine angered soul"——

"Have patience Papantzin, for just a short time more. Unless he gives you back your child I swear to you that his power shall be divided! Now listen, Pochotl, when from the king I turn, if in marked derision, you haste and summon every brave from the imperial guards, who were of Papantzin's command, and tarry at the palace gates ready to do my bidding."

"I will Hueman, no second call will those ready heroes require."

"Oh my friend do promise me that my daughter shall be free and saved from all contention."

"She shall be saved or be a *kingdom lost!*"

"The gods be praised, your forceful words do give me hope—unless he does return my child *I'll take his life!*"

"I would he had a dozen lives that each might feel the sting of death more cruelly; come, let us then begone, Pochotl, lest some delay may change our cherished plans."

As they carefully picked their way through the mud and mire and entered the presence of the king he exclaimed:

"Hueman, the gods be praised that you have come at

last. The mad Tlaloc has taught me to believe your warnings and I would, if in my power, atone for my past deeds and I will gladly follow your worthy plans if you will aid me in divining the surest, speediest way to extricate myself and subjects from this smiting curse!"

"And have you, vascillating king, counseled with your mocking courtiers and gained their royal pleasure and permission for this, your grand debut in power?"

"Hueman, of them you know I have no need to question when once I have determined to assert my power; you are too shrewd to think I trifle now when danger lurks in every lowering cloud—reveal to me some sure and speedy means to appease the angry gods."

"Oh, trifling Tecpantcaltzin, your domain was beautiful, aye every league, until your beastly nature, born and bred within a foul, lust-marrowed frame, conceived the dastardly wish to hide the fairest, purest, sweetest maid within your realm from her loved parents' sheltering arms, and forced her into a prison cell to be your prey! Her little hands did beat in vain against those rock-bound walls and her thrush-toned voice pealed forth until hushed to hoarseness, and her dark, pleading eyes and prayerful words did never move your cruel heart to grant her liberty, for within its hardened depths no mercy every grew. Think you that the Supreme Deity, who mothers all our woes, will suffer you to prosper in such fiendish crimes as these?"

"Oh, king, I blush to tell you what I saw—a chieftain of a conquering band who had led a living wall of human forms to save your kingdom—he climbed the parapet and waved our flag on high to urge his willing braves triumphantly outlined against the sunset sky a target for the arrows of ten thousand Eagle braves. I saw him kneel beside the dying form of her he loved, mute in a deep

consuming grief that burned up his tears, then plead for her sweet life in tones that seared my very soul; it was within my power to grant that prayer and when I hurried forth in eager haste, fleeing before me was a spy! One whom your treachery commanded there, and then you called that chieftain with some veiled excuse and sent a murderer there to finish that foul deed your brain began. Aye shrink and tremble! wanton king, I have not done! When the last rays of setting sun had kissed the burial place where his loved mate was laid and his lone heart called loudly for his child, I bade him follow at your heels and learn by whom and where his child was hidden; surmising this, you ordered there a guard with villianous arts and wiles—become your tools—to proffer him a soothing draught wherein was poured the *deadly Toloache!*”

“Oh cease, Hueman, in pity stay your scorn! Those searching, blazing eyes of thine eat cruelly into my shivering flesh. I will atone, will make his child my honored queen, I swear it, this day Xochitl shall become my queen.”

“Your words and oaths have little weight with me; actions alone convince me wherein truthfulness abides with you and hearken, *cursed crowned king*, by virtue of my art I saved that noble chieftain’s life! He stands today a monument of my power with bosom heaving for revenge, demanding his beloved child and *Justice*, as becomes his valiant deeds.”

“It shall be given, nothing can swerve me from my purpose but the grip of death! Hueman, you are in very truth a god! while life remains in my conflicting breast I shall revere you for saving Papantzin. Go bring him hither.”

“No, in *justice* summon here the remnant of his band

and bid them bring their chieftain from my cavern home." * * *

"It is done, they have departed upon that mission to bring the parent of my future queen, and oh, Hueman, how gladly will I strive each day and hour to win her love; no whispered wish if half unsaid but that I will divine and grant if in my power; no unkind look or word shall mar her thoughts and she shall grow as heavenly sweet, as fair as lillies grow. I call upon all of the unseen powers that rule the universe to seal my lids and glue my tongue to the roof of my mouth, rather than that I see a single frown upon the beauty of her angelic face."

"Remember king, my memory has never yet failed me a fraction from ill use and woe be unto you when comes the hour that you forget! Ah he comes, I hear the tread of martial feet."

"Aye, he comes to greater victory now than any host who ever braved an arrow, for he has earned the right to bow the head of this proud kingdom to the very dust! Come hither, Papantzin, I wronged you and I am scourged and seared with keen remorse—see Papantzin I kneel! Your king is pleading at your feet! forgive"——

"Oh, king, what had I done—I did *not* deserve all of these wrongs which you have heaped upon me; that kindled every drop of blood to flame within me making my heart and brain a seething caldron."

"Forgive thine unjust, but repentant king? Today your child shall be restored to you and be proclaimed my queen."

"Then promise, too, that no other Toltec form or foe be sent by your command to that grim altar-stone."

"I promise, and I swear to keep my vow."

"Then I forgive you—arise and lead me to my child."

Trembling and exhausted the excited general turned his anxious face toward the prophet, as he exclaimed:

“Come here, Hueman, do take my arm. My boasted strength is gone, my feet do stumble in their eagerness to reach that goal which hides my precious one; I scarce can see, Hueman, and is this rain that trickles down my cheek? It can't be tears, I could not weep when my loved wife died! I do feel weak with feverish joy and Palpan heights seems very far today.”

The king and his retinue advanced and led the way in order to apprise the fair prisoner that her deliverance was at hand, and she rushed with a shriek of joy into the outstretched arms of Papantzin who exclaimed: “My child! my darling one, once more I clasp you in my arms and hear your loving voice—and oh, how can I tell you all—a grief which you must share”——

“Dear father I know what you would say—I know that my dear mother has gone to our sun-land home, for she came to me, father, so divinely fair and I begged of her to bear my spirit home with her beyond the stars.”

She murmured these words half inaudibly, the king seemed terribly excited and nervously watched the princess, who appeared utterly unconscious of his very existence until he said:

“Princess Xochitl, I have a precious boon to ask of you here in the presence of your father and good priest Hueman, I crave the rapture of your sweet being near me always; an influence which will make me more a king—oh, do not turn thus from me, drive away that look of horror, loathing and dismay! Oh am I then so utterly repulsive in your sight, I would I could undo the past or blot it from your memory. Believe me, I will try with all the tenderness in my power to win and keep your love. Dear heart I offer you a throne and all I have to give, do

“speak to me? Oh thou beautiful one, speak to me, consent to be my Queen?”

“King Tecpantcaltzin, my lips cannot turn *traitor* to my heart—Father, you know the precious secret hidden in my bosom, your wish *alone* shall be obeyed.”

“My child, in very truth I feel that it were better so, it is the only way to save your good name now and save the Tollan kingdom from the horror and disgrace of a civil war—I crave for thee no royal diadem, no power beyond the strength of happy love—but this conspiring force which has hemmed you in seems to leave but this one avenue for your escape.”

“Then you are answered king, and if in all the years to come you feel the *want* of love such as my heart *can* give—remember, not of my own free will did I become your Queen”——her voice sank to a sobbing wail which tortured the soul of Papantzin and the Prophet and seemed to arouse some latent pity in the bosom of the agitated king who exclaimed:

“Xochitl mine, like some lone plant in rock-walled, darkened glen that strives to seek the light will I each day and hour labor to win the priceless treasure of your love.”

He closely scanned the beautiful face of the princess whose passive features were expressive of other thoughts than those proffered by him; he then gave the order to return to the city, himself leading the way, thereby permitting the future queen the welcome privilege of conversing unreservedly with her parent and staunch friend Hue-man.

“To you, dear Father, and my cherished friend, Hue-man, I can now pour forth the wishes of my heart in which sacred grave of all my cherished hope the sunshine of my happiness will set today, forever! this cruel, stern

decree I know is best for our loved country's weal, but rather would I don my belt with gleaming blade and seize my oft-raised bow and follow he whom I love through all of the forest wilds and treacherous, deep ravines lined with defiant foes than reign one hour as queen."

"My child each word of thine cuts deep into my writhing soul; I think and tremble at this sacrifice! I know, dear girl, that your heart was given to Topiltzin and know, too, that he loves you better than his life! But child remember that he is born of kings and has a noble lofty soul and if the time should ever come when low, sneering, venomous lips"—

"Don't Father, do not say another word of this—I shall not falter by the way—but you, Hueman, please do me this one great favor: when Topiltzin returns say to him in my name that to save this stricken realm from severing ruin I gave my life. My love he knows is his since we were babes, tell him that the memory of that precious truth shall be my beacon light to illumine my dark and narrow way and give me patience to perform my task until my fettered spirit breaks its galling chains and flies to him, tell him to accept this dreadful fate as I have done"—her voice sank to a whisper and tears rained down her pale cheeks, preventing her from finishing the sentence and the kind-hearted prophet divined her wish and exclaimed:

"Yes, dear Xochitl, I will plead with him in all of the eloquence of which I am capable and will bring the power of my art to bear upon, and if possible suppress the mad fires of revenge which will breed a host within his soul; and child, I could not, would not find it in my soul to acquiesce in this coming event which is so distasteful to you, were it not that the murmurs of dissension which are rife in the kingdom are becoming more pronounced

each day and I fear a rebellion will follow this terrible crime, unless your father and I side with the king. We cannot afford a civil war to be engendered while we may peacefully avert it—we could summon a mighty army and we could overthrow the power of Tecpantcaltzin at the sacrifice of many, many lives and above all else would destroy the sweet emblem of peace so dear to the soul of every true Toltec, but it would make this crime none the less terrible, and perhaps those most dear to you might be slain in the conflict; it is your destiny child, be brave and save your country from 'severing ruin' even as you have so aptly said, and leave your future in the hands of the Supreme Deity who wills and rules our destinies."

Under the trying circumstances and fearful of a mutiny the king determined to have the marriage ceremony performed without delay and, as they neared the palace, four women with lighted candles in their hands advanced to meet the faltering bride, and led her to the king who stood at the entrance to the palace gateway; he held a golden censer in his hands which he swung in rhythmic motion until a wreath of thin blue smoke enveloped the princess with clinging, perfumed vapor, then he tenderly proffered the same to her cold, nervous fingers that she should likewise drape his towering form with the same fleecy cloud, but scarcely had her hands closed upon the sacred chain than as if by angry spirits seized it fell ominously clanging and broken at the very feet of the dismayed king who started back in horror at the evil omen which had a deep significance to him and which caused a groan of anguish to escape the gathering throng.

With a supreme effort he forced a smile upon his countenance and advanced and clasped the bride's hands within his own, then led her within the palace to a rostrum upon which stood a brasero of leaping flames; seven times

she walked around the blazing urn alone while a far off, yearning, haunted gaze filled her dark, lustrous eyes and her tightly clasped, shapely fingers seemed tipped with drops of blood. She turned and mounted the rostrum with the king and then the high-priest advanced and gathered the point of her richly embroidered *huepilli* and tied it in a graceful bow with the exquisite *tilmatti* which enrobed the king.

The banquet was then served, but over all there hovered an air of heaviness which hung like a pall, and the voice of the priest sounded like a dirge as he raised a goblet of wine to his lips exclaiming: "Hail to our Queen!" Then the willing voices of the multitude partook of the congratulations, cheering and cheering until the shivering queen reached forth both of her rounded arms beseechingly and beckoned them to be still.

Magnificent presents of gold, silver and precious gems were bestowed upon the queen and a handsomely wrought urn of silver was filled with burning copalli as an offering to the gods.

Xochitl seemed enveloped in some mysterious solitude which appeared to lift and bear her soul away from all of that festive scene; at last she raised her beseeching eyes to mine, fraught with a strange unearthly gaze that seared my very soul and will haunt me to my death.

CHAPTER VIII.

Many moons have fullled and waned since that never to be forgotten day when my brave Topiltzin consented to meet an imaginary foe; when I sounded the shrieking Teohuehuatl to save one thousand of his men from the ignominious order of the king, and signified his willingness to obey my pleading and endeavor to rescue our missionaries from the far north, and I am longing for his presence once again, and yet with strange misgivings which I cannot smother.

The gentle queen has long since won the hearts of our people and strives in every way to relieve the destitution and misery in our land for a burning, scorching heat has seared all of our vegetation and seemed to penetrate and bake the very earth; our fields are parched and shriveled, and our fruit trees are barren for the want of rain.

Close upon the wake of the heated term—which lasted several moons—a cold wave came and spread a blighting frost upon all Tollan; these fearful misfortunes have appaled our race and we all dread one more warning which still remains, the last to sound the final note of doom to tottering Tollantzingo.

A future king is born, and the fair young mother has named him Meconetzin, Son of Maguey.

The continued absence and long silence of my kin disturbs and grieves me, for I know that a crisis is approaching which forbodes the very air I breathe, and I

feel it in the weight that holds me down, but I must try and drag my tired form to the palace, for the king's messenger has just appeared with a summons, and I must, although reluctantly, obey. When I reached the palace I knew that something very grave and unusual had occurred, and the king exclaimed in excited tones:

"Hueman, this day I have indeed sore need of your divining powers—some hours ago a woman came to me bringing a beautiful Albino child which she found very ill upon the brow of yonder hill, and as I stood at the palace gate, listening to her tale a huge dark bird swooped down and seized the infant from her grasp and flew with it toward yonder mountain of Iztaccihuatl."

"Oh, king; this is the third and last of those warning signs—a plague—the worst of human ills will surely follow. Oh, that you had, when our country teemed with bounteous harvest, but stored a goodly portion in reserve for barren times like these."

"Hueman, long months ago I heard that Topiltzin had conquered many tribes and seized their hoarded stores which amounted to considerable, and I have sent out many runners to apprise him of our distress, and begged of him to bring us relief, but not one runner has returned."

"I think that it were better to send a band of men of sufficient numbers to withstand an attack."

"Hueman, I did forward three hundred men one moon ago, just as you advised me to do, and if all accounts were true they were near enough to Tollan that we could have heard from them by this time. Our supplies are getting dangerously scant, and I have been unable to purchase a single measure of grain. I shall this day forward still another band upon the same trail, hoping to have them

overtake the others and aid them in hurrying here with succor."

"Oh, I have prophesied, feared and dreaded times like these, and listen! Again peals forth the booming of the heavens, another furious storm is approaching, and I must call upon some latent power to aid me to my cavern home. A dreadful weight now drags me down; in dreams that racked my soul long years ago these fearful scenes appeared to me, but then it was only a dream."

"No, do not go, Hueman, you cannot climb the cliff in this fierce storm; tarry here until it has wasted its force."

"Impossible, Tecpantcaltzin; I shall have gained the cliff before the fury of the storm is upon us; my faith will give me strength, and unseen hands will aid me, so I will hasten on, adieu." * * *

Another week of storm, and again it has abated, and, oh, the *dreadful plague* rages now in all Tollan, and every remedy proves of no avail; all of the dried herbs have been exhausted, and the unusual action of the elements has destroyed the present season's crop entirely, but who comes here at this, the break of day? "Topiltzin! Topiltzin! The gods be praised that you have come at last; and have you come alone?"

"Yes, I have come alone, for a short distance only, to warn you, dear Hueman, to remain here in the security of this cavern until I rule the throne!"

"Topiltzin, have you turned traitor to your king?"

"Yes! a thousand times, yes! Shriek it, oh ye winds of heaven; ring it to the sea—Topiltzin is a *traitor!* To such a king a *rebel!* an *avenger!*"

"Mine only kin in mercy hear me. By the love you bear me, I implore you spare those stricken people further misery. They are in dreadful want—ill, starving! Oh, pitying heaven, lend me some gentle power to calm

his fearful anger. Topiltzin, a year ago and more the elements of nature began warring with this vale."

"And you ask *me* to *spare* them when the Supreme Deity will not do so? Hueman, there was a time when all of your gentle pleading had power to move me, and changed the current of my life, held my will in check, and led me by some fearful force which my impulses could not resist, but now the flood-gates of my wrath are torn *asunder*, and not one power but *death* can stay *revenge!*"

"Oh, pity those poor, shivering wrecks down in that once proud vale. Your heart would ache and throb with mercy to walk those streets as I have done and feel those beseeching, hungry eyes upon you."

"I will save them; I will provide a way for them to exist until another crop has grown, and I will give that king his choice—to surrender every claim peacefully or marshal his hungry hosts to meet my well-fed and well-equipped army upon the field of battle."

"Topiltzin, tell me about your quest—did you rescue those poor besieged missionaries who were undergoing slow starvation walled up in their cliff-tower homes?"

"I saved the remnant of that band, and they are now with my army awaiting my return, and I cannot longer tarry here, Hueman."

"Topiltzin, for nearly two long years I have kept a message for you from the—from she whom you love."

"Speak on, Hueman, in mercy tell me what my *martyred* love did say for me? I know the fearful facts—all *that monster imposed upon her*—know all about the murder of her mother; know, too, that the very heaven will veil itself in blood before I retract my vow. Tell me what my wounded dove has said for me; her pleading eyes are ever gazing into mine, and her sweet voice,

those tender tones, I heard them in the wailing of the winds that whispered me to sleep, and in the softly gurgling, limpid stream; no warbler of the forest wilds but seemed to have caught some echo of her dear gentle tones—my soul and heart and brain were bursting by this crushing weight of sorrow, while those terrific warnings of the heavens brought terror and dismay to cursed Tolan; the hurricane that swept across my breast throbbed every impulse to decisive action. Hueman, I only wait to hear her *message*.”

“These were her words to me before she took the vows that made her queen—‘do me this one great favor—when Topiltzin returns, say to him in my name that to save this stricken realm from severing ruin I gave my life; my love he knows is his since we were babes; tell him the memory of this heaven sent truth shall be my beacon to light my dark and narrow way and give me patience to perform my task until my fettered spirit breaks its galling chains and flies to him. *Tell him to accept this dreadful fate* as I have done.’ These were her words to you. Come, lay your bonny head upon my breast just as you did in childhood’s sunny days. Ye gods, it is a fearful sight to see a warrior weep! Listen, Topiltzin, and I will tell you more of her. She has proved herself to be a worthy, generous, gracious queen, and our people all do worship her, and she loves those grateful hosts, and when you turn the fury of your wrath upon those people in their distress and misery, remember that she would never countenance such a dreadful move as you propose to make.”

“Hueman, recall to memory the dreadful nature of that crime which he committed and glossed with marriage vows; the very gods of the entire universe denounce him. Had I been near enough to have learned of his

beastly atrocities I would have rescued my injured loved one or have perished in the attempt. You did not sound the gong of war amiss, two nations were advancing upon Tollantzingo, and had we not have intercepted them at that auspicious period they would have joined with the ready Chichimecas, and with such a formidable resistance my army would, I fear, have been cut to pieces, and I doubt if our whole nation could have overcome *such an attack*. In their retreat we managed to secure some important captives who were runners sent from our missionaries in the far north, repeating the supplication that we send them assistance without delay, or it would be too late as the natives were in revolt, and were endeavoring to reach their elevated homes. I appointed those runners to guide us back to those besieged people whom we rescued from annihilation, although they had an abundance of provision. Their lofty abiding places were marvels of ingenuity and skill hewn into the rock-ribbed mountains, and chambered artistically while they had formed the only window at such a favored angle that it commanded a full view of the heavens, and swept the surrounding country for leagues and leagues, although latticed and obscured from view with trailing vines.

“Their subterranean halls, where the solemn rites of brotherhood were administered and enjoined, reached away from the aperture far into the hillside. Each surviving hero of that intrepid band will rally around my standard, and they all approve of the course which I shall pursue. The time has arrived for me to act, and the canker eating into my loved one’s heart and mine has nerved me to proclaim my lawful heirship to the throne and save our nation.”

“Oh, rescue them from hunger, Topiltzin; come down with me now and promise them relief.”

"Hueman, mine eyes could not rest one instant upon that stricken horde and let their prodigal and misguided ruler live! You told me once how fondly you too have loved; told of the treacherous crime that made *her* mad! She, whom you loved, could not have been dearer to you by any tie than that which binds my love to me, and that same traitor who deprived me of all my earthly happiness has wrenched from me my birthright! Perhaps, I, too, am mad! But do not imagine for one moment that I can make terms of any kind with such as he—you ask too much of me, Hueman, mine inherent nature made of me—

"A host, to war with wanton wills,
And love as steadfast as the rock-bound hills."

"Know you that she has a child?"

"Yes, that I know, Hueman; know too that not one trace of his vile image marks the child. Had it been born a minature of him, I'd tear it from it's mother's sheltering arms and dash its brains out against the palace wall rather than rear to manhood such a hybrid creature! He has his mother's lovely eyes, the same sweet pensive mouth and the dimpled chin; Hueman, I love that child almost as if it were my very own."

"My Topiltzin, you have a noble heart, gentle as a woman's in some things, and in others—well, I shall no longer plead with you for aught but patience."

"Hueman, the smothered fires of my indignation consumed my patience long months ago, and some mad spirit within me seems to shriek this truth that—

I have battled with this purpose with my spirit bruised
and torn,
Have wrestled from the close of day until the rise of
morn;

In the march and 'round the camp-fire questioned every
star that glows,
But earth and sky and my own heart have always answer-
ed no!

"Hueman, we have in a secure and well-guarded cavern in yonder mountain side a large supply of grain, meat and vegetables of sufficient quantity to relieve the wants of these stricken people until another harvest grows, *when I am king!*"

"Oh, Topiltzin, your words seem such a boastful mockery to me. What a precious boon to those poor suffering people a small portion of your stores would be; a scant amount of grain has been hoarded by the provident queen, of which a small quantity is doled out to the starving people, and even that can hardly last another moon I have been told."

"I have an abundance of fresh grown maize, beans, vegetables and dried meats of every kind, also many varieties of fruits. I have every runner who was sent commanding me to return, also each gardner, farmer and slave outside of the city gates, and every guard of every city out side of Tollantzingo in the Tollan kingdom; it will take but a short time to marshal them with mine army; my scouts are never idle, and I am informed by them that the Chichimecas have formed an alliance with the Xochimilcas and Tezcocans, and are now striving to entice the Culhuaca nation to join them, and if they do, while Tecpantcaltzin rules, and make an attack upon us, the Toltec nation will be overpowered. With my large force of well-fed, well-equipped, conquering braves in the fortress of Tollantzingo I can defy them and save our race from certain destruction if he will yield to me supreme control, and leave the throne in peace; then we can

save Tollan. Hueman, will you do me this one great favor? Will you lay these facts before him—unless he submits to my terms I shall storm the fort to-day.”

“No, no, my kin; no, I cannot bear such a message from you to him; but yonder comes Papantzin, lay bare these facts to him.”

“Ah, Topiltzin, brother chieftain, I am glad indeed to welcome you home again; but, oh, what fearful changes have been wrought since last we met!”

“Yes, Papantzin, and why?”

“An angry god has devastated all Tollan.”

“What of your king?”

“Oh, Topiltzin, I guard my pent-up feelings by the effort of a mighty will—he humbled himself to the very dust, beseeching my pardon, which I granted him. When once my word is given my heart and soul are loyal to my vow. He strives to be more manly now and is kind and devoted to my precious child.”

“Hold, Papantzin, by all the gods! He shall not be exonerated in my presence by even you! When was he *kind* to your child, and to you? Was it when he made of her a prisoner in Palpans rock-bound walls, and slew her gentle mother and your thousand braves? Then strove by Toloache’s cursed power to murder you? What wonder when his crimes had found him out that he slunk upon his ready knees cringing and beseeching of you to pardon a crime which a just and angry God would not condone! Henceforth I bear the name of traitor to him whom you call *kind*! I have come to Tollantzingo to demand my rights, and have come prepared to enforce them, and if he will not peacefully resign control and allow me to save our nation from the throes of famine and annihilation by the united forces who are now preparing to attack Tollantzingo, then tell him to retain it

by his might! I am aware of his ignoble acts since I was here, and know that all of his wealth in gold, silver and precious gems—which are his only store—cannot provide our people with sustenance if he endeavored to dispose of them, for there is absolutely nothing to buy; the kingdoms of Maayha and Tlapallan have suffered quite as badly as we from the warring of the elements, and are now in revolt! You know that the rule of Tecpantcaltzin has been a shameless, prodigal one from the beginning until now; a fact that you cannot deny, and it is time that some one seized the reins of government before it is too late and all be lost!”

“Topiltzin, my brother chieftain, if I should say as if from the depths of sincerity that I *blame* you, then I had lied!”

“I believe you, Papantzin, no alien blood permeates your noble frame, and it will *grieve my soul* to meet you and yours arrayed against me.”

“My hands shall never be raised to war against you. Pochotl now has charge of my command, but the plague! That most dreaded of all *monsters*, stalks abroad Tollan smiting the starving people and fast thinning the ranks of all of our braves; you will find these panic stricken hosts an easy prey. I cannot ask you to withhold revenge, the uselessness of such a plea flashes from your indignant eyes. I shall linger near my child during the terrible conflict to shelter and protect her and hers.”

“Do me this favor then, Papantzin, say to your king that the thousand braves whom he ordered to be slain, belonging to my command, I have brought back to Tollan, and many thousand more to combat his unworthy power; tell him that I, the *rebel Topiltzin*, command him to vacate the throne in peace, or sound the screaming Teohuehuetl and be prepared for war! Here take my

hand in brotherhood, to you and yours I am no *traitor*, we know not what red sea of blood may wall between us before the setting of another sun, and if I fall, tell her I died for love of her and our proud nation's weal; happy in dying for her if I cannot while living claim her for my own."

"I will tell her, Topiltzin, and, oh, how my soul grieves for the outcome of such a worthy love as yours; I dare not dwell upon it. Farewell, and may the gods aid you in doing all things well."

As he departed Topiltzin turned to me saying:

"Farewell my kin, dear, patient, just Hueman, may heaven watch over you and keep you from all harm."

"Oh, Topiltzin, there is a dreadful weight tugging at my breaking heart strings now; oh, would that I had the power to plead with you to stay your avenging hands and save us from annihilation! Oh, may the gods subdue the king since you are eager to begin the fray."

My words are useless to him now, he has gone to await the issue of his threat, and I will endeavor to explain, persuade or approach the king with words of reason—I dread the task, my art seems to have forsaken me upon some desert waste or pinnacle, from which I cannot find the way that leads to peace.

CHAPTER IX.

"Papantzin, this dreadful news does paralyze my very soul! I had not dreamed it were possible for Topiltzin to inveigle his hosts in such a dastardly scheme; think you that he might be bribed?"

"Never! The bare suggestion would only incense him more."

"Did you there strive to reason with him, Papantzin?"

"Reason? As well attempt to reason with a tempest's lashing roar! You have no time to lose, unless you do accede to his demands your men must be prepared to meet him on the field of action. This is a fearful moment for us all; but you alone can say whether your kingdom be overthrown by *words* or *deeds*."

"If any *traitor* rules my throne it will be through streams of blood and over mine inanimate form! Go, Papantzin, and order double rations for our men, and it will take the last grain of maize that there is in Tollantzingo. Go, tell my queen of this infamous outrage which is meditated, and tell her that she need have no fear that any *traitor's* feet shall cross this threshold unless I fall in its defense; tell her that I shall lead the charge."

"And if the Chichimecas have formed an alliance with those other formidable nations and do make an attempt to invade our territory during this lamentable siege?"

"Fate cannot be so cruel! Methinks the clever prophecies of Hueman were not *all* based upon his knowledge of the stars."

"Oh, do not censure the worthy prophet; I heard him plead with stubborn Topiltzin as for his very life, and leave him shivering with regret and horror!"

"It is well for him that you bring such news to me; had *he* turned traitor too I would have sent a detachment of men to bring him here a prisoner."

"A prisoner! Him, the Priest and Prophet! You are indeed gone mad to cherish such a rash thought for an instant! Your men would defy your commands were you to issue them, for the fear and reverence which they have for the loyal prophet-priest exceeds—oh, but here he comes, and can answer for himself."

"Hueman, I trust that you have come to tell me that that rebel kin of yours has abandoned the audacious crime which he contemplates in my domain?"

"Would to heaven that it were within my power to tell you so."

"This, then was his object in detaining my runners and defying my commands?"

"No, he did not detain them, but they chose to join his ranks."

"You! You *dare* to tell me this when *you* have warned and urged me to send more men! Hueman, this looks like *treachery* too!"

"Tecpantcaltzin, I *scorn* to waste words in vindication of such an unjust accusation which you know is beneath my principles."

"Then, where is Topiltzin?"

"He has gone to join his army, which is stationed a few leagues from here, where he will tarry until sunset for your signal, he has said."

"Then let them come! My men shall wall the gates of Tollantzingo thousands deep! My final orders have gone forth, and the war-gong shall at once be sounded."

"I fear me it will sound the knell of doom!"

"Return, Hueman, and keep a sharp lookout from yonder cliff, for if the Chichimecas have formed an alliance with other nations and do approach you must signal from the cliff without delay. Then, too, I fear that your presence here at this auspicious hour may jeopardize your life."

"Tecpantcaltzin, there was a day and more than one, when by acclamation had he chosen thus to be ruler of Tollan, and myself the great high priest we could have been such. But that peaceful nature so characteristic of our people restrained him until you broke his loyal heart by tearing from him all that he held most sacred. Yes, I will return and set watch on yonder hill—will raise the burning torch to signal you if the united armies, too, invade us. Give to the gentle queen my kind regards, and tell her that my retreat is safe from every foe, and I gladly offer her its shelter."

"The queen shall remain just where she is, well guarded by my men; no savage host nor disappointed *lover* can find an entrance there."

"Sir!"

All of the pent-up sorrow, regret and indignation were concentrated in that monosyllable when it fell from the drawn quivering lips of the aged prophet, who hastened from the palace murmuring—"I dared not attempt to utter another word, not even to denounce the absurdity of his evil and unjust insinuations; but, ah, I know by the foreboding air which oppresses me that my feet have crossed the palace grounds for the last time. I have no wish to live beyond my nation's life.

Night has fallen and dear Quetzalcoatl's radiant gaze seems riveted upon Tollantzingo, as if he longed to

snatch this monumented vale from off the universe and hide it in the serried fields of air.

The winds have ceased their play and every leaf which escaped the driving storm is poised attentively as if afraid that its gentle whisperings might anticipate the fearful catastrophe about to burst upon us. The insects in their variegated colors have sought the welcome shelter of their little homes as the dismal howl of the shrieking Teohuehuetl sounds throughout this moon-kissed vale of sorrow; the trilling notes of night birds are hushed, and again and again the slumbering echoes are awakened by the demoniac cries of the bellowing war alarm.

The gleaming bosom of the lake is hushed and scarce a ripple raises its ghostly head as if it too would know whose arrows will begin the coming siege. Stately trees have bowed and withered branches stretched forth as if in mute appeal to the ruler of the elements to stay the approaching storm of human strife; all nature is hushed in a threatening calm awaiting the martial tread of those rebellious braves.

The sunset defied its equal in hue,
Of fire and gold of silver and blue.

With pale tinted colors spun, a web of glory was revealed from height to height as if reluctant to dispel the light of dying day which I fear will arise upon a vale of desolation!

Fair luna gleams with ashen face as if she too would warn the world of the fires that rage in her volcanic breast which consume her vitals, pall her dead face, and wedge her in a ceaseless round of evolution.

Oh, what is that long line winding its way like serpents? They come not from the direction which Topilt-

zin's army will advance. Ye gods! It is the united armies! I will set the flaming signal upon the cliff and nerve myself to warn my Topiltzin; and now the king must know the dreadful fact, and I will manage to let myself down on the forest side of my cavern and hasten to inform my Topiltzin.

The way is tangled, and creeping vines retard my eager feet. Withered branches and massive forest trees hewn by the hand of the hurricane impede my way, but hark! I do hear other steps than mine, and I see the glaring eyes of some savage beast which is keeping pace with me. Oh, had I but the strength and suppleness of youth I would not fear the monster. Perhaps I may be able to defend myself with my trusty blade which is keen. I hear the guarded tread of many feet and know that the rebels are fast approaching, and none too soon, for the savage growls and snapping viscous teeth of the mountain lion are dangerously near me. Oh, thou Supreme Deity, aid me and save me until I warn my Topiltzin! "Topiltzin! Oh, hear me!" My voice sounds strangely hoarse, and the dreadful beast is preparing to leap upon me. "Topiltzin! Come, save me! Oh, he sees me and draws his ready bow—Oh, spare me! It is I, your own Hueman." * * *

"What have I done! Oh, speak to me, Hueman! Speak, I implore you before I plunge this reeking blade into my breaking heart. How could I imagine for an instant that it was you. When I saw that gleaming uplifted blade, I thought it was poised by an assassin sent by Tecpantcaltzin, who would by murdering me have demoralized mine army. Oh, speak one little word to me, if only to say forgive?"

"They—have—united. They—are—at—the—gates—

now—fly—to—the—rescue! Flank—them! F-l-a-n-k—them——”

“I cannot leave you in this desperate condition, not now, Hueman; I must do something to staunch this terrible wound.”

“The—herb—in—my—belt!”

“Thank heaven that you are provided with the precious herb! This will relieve you without delay! See we have killed the ugly beast that attacked you; there now, you will soon revive, for the flow has ceased.”

“Go—oh, do—go—and—save—the—queen!”

“I have commanded three thousand of my men to hasten on and flank them, and now we will carry you back to the cavern. You know that it will not divert our path, and I will leave a guard to watch over you there, then I will hurry on to *aid* the king!”

“The Supreme Deity be praised! He has answered my fervent prayer! Topiltzin, to the rescue! Now I can die in peace.”

“You must not, shall not die! See you are much better, and we are near your home.”

“Yes, I am better, and you need not leave a man with me; you will need them all and more; no, no, I cannot say farewell! You will return to me as king!”

He is hurrying his noble army to the rescue—oh, how proud am I to chronicle the fact; but I cannot stay within these walls; I shall creep out upon the pinnacle that I may be nearer to heaven; ah, those deafening cries, they pierce my wounded breast; ha, what skulking form is this approaching? It is indeed a woman!

“Ezcolotl, how have you managed to reach here at this time and alone?”

“The gods of pity lent me wings, Hueman; I cannot tell you what dreadful deeds are being committed in

Tollantzingo now; the enemy beat down the gates, then mowed our people to earth like grain before the sickle. Their flashing macanas are reeking with blood!"

"How did you then manage to escape them?"

"All of the women who could were permitted to seek shelter in the palace grounds, and we might have been safe there but mother was determined to return to our cottage and get some lovely jewels which she had left, and I could not see her go alone. The enemy had scaled the walls; they seized my mother, and I flew toward the palace for aid, but I heard her scream of mortal agony and saw her fall and die; then I ran around the palace wall into the darkest shadows to come to you; I heard the king urging the imperial guards who were then at the fortress gates."

"Were the gates open, Ezcolotl?"

"I cannot say, and I have been a long, long time in making the journey here, and I was so excited and frightened that I cannot remember whether the gates were open or closed."

"I fear that they are beating down the ramparts now. Oh, thou Supreme Deity, spare the queen! Ezcolotl, hasten to the cavern—get—plant—bring—water—I—am f-a-i-n-t-i-n-g!"

"Oh, Hueman, wake up; do awaken and speak to me! I am so frightened, and this is blood upon his breast—he is wounded! Dying! Oh, let me raise your head!"

"Ah—now I am—better; it is—perhaps—quite fortunate—you—came—"

"You are terribly wounded, dear Hueman, a stream of blood is gushing from your breast; what can I do to staunch it?"

“Go—into—cave—get plant— is — growing — there— quick!”

“Oh, Hueman, do not send me into that dreadful cavern; I cannot urge myself against my fears, they are consuming me!”

“Go—I—am—d-y-i-n-g!”

“Oh, oh; I, too, shall die of terror if I try to enter there!”

“G-o!”

“Your dreadful eyes are eating holes into my flesh! In mercy spare me, yes, I must; you move me now against my will.” * * *

“Here, here, Hueman, I have the leaves of the plant, and I will place them upon your bosom. Oh, what a ghastly wound! Now you are better, the blood has ceased to flow; I was nearly crazed with fear, but your stern fascinating eyes led me directly to the plant. I closed my eyes for fear of seeing goblins and spirits, and the gods know what not, and I did not open them until I came back to you; but I know that the cavern was filled with grinning, jabbering ghosts. Do you still hear me, good Hueman? In pity speak to me again; please say just one little word that I may know you are not dead.”

“W-a-i-t!”

“Bless you, Hueman, a thousand times; had you not answered me I would have shrieked in frenzy regardless of the enemy bellowing like many savage beasts down in that gory vale. Is it the herb that you wish? And can you eat it, too? I would suffer any torture rather than place that living, creeping, crawling leaf between my lips. Oh, do you hear that deafening roar, Hueman, it sounds like some victorious cry?”

“Raise—my—head!”

“A little more!”

"There now, you can see across that reeking vale of death!"

"Oh, my heart—is bursting—with—its—weight—of sorrow—beautiful—Tollantzingo—demolished by savage hands—oh, may they spare the golden garden of the sun-god—the queen—oh, surely they cannot raise a hand to injure her—oh, would I, too, had died before I realized my prophesy fulfilled."

"Do not trouble yourself about the city; our people are mighty, notwithstanding their distress; I am so glad that you are better; I thought my scared and trembling being would collapse in very fear until I held that strange magnetic plant within my grasp; it seemed to tingle every fibre of my being, and I can now understand why you so much desired it; please forgive me for hesitating in that unfeeling manner for my heart is nearly breaking with the fearful strain which I have undergone this night. Oh, Hueman, tell me one little word about Topiltzin?"

"He is down there among that fiendish horde, heaven help him!"

"Oh, ye gods, protect him! I had not dreamed that he too were there; it was said that he was away to the far north. Oh, Hueman, do tell me a prayer like yours that I may call upon your God to spare him! Our idols have not granted one of our prayers for moons and moons, not once since she, Xochitl, was made queen; the people one and all do say that she brought a blighting curse upon Tollan, for the very elements of nature have frowned upon us all on her account."

"Hush your blabbing tongue; your foolish words defile my hearing; the wanton profligate king brought all of the curse upon Tollan by improvidence and barbarity—since he wed he has been held in check by the influence of the

gentle queen, but it was too late to undo the wasteful example of years."

"Ah, yes, she prayed, urged him to disregard the wisdom of the high-priest, and the war-god clamored in vain for offerings at the sacrifice; which if he had obeyed, we would never have known this fearful persecution which is running riot now."

"You frivolous thoughtless girl, a moment ago you were pleading for a prayer of mine; now you extol the power of metal in lieu of the Supreme Deity! Oh, you blasphemous creature!"

"No, Hueman, pray do not say that; I am only just telling you what others say; why the good priest Huemac wept like a child when he told my father's people how the king answered him when he urged him to offer up a sacrifice. These were his exact words—'away with you, nor flaunt your brutal wisdom upon my roseate dreams like darkling bat-wings upon my palace walls.' Now, I think that his roseate dreams are turned to gall and wormwood, Hueman? Perchance, his boasted palace walls are now crumbling under the battle axes of the destroying Chichimecas."

"The Supreme Deity forbid!"

"What, have you then a tender feeling for the king? It was said—and often repeated in Tollantzingo—that you and the king have been sworn enemies ever since he took Xochitl for his queen. I think that she made herself quite cleverly conspicuous in order to attract his attention; why any one could have found the wine of maguey if they had been one half as curious as she was. Had I been a particle as bold I too might have been a princess, and perhaps a queen! When she brazenly insisted upon carrying a cup of the wine to the king it was only an excuse for her to call her shapely figure into notice, and

she jealously arranged for me to be commanded to drag a great load of the well-known maguey into the palace and follow at her heels like a paid servant. Ye gods, I never thought until the task was done what a ridiculous fool I was to allow her to prance me about in order to give her a chance to show her importance, and at the expense of my sensitive feelings! The idea of her wishing to make such a display of that little discovery which she really stumbled upon, and then cause me to become a walking maguey field just for effect! I am surprised that the king did not order a servant with a broom to whisk us all out of the palace, for the earth filtered through my fingers and trailed along the halls."

"Oh, Ezcolotl, do me the great favor to close the creaking doors of your volubility, and induce your ears to play some natural part—those shouts, they must be cries of victory!"

"They are, Hueman, but not the Toltec exultant cry. Oh, look yonder! Upon the temple roof and also upon the palace balconies, stand crowds of screaming warriors. Oh, where is dear Topiltzin? Do you think that the enemy will come here, Hueman? Oh, look! look! They are coming now; where shall we go, Hueman? See, they are climbing this stairway. Topiltzin! Topiltzin! Oh, I am so happy that you have come! Why do you bring the queen here; has she fainted? Where is our king?"

"He is here, I now am king over all that remains of the Toltec nation. Here Ezcolotl, take the child; in all of that maddening sea of furious demons he never raised one whimpering cry. Hueman, come with me if you can; I wish to bear my precious burden to a place of rest. Huemac is waiting below, and my men will start at once, for the security of the cavern where the stores are hidden. Take good care of the child, Ezcolotl, he is a brave little

fellow and worthy of his noble mother—go, follow the priest Huemac!”

“Dear Topiltzin, may I not aid you in reviving the queen? See, here is water.”

“She has no need of that, Ezcolotl, the Supreme Deity has revived her gentle spirit beyond the stars in the blissful realm of the sun.”

“Oh, no, she is not dead, Topiltzin! She is not dead!”

“She lives, Hueman, in the glorious after-life; she is mine now, my angel.”

“Oh, do look, Hueman; see, he too is badly wounded! See those cruel stabs! See those pools of blood! They are forming at his feet! Oh, Topiltzin, my love, my love!”

“Go, Ezcolotl, take the brave young prince and guard him well. I go to lay me down within the sepulchre which is prepared to receive our dead. Farewell, make haste! Hueman, we must descend at once; my strength is fast failing me.”

“No, no, do come with us, Topiltzin, and bring Hueman. Oh, do leave this dangerous place where the enemy may follow us at any moment.”

“I can go no further, I am wounded unto death; go, woman, go, you will surely be pursued if you hesitate longer, farewell!”

“Farewell, my darling; oh, my lost, lost love, farewell!”

“Lead on, Hueman, I am very weak and faint, my strength can barely sustain me to our haven of rest.”

As we staggered down the stairs my poor Topiltzin refused to allow me to aid him, and when we entered the treasure house he sank down with his burden upon a luxuriant couch of fur and I said to him: “Topiltzin, I love to feast mine eyes upon that flower-like face; how

beautiful she is, so calm, so still; no wave of life can ever leap those pulses now; her glorious eyes awake to heavenly tones and angels press those curving lips. Now let me strive to bathe your dreadful wounds."

"It were useless, dear Hueman, they cut me deep, and I shall linger here beside my love and sleep forever, while our spirits are united in the sun. Come close beside us, dear Hueman, I fear that you too are wounded unto death."

"Yes, dear Topiltzin, but had this grave wound never been inflicted I could not have survived my nation's fall; my will shall hold my strength together until my work is done."

"Come, let me take your hand, and I will try to tell you all that happened at the fall of Tollantzingo. We flanked them desperately and mowed them down outside the gates and strove to beat them back; but there were four united nations against one! They broke the walls beyond the gates with battering rams and surrounded the imperial guards who in their desperation flung wide the gates as I had signaled them to do, and I rushed in with my men to aid them. A shriek rang forth that the king was slain, and his men fell back demoralized. I rallied them, and we fought inch by inch, striving to keep them from the palace, and the entrance to the golden garden of the sun-god, but they demolished the walls. They were awed for a moment at the majestic scene, and at faithful old Zantzintl, who stood with one hand pointing significantly toward the heavens and the other toward the beautiful statute of our Savior; and it seemed for a moment that victory would be ours through their superstitious fears, but the spell was broken by the sound of battering rams against the palace doors which yielded. Then they swarmed within.

Brave Papantzin and his trusty band circled about the queen and her child to shield and save them—I saw a deadly stroke leveled at Papantzin, when brave Pochotl sprang between the assailant and his chieftain and was felled to earth—again they charged on Papantzin, who leveled blow after blow until I fought my way near enough to seize the queen, who clasped her babe close to her sheltering breast while my men covered our retreat just as I saw her devoted father fall beneath their fearful, savage onslaught. No word was said, but on his face there shone a holy calm as his dying eyes were raised to hers and mine.

We cleared the gates and dashed around the palace walls where some of my braves secured a canoe to cross the moat.

Just once she raised her deathly face to mine and whispered: "*My Topiltzin—the after-life,*" then a cruel shiver racked her form, and I clasped her closer to my aching heart and pressed my lips to hers and she was dead! I scarcely knew when my lamenting warriors drew the piercing arrows from my mortal wounds.

I am tired now, Hueman, I wish to go to sleep beside my love—good-night—Hueman, good-night." * * *

Yes, they are sleeping, my lumbering gait and long drawn sighs cannot arouse them now.

The Toltec race no longer is a nation, but laurels of unfading fame shall tell how we have lived and died. Adown the mighty strides of time conjecturing tongues may hint of buried treasures, but to him alone in whose veins courses the blood of the royal line of Toltecs, will the secret be revealed. The son of this sweetly sleeping Xochitl draws from that parent's side a strain of true royal blood—to him perhaps the secret may be revealed. * * *

Oh, Thou Almighty Supreme Deity, have I now earned the blessed right to tread the path to the Sun? Have I raised the standard of my being beyond the cruel limit of being born again? Oh, I would that my thoughts had grown so pure that they might reach to God, and then I need no longer fear that I be born again. * * *

I hear soft, low music now, methinks an Angel form has wafted perfumed billows across my peaceful brow—come closer love—oh, how beautiful you are—give me your little hand once more and lead me on. * * *

It is sweetly strange and gratifying that I no longer feel the stroke of age, and as I pen these lines a flood of holy light illumines every recess of this treasure-house and a sweet, well-known voice whispers "Come." * * *

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PART II.

CHAPTER X.

THE great high priest Humac, was appointed leader of the Toltecs and he advised them to secure all of the provisions which it was possible for them to remove, and they journeyed to a place far distant from the enemy which was considered suitable for a halting place and was named Xaltocan.

Among those who were fortunate enough to make their escape was Xinhltatzin, who had been one of the singers of the temple, and was the sweetheart of the illfated noble Pochotl, and her mother, who evinced a deep and tender devotion toward the little prince Meconetzin, of whom even careless Ezcolotl had become exceedingly fond.

Their next halting place was Coatlyapan, where the attention of the followers of the faith of Tecpantcaltzin was called to the fact that three large and shaggy animals were following them; they kept a certain distance from the refugees at all times, which increased their superstitious fears and they solemnly declared that the animals possessed the spirits of Tecpantcaltzin and his two brothers, Cauhltli and Maxtlatzin.

The liberal minded band of Toltecs who followed the broad and noble teachings of the prophet priest Hueman, saw that the presence of these animals boded no good to their leader, and a slight estrangement arose which was soon provoked into a hostile demonstration, which threatened to erupt at any moment.

Huemac urged them onward at all possible speed, hoping in this manner to avoid further trouble; but many remonstrated at the rapid gait, as there were many among them who were wounded, also some very old and very young people; when they reached Huehuecauauhtillin he granted them a longer season of rest, but the mutinous feeling still pervaded the two factions and Huemac became very despondant in consequence of these difficulties.

Their next move was westward at Atzcapotzalco and there they remained for a short time, when they again took up the line of march toward Tetlilicuan, where they left the wounded and worn-out followers who were unable to proceed further.

Huemac in a fit of despondancy and grief advised them to choose another leader, as the disease of ingratitude become epidemic among them. Nouhyotl, who had been a commander in the army of Topiltzin, was chosen as leader; he had always been a rival of Pochotl, and he lost no opportunity to make love-songs to unhappy Xinhtalatzin, whose grief for her fallen hero seemed to increase with the difficulties which they encountered in their tedious and hurried flight.

Nouhyotl by his rare tact and diplomacy was a general favorite among both factions and his coronation took place at Tetlilicuan.

The despondancy of Huemac increased from day to day, and he often expressed deep regret that he had ever undertaken the long march when he saw with what eager desire his followers accepted his resignation and also the pride which they evinced in obeying their newly made king.

It was to sorrowing Xinhtlatzin and her mother that heart-broken Huemac poured forth his grief and disappointment.

Ezcolotl, by virtue of the great importance attached to her commission as guardian and nurse to the thriving young prince Meconetzin, had endeavored to awaken an interest in the bosom of Nouhyotl from the moment they had met upon the march; but all of her arts and wiles proved unavailing, and she was chagrined at the eager longing glances he showered upon graceful Xihhtlatzin, whose utter disregard alone saved her from the hatred of scheming Ezcolotl.

At the close of a beautiful day a few weeks after the coronation took place, and at the precise moment when poor old Huemac was making known to the two ladies his determination to return to his native land to breathe his last earthly wish or die in the attempt, Ezcolotl forced her way into their midst exclaiming:

“Here, take the young prince Meconetzin and care for him, as you fear the power and prophesies of the wizard of Tollantzingo, for in one short hour I shall be dead; and you Xihhtlatzin, will then have no rival in the affection of the newly made king: as I sat me down a few moments ago in the shadow of a wild-rose tree, weeping bitterly because I have no friends, not one, and as I cast my eyes upon the ground, I beheld a sparkling gem at my feet which I seized and carried to the king, and he pronounced it to be a genuine Chalchihuitl, then I said desperately that I was led to it by the spirit of my dear Topiltzin, who always loved me dearly and now grieves to see me thus unhappy, and I immediately swallowed the gem to relieve me of my lonely life; now I shall certainly die shortly and I implore these good ladies to take good care of little Meconetzin, whom I love dearly, for he alone on this earth cares for me just a little. Good Huemac, how soon may I expect to be transported to the sun to join my darling Topiltzin?”

"I am no prophet, but I am certain that it will take a larger gem than the Chalchihuitl to shut out your voluble existence."

"Will it not really kill me?"

"No, but it may be the means of curing you of some of your foolishness, or perhaps will take root in you and create some hybrid creature upon which you may be able to lavish your abundant affection; so the very best use that you can make of your time is to follow the instructions which have been given you to take good care of the son of maguey, who will in time reward you for your vigilance." She turned away abashed and hesitating, and he turned to his sympathizing friends exclaiming:

"My sorrow has completely hemmed me in, I have no pleasure in my existence away from my native land, it is no use in trying to urge me to take up the line of march further away from the scenes of my youth which I yearn to again behold, although they are now in the possession of savages. I shall return to die upon the summit of Chapultepec, which overlooks my native vale and in sight of the temple wherein I have worshipped since my infancy, unless I perish in the attempt. Adieu, dear friends, I will admit to you that the presence of those shaggy animals that follow us has caused me deep concern. Of course, it is much better for our people to have a young and gallant king to rule them than an old and decrepid one like—like me. Farewell."

The ladies were too kind-hearted to see the home-sick old priest start out alone upon his self-imposed mission, and Xinhltatzin filled the breast of the newly-made king with pleasure by making known to him her first request, which was that he should send guards to accompany the aged priest upon his journey, as there was great danger that he might perish miserably by the way-side. The re-

quest was granted, and in order to avoid any protest on the part of the wanderer they were instructed to follow him at a safe distance and only make their presence known in case of an absolute necessity.

In the course of several moons they returned and related the following incidents in the journey of Huemac. After many days and weeks of travel, subsisting upon herbs, roots, berries and fruit of the cactus, worn and emaciated, he gazed upon his native vale of Tollantzingo. He climbed the hill of Chapultepec and seated himself under the shadow of a towering cedar tree, utterly indifferent to his danger; his faded eyes lighted up with tender memories as they lingered upon the familiar scenes.

At last the flood-gates of his emotions were released by the torrent which he could not suppress, until he fell to the earth in a paroxysm of grief that shivered his aged form like a reed in a merciless gale.

The sun sank pityingly behind the mountains and the stars lifted back the clouds which had rifted the heavens and shone upon the prostrate form of the pilgrim; a gentle breeze wafted through the massive branches and lifted the silvered hair from off his brow, cool and caressingly; at last he staggered to his feet and a low, mournful wail fell from his trembling lips:

No one to greet me, no loved one to meet me;
A stranger, I am come to the land of my birth
O'er burdened with sorrow, no hope for the morrow;
Oh receive me, Great Spirit, I am tired of earth.

Then he slowly uncoiled a rope of ixtle which he had carried in his bosom and he laborously climbed the giant tree and secured one end of the rope about a sturdy limb

and the other end about his wrinkled throat; then clasping his hands together, he made one last fervent appeal to be forgiven for ushering himself unbidden into the presence of the Supreme Deity, then slid from off the limb into eternal space. * * *

CHAPTER XI.

TWENTY years have elapsed since the memorable fall of Tollantzingo, and the band of Toltecs live peacefully under the excellent rule of king Nouhyotl and his gentle queen Xinhtlatzin. They have but one surviving child, a handsome princess whom they have named Centeotl, now eighteen years of age.

Prince Meconetzin had become a power in the kingdom and was revered by the Toltecs, for he inherited all of the grace and beauty which had proved so fatally fascinating to his gentle mother, and also her refined nature, coupled with a robust, manly figure.

In the presence of the fair young princess, whose features always brightened at his coming, he unconsciously brought every powerful element of his sensitive nature to bear upon the one great wish of his longing heart, which yearned to be always near her by the sacred right which her own loving heart must give.

Ezcolotl became the mother of a son, the result she said of her having swallowed the chalchihuitl, which she had taken with suicidal intent; she had named him Topiltzin, and as the years rolled by she became very ambitious for his future welfare, and incited in his bosom a feeling of jealousy and spirit of rivalry toward Meconetzin, hoping thus to suppress in a measure his ever increasing popularity. Through his daring skill as a warrior he had won the enviable rank of general, and commanded the whole

army aside from the imperial guards, over whom Meconetzin ruled. It was the one wish in the heart of Ezcotl that her son should gain the love of the sweet princess Centeotl, and she daily conjured subtle means of bringing disgrace upon the guileless son of maquey, but he was guided away from every deep-laid snare as if by magic, or the aid of unseen hands.

Topiltzin was every inch a chieftain and a fearless, diplomatic commander, who embraced every opportunity to boast of his unique parentage, it being a distinction accorded to no other Toltec. He had a powerful and commanding figure, and excelled in all of their athletic sports and was out-rivaled by no one as a marksman; he danced the favorite Areyto gracefully while thrilling the dulcet-toned *teponaztli*.

Princess Centeotl was not wholly indifferent to his passion, which he exhibited in such a spirit of daring that it quite overwhelmed her with mingled fear and pleasure.

The wooing of Meconetzin was of such a delicate, patient and enduring character that he entwined himself firmly about her heart before she was aware of his gentle power; into his large, dark, expressive eyes came a divine wave of worship, soothing to her quickened senses which filled her being with rapture and peace.

An escaped Toltec, who had been a slave to the Chichimecas since the fall of Tollantzingo, had traced the course taken by the Toltecs in their flight and immediately made his way to the king and informed him that he had found near the gates of the besieged city—while assisting in the removal of the dead—a massive and peculiar key, which article he managed to conceal about his person until the hour should present itself when he might hope to escape and join the remnant of his race. When that coveted hour arrived and he fled, he was recaptured, stripped

and beaten until life was nearly extinct, and it was then that the key was found and taken from him. He tried by every plausible means to learn what had been done with it, as he believed that it secured the vault wherein Tecpantcaltzin, Cauhtli and Maxtlatzin had deposited the massive bars of gold and silver and also the valuable plate and enormous quantity of jewels belonging to his kingdom.

Nouhyotl had always cherished a secret ambition to be instrumental in re-establishing the Toltec kingdom in its native land. He had been successful in negotiating with several nations who inhabited the surrounding country and signified their willingness to aid him, and they were initiated by the Toltecs into various arts and pursuits, and thus during the twenty years which had intervened the subjects of Nouhyotl became quite a formidable host.

He was deeply interested in the narrative of the fugitive and gratified to learn that the treasures of the Toltecs had never been discovered by the Chichimecas, although many heroic slaves were tortured to death in order to try to wrench the secret from them; this fate he, too, would have met but for his ingenuity in preying upon the superstitious fears of the ignorant conquerors by affecting idiocy after the brutal beating to which he had been subjected.

They had searched every portion of Tollantzingo for the lock which the strange key should open, but failed to discover it.

After listening attentively to the slave's narrative, the king summoned Ezcolotl, who had always been volubly proud of her knowledge of the transactions at the palace during the reign of the ill-fated Tecpantcaltzin. She assured the king that the treasures were carried to Palpan

heights and concealed therein by the king and his two brothers, aided by a band of servants who were heavily laden, and had remained a certain length of time before the sounding of the war-gong at the fall of Tollantzingo.

Thus assured, Nouhyotl thought that if he could gain possession of the key by strategy or otherwise, and then assure the powerful Culhuacas that the treasures of the Tecpantcaltzin kingdom were intact and thereby induce them to ally their hosts with his, they might have hopes of conquering the Chichimecas, who had compelled all of the nations who joined with them in their conquest of the Toltecs to acknowledge them as the supreme rulers of Tollan, which name they changed to the Chichimeca kingdom.

They ignored every promise made to the other powers by which they had induced them to join in the invasion, claiming in extenuation that they were unable to discover the hiding place of the Toltec treasures and there was consequently nothing to divide.

Nouhyotl had learned that the Culhuacas longed to free themselves from the enormous tributes imposed upon them by the greedy and unprincipled Chichimecas.

After mature deliberation he decided upon an immediate course of action, and he summoned Meconetzin and Topiltzin to a private audience with him, and carefully laid all of his plans before them and entrusted them with the important and dangerous commission of obtaining possession of the coveted key.

Without consulting the queen or deliberating upon the rashness of his plan, he promised the young rivals that he who became successful in the venture should have the fair princess Centeotl for his bride.

Bounding homeward, with a radiant countenance Topiltzin imparted the joyful news to attentive Ezcolotl, who

at once set about to devise ways and means for the success of her dearest wish and that of her idolized son.

To the refined spirit of Meconetzin this task was indeed a repugnant one; not on account of the danger and probable defeat to be incurred, but the spirit of barter in the terms of the decree were utterly antagonistic to his proud and noble nature.

That he would willingly lay down his life in the defense of his people and aid them to recover their lost kingdom there was no question; but to be sent upon this mission fraught with every evil and pledged with such a divine reward in common with the son of plebian Ezcotl galled every drop of royal blood that surged in his manly breast, and he could not repel a feeling of scorn toward the king for the injustice he was planning against the fair young princess, who would thus be denied any choice of her heart's wishes.

Twelve moons was the limit of time given them to accomplish the mission and ten trusty braves were allowed to each. Preparations were at once begun for their speedy departure, and they were repeatedly commanded by the king to make all of the advances possible toward the intelligent Culhuacas, through whose vast domain a great portion of their hazardous journey must be made.

A grand ball was given at the palace in honor of their departure on the evening preceeding their march, and each young chieftain swayed in graceful rhythm to the wierd music brought forth by the instruments in their gesticulating hands. Centeotl, who was seated upon the rostrum occupied by the king and queen, beheld the lively scene with glowing admiration.

The spirit of reckless daring so characteristic of To-piltzin was vividly portrayed as he whirled, curved and glided in the dance, and his brilliant eyes were marked

with a gleam of possession in their fearless depths as they rested upon charming Centeotl; but a frown gathered upon his expansive brow, which pulled his heavy eyebrows together, giving his well-set features a forbidding appearance, as he saw her turn shivering away from his impassioned gaze and seek the answering smile which glorified the handsome features of graceful Meconetzin; and they seemed utterly oblivious to their surroundings and had at one sweet bound entered the realms of love's paradise: a holy calm settled upon the eloquent features of the dignified prince and a thrilling rapture of peace and security filled the heart of the blushing princess with sacred joy.

That night when Meconetzin sought his couch he was visited by a most remarkable dream or vision. A beautiful form floated gently down beside him with a soft rustle of her perfumed snowy garments and gazed lovingly into his wondering eyes exclaiming: "Meconetzin, son of maguey, I am your mother Xochitl, the daughter of Papantzin, and all through your childhood years the good prophet Hueman and I have kept watch over you, guiding your feet away from every danger and inspiring you with courage and patience; now I have come to warn you against the wiles and snares which will be placed in your path by your rival Topiltzin and his designing mother Ezcolotl. Beware of them! they are your enemies in thought and deed. The mission assigned to you is a most dangerous one—but the key, which the king has such a craving to possess, is not the one which unlocks the door leading to the hidden wealth of the Tecpantcaltzin kingdom but the fabulous treasure of the true and loyal Toltecs, which has been accumulating many years previous to and centuries since the reign of the Toltec Savior, the immortal Quetzalcoatl, and was lost at the

fall of Tollantzingo by the true heir of the Toltec throne, general Topiltzin, who perished from wounds received upon that fatal field. Within this key—which is really a misleading device—is hidden a tiny spring which you will find in the socket, upon which a firm pressure will reveal a parchment which you must possess and peruse at all hazards, for it will tell you how to reach the treasures which you may perhaps be able to remove and appropriate to the well-being and advancement of the true and loyal Toltecs. The wealth of the Tecpantcaltzin kingdom is hidden at Palpan heights, at which place you must watch for the sunlight to flood the place, when a message will be revealed to you which is inscribed therein upon the wall, explaining the exact location of that wealth. This is very insignificant in comparison to the wealth which the bronze key will reveal to you. The bit of parchment describes the path leading to the underground palace of solid onyx built over the most prolific mine ever discovered by our people, and it is also the sepulchre of my mortal body and that of Hueman, the prophet of Tollantzingo and general Topiltzin, his nearest kin.

“The cavern is guarded by the constant vigilance of those shaggy monsters, which will never molest you. Within the cavern grows a most beautiful and odoriferous plant which is constantly in leaf and blossom. Gather it and always keep it stored about you, for it is an antidote for the deadly Toloache and every other poison known to these people; flee to the prophet’s cavern—as it is called—if you are pursued, for not one of those superstitious people will dare to follow you there; you cannot mistake the place, for it is directly opposite Palpan heights and is feared and shunned by all.

“Remember Meconetzin, that your mother will always guard you as only spirits can, and you must obey the

gentle intuition of the promptings of your soul, for in this manner only may I communicate with you; the mighty force which hems you in, cannot be destroyed by mortal hands—therefore do not weaken it by impatience or worry, and when clouds obscure the brightness of heaven be not cast down, but renew your *faith*, for it is the gateway to glory, and now adieu—you shall feel my presence near you always.” With a lingering kiss which thrilled him with ecstasy, she gathered up the billowy folds of her fleecy robe in one soft, dimpled hand and sailed noiselessly aloft the nebulous realms of that beautiful night.

Meconetzin aroused himself from the spell that allured him and felt that he had been conscious of all that transpired, and he carefully reviewed each word and impressed his grasping mind with every detail, and he knew that it was not all a dream.

The first gleam of the following rosy morning was the appointed hour set by the king to receive them and give them their final instructions, and also to say adieu to the one being whom they both loved.

Fear smote the heart of the princess when she encountered the passionate, masterful gaze of Topiltzin, as he wrung her hand at parting and riveted her frightened eyes to his by that powerful magnetism which seemed to imprison her for a moment under the basilisk influence of his searching eyes.

How infinitely different was the sensation which she experienced when Meconetzin’s shapely, helpful hands gave hers a tender pressure, as his dark eyes tear-laden, met hers and his curved lips blanched and trembled as he attempted to murmur her name and turned abruptly away to hide the anguish which the parting aroused in his soul.

The little band moved quietly out of the city and sped swiftly on their way, just as the windows of heaven crested the purple heights of the grand old mountains, and carefully lifted the filmy vapor that draped the flower-dotted vales and cactus-covered plains of dreamy old Tollan. Upon the outskirts of the city the prince was astonished to see another person join the braves of Topiltzin and he said:

"I thought we were entitled to but ten men each, and I see that you are provided with eleven; and why is this?"

"If you were not such an inveterate star-gazing mortal you would have no occasion to ask such an absurd question—I have but ten braves—the eleventh person is my heroic little mother in the garb of a chieftain; I could not dissuade her from this purpose. Her determination was made known to me at the precise moment of my departure to the palace and I had no idea where she would join us until now."

"Of course it is no affair of mine, but I do think that the journey is a hazardous one for a woman to undertake. Our wisest plan will be to map out the course which is best for us to pursue while we are here in the security of our own domain, for we cannot hope to travel unmolested, and must endeavor to attract as little attention as possible. I think it will be necessary for us to arrange a code of signals before we venture further, for although we are both upon the same mission, it were better for our future safety to protect ourselves in this manner, which need not conflict with our separate ideas in regard to the object of our pursuit."

"Meconetzin, I may as well inform you right here and now that I have no plans whatever to make or share with you; the fair prize can be awarded to but one, and I pro-

pose that we take our separate ways to obtain the key in order to avoid treachery"—

"Treachery!! Topiltzin, dare you for one moment question my integrity? I broached the subject in a spirit of caution; there is also but *one key* for which we endanger our lives in the hope of obtaining, but there are thousands of untried means."

"Very true indeed, and if my life is spared I shall try each one in turn until I become the proud possessor of that *one particular key* and its matchless reward." He glanced surreptitiously at the stately Meconetzin while making the vain-glorious speech, and felt a trifle disconcerted as he saw that his mobile features relaxed not a muscle nor contracted the suspicion of a frown, and he feared that calm resolution far more than a flame of anger.

Xolotli, the Toltec who had escaped from his slavery of twenty years duration was allowed—by his special request—to guide Meconetzin and his band, and he evinced great pleasure in explaining to him the facts regarding the savage habits of the aggressive Chichimecas who, previous to the conquest, had never tilled the soil nor given evidence of having any inventive genius other than the construction of a rude bear-trap, a bird-snare and to weave fibres of maguey into nets with which they snared fishes.

When they became the lordly possessors of the wealth and skill acquired by the thrifty Toltecs, the many important devices in looms necessary to develop the choice fabrics prepared by them were utterly useless in the hands of the conquerors; also the instruments used by the metal workers and jewelers which were used to fashion delicate tracery from the pages of nature upon various ornaments and in preparing the many imple-

ments necessary to the toil; it was the consideration of the vast knowledge possessed by the prisoners which prompted the conquerors to spare many lives.

The terrible plague died out and all of the surviving and unhappy women and children of Toltec blood were distributed among the different tribes and commanded to teach those savages all of their civilized ways; they were anxious to imitate their illustrious predecessors in every possible manner.

The phenomenal superstition of the Chichimecas received a fresh impetus when the startling announcement was made that an aged Toltec priest was found hanging from a limb of a tree upon the summit of Chapultepec. They considered it an evil omen which would work disaster upon them if they abused their intelligent captives, some of whom were intrepid enough to assure them that the suicide was returned to them by a message from the sun, and that it was a token of future vengeance upon their persecutors.

The three shaggy monsters at the prophet's cavern added lustre to their fears and intimidated many of the captives also.

The Calhuacas, who were really an advanced nation, were profoundly impressed with the high order of intellect possessed by the Toltecs, and all captives who succeeded in escaping from the Chichimecas although held as prisoners, were worshipped by them as deities and held positions next in importance to the king.

When attentive Meconetzin became aware of all of these things, his heart softened toward king Nouhyotl, whom he realized would sacrifice all that he controlled in order to re-establish his beloved people in their lost domain.

The prince and his band reached a cavern which is un-

der the hill of Chapultepec, in safety, and they decided to make it their headquarters, for Xolotli assured them that no Chichimeca was brave enough to venture in the shadow of the towering tree since the suicide of heart-broken Huemac.

A captive gardner well known to Xolotli, who had been permitted to continue his vocation for the benefit of his masters, was the one person to whom Meconetzin decided to appeal and learn, if possible, directly or indirectly, the location of the important trophy.

With this object in view, he decided to make himself known to the gardner as soon as the shades of night grew dense enough to start forth, guided by Xolotli.

He lingered for some moments under the very limb from which the aged, home-sick pilgrim had hurled himself into eternity. A pathetic smile hid the indignation which entered the soul of brave Meconetzin, that he should come to the land of his birth and be compelled to act with the stealth and cunning of a criminal! These conflicting emotions destroyed all thought of danger, as he silently followed fleet-footed Xolotli, until he gave a quick gesture of warning and he halted at the entrance to a brushwood corral, while his guide cautiously ventured to the house wherein the gardner was peacefully sleeping. He speedily returned and beckoned the prince to follow him.

"Thrice welcome to my humble abode, brother Toltecs, all that I have and all that I am is at your worthy disposal. Xolotli is my life-long friend, but you, young man, your countenance is new to me."

"I am Meconetzin, son of maguey."

"May the Supreme Deity protect you Prince! How dare you venture here upon these dangerous grounds?"

"I am come for the purpose of gaining possession of

that mysterious key found by Xolotli upon the battlefield after the fall of Tollantzingo, and I thought there might be a possible chance of your aiding me in the location of the same—it is of no possible service to the Chichimecas, but will be of inestimable value to me.”

“Perhaps Xolotli has told you that my son is a jeweler for the king, as his inclination tended that way from the moment his eyes were first dazzled by the sight of rare metals and rare gems, and their beautiful uses—then too, these ignorant people do not care whether a child follows the vocation of his sire as became *our* laws, and thus I am deprived of his companionship; for our jeweler, who was most skillful under Tecpantcaltzin’s reign, had no sons, and he was badly wounded at that terrible siege and found refuge here, and that was the beginning of a friendship between himself and my son which lasted to his death. My poor wife was ill of the plague at the time and I too was unable through the weakness of starvation to assist at the terrible battle. Two moons have passed since he has visited me and I am now expecting him every day—he is very popular in the city, and will be able to learn the whereabouts of the key, if he does not already know.”

“Then do me the lasting favor to learn from him if possible the location of the trophy and impress upon him—in the name of our brotherhood—the necessity of the utmost secrecy in regard to the same. He and yourself shall be rewarded handsomely, and now we will bid you a kind good-night and will take the liberty of calling soon again.”

“Dear Prince, we ask no reward for that which we will be only too proud and glad to do in your service and more if possible; everything must and shall be done quietly, rest assured of that, it is our only safety; all that

we have or may do is at your service, and my humble abode I shall proudly offer you for a shelter and gladly welcome you here always. You, too, Xolotli—here is always your home. Be very discreet and careful here, dear Prince, you are in danger! Good night; may the Supreme Deity watch over and guard you from all harm, oh Prince of the only true faith.”

When they again reached the cavern, they were surprised to hear no sound of the remaining band. Again and again they gave the low, clear signal peculiar to their fraternity, but no response was heard.

Xolotli released some cucuyos which fluttered about, expanding their wings until they lighted up the corner where the provisions had been placed, and they then saw with dismay that not a vestige of them remained.

A deep sense of dejection overcame the prince for a moment as he saw the indisputable evidence of treachery, and he turned to accost Xolotli when many strong hands and arms were thrown about him and the prince became a prisoner! A gurgling cry, more beast-like than human, escaped from the lips of the terrified Xolotli as the Chichimeca guards secured them together and forced them to march on through the cavern, which had an outlet by a narrow path leading directly to the city.

In this degrading manner the only living heir to the Toltec throne and Toltec treasures was led through the very portals where his father fell and into the palace of his ancestors.

They were secured against a massive marble pillar until the grey dawn of a new day crept cautiously into the spacious apartment as if reluctant to reveal the forlorn countenance of troubled Meconetzin and his faithful guide. Fortunately for him the Chichimeca tongue had been learned by him and when the guards came to lead

him before their erratic king, he was able to converse with him; the moment he entered his presence he scowlingly exclaimed:

“Young man, I am informed of your rank, also your mission to my people, and we have a very unpleasant manner of disposing of objectionable adventurers who make their way uninvited into my domain for the ignoble purpose of inciting a rebellion!”

“King Tenochtitlan, I came not to wrest one inch of your disputed territory, nor to plant one grain of discord among your subjects, nor detract in any manner from your sovereignty, and when my object had been attained it would not have made you a particle poorer in your known possessions nor one degree less a king. Inasmuch as I am known to you the identity of the traitor who revealed and betrayed me is proven. Of you, in whose arteries pulses the victorious blood that conquered my proud race, I may expect more clemency than from the dastard who sprang mysteriously into existence, I am ashamed to say, from a Toltec mother.”

“Son of maguey, for the present I shall spare you and provide you with guards, who will lead you to the lakes where you shall—as a penance—bring into my presence a female crane and a female kingfisher upon a floating garden, both of them hatching a brood which must be ready to come out of their shells the moment that your arrival is announced.”

As he was led away from the palace, they met a priest emerging from a temple carrying a large bouquet in one hand and a Huehuetl in the other, which gave a sharp, shrill sound as he played upon it. He turned his face reverently toward the east and blew with great force upon the instrument and then toward the other cardinal points

in the same manner, stopping at intervals to gather a pinch of dust from his path and swallow it.

At the first blast of the instrument, his followers all knelt down and prayed vociferously; all who had been guilty of any crimes called upon their gods to pardon their guilt and not permit of its being discovered by man.

The soldiers knelt in the dust and prayed for courage, for strength, and for great victories over their enemies, and prayed loudly for many prisoners for the sacrifice!

Again the music pealed forth and the guards at a given signal from the priest led Meconetzin into the temple and directly in front of the sun-god Tezcatlipoca, where lay a robe the exact counterpart of the one worn by the idol of the emblem of day; with this garment he was commanded to array himself, very much to his surprise and disgust.

When the task was completed and he was again led forth, the crowd of worshippers turned to do him honor. Many prostrated themselves in his pathway and all of the motly crowd gazed upon him with radiant smiles and admiring laudations. He was at a loss to comprehend the significance of the novel ovation which saluted him on every side until he was led through the streets, where they met Xolotli well-guarded. The moment that his eyes were turned toward the prince he uttered a cry of anguish and clasped his fettered hands in misery; his tragic looks and grieved, frightened tones caused a spasm of fear to permeate the being of the prince for a moment only, then he resolutely advanced toward the captive and demanded of him an explanation of the strange proceedings about him and the significance of the gaudy raiment which he had been compelled to don.

"Oh my Prince, my poor Prince, you are doomed! You are doomed! That robe is the insignia of your fate! By that token you are marked to be the next victim to the

sun-god—that high-priest yonder is the one appointed to tear out your heart upon the Cuaxicalli-tizoc, sever your head and hurl it into the yawning Tyzompantli, and your arms and feet will be cooked and sent to the tables of the lords and nobles—Oh! ye gods! ye gods!!” And shackled Xolotli forgot his own terrible plight in his grief at sight of the prince wearing the seal of doom!

“When does this sacrifice take place, Xolotli?”

“In one year from the day upon which you are chosen—the sacrifice to the sun-god has just transpired, the seventeenth day of May of each year is the fatal day.”

The guards waited in respectful silence while the foregoing conversation ensued, gazing with awe and veneration upon the young prince, who experienced a welcome reaction in his breast at the announcement of the slave.

The multitude began to chant a dirge in suppressed and discordant tones, which sent a chill of horror through the sensitive nerves of Meconetzin and an impulse seized him to spurn the blood-thirsty wretches who groveled at his feet. A stately palm near which he stood raised its sword-tipped fingers with a sorrowful, threatening gesture and dropped them mournfully as the caressing zephyrs swept on, laden with that muffled, lugubrious wail.

Twelve moons had seemed an eternity to him when the mandate of king Nouhyotl had been made known to him, but now he knew that time would hasten on with fleeting wings.

With a proud gesture he turned a beaming countenance upon the assembled multitude, who were unprepared for any show of submission on his part, and at which demonstration they lost all control over their subdued spirits and subtle caution, and simultaneously rent the air with savage reverberating cries of cheer.

They considered the unparalleled nerve of the prince to be more than heroic, sublime.

When the crowds dispersed at the door of the apartment which had been assigned to him, he beguiled the attention of the guards with a show of interest as to the most feasible plan of bringing the brood at the auspicious moment stipulated by the king.

The ancient and beautiful city no longer bore the name of Tollantzingo, but had been changed to that of Tenochtitlan, in honor of the ruling king, who had been instrumental in bringing about the quadruple alliance which had succeeded beyond his wildest hopes.

While keeping the guards' attention alert to the importance of the king's commands, which to all outward appearance engrossed his entire reflections, he absently drew an arrow from the belt of one of the guards as if to admire its workmanship; then he carelessly used it as a pencil to draw odd and comical figures upon the earthen floor; finally, when the attention of the guards were bent upon his efforts, he began outlining keys, large ones, small ones, of every size and shape that he had ever seen, and many which he had not seen, until one of the guards declared excitedly, pointing to one of them, that it was an exact counterpart of the one which had been found on the field of Tollantzingo after the terrible battle, and was believed to be the magical one which unlocked the hidden treasures of the Tecpantcaltzin kingdom. In an indifferent manner and tone the prince enquired if the key that had been found had been preserved.

"Oh yes, most revered Tezcatlipoca, it is among the treasures of the king and my brother is one of the guards." For a moment the prince searched the beaten floor with triumphant eyes, then he enquired:

"Why do you call me Tezcatlipoca?"

“Because you are our human sun-god.”

Fearful of exciting the least suspicion in the breast of the wary guards, he refrained from questioning them further about the key, and he languidly stretched himself upon his couch.

For several succeeding days the ceremonies were continued in honor of the newly chosen sun-god, at which chafing restraint the prince exhibited remarkable nerve and patient endurance, which appealed more to the Chichimecas than volumes of eloquence or tirades of abuse could ever have done.

Upon the preceding day but one, to the appointed time set for their departure to the lakes and at a time when the popularity of the doomed prince had nearly reached its zenith, and when it was considered a rare treat for him to deign a word with them, he felt constrained to again broach the subject of the key.

The guards repeatedly expressed their admiration for his wonderful courage, the brother of the imperial guard was his most devout admirer, and he humbly besought the distinguished prisoner to impart to him the secret of his wonderful courage and endurance. Mecnetzin informed him that there were certain conditions which he must religiously follow if he really desired to attain courage equal to his, and foremost of all was demanded a solemn pledge of secrecy, for the gift was only transmissible in the most confidential manner. He cited several trivial duties to be performed, and then told him that the key in the king's possession was not the one which secured the treasures of the Tecpantcaltzin kingdom, but was imbued with mighty strength, a fact which he would be aware of if he could secure and bring it to him, when the important power would be his forever after if he never allowed his mind to dwell upon evil thoughts.

When his next watch came on he tried to attract the attention of the prince by pointing triumphantly to his girdle when the other guards were not observing him; at last, fearing that his actions would arouse their suspicion, he called him aside and said: "How dare you ogle me and attempt such brazen familiarity? Know you not that I am the only living spirit of the great and powerful Tezcatlipoca upon this earth? I am the representative of heaven, without whose effulgent rays no living being could exist, without which eternal night would darken the universe! Remember henceforth whose mighty spirit is within me and never seek to detract my thoughts from my devotions, unless you are commanded by me to make yourself conspicuous."

The abashed guard made no reply, but the meekness of his devotion increased, and in order to reinstate himself in the good graces of the distinguished god, he ingeniously managed to secrete the key under the covers of the couch of the apparently indifferent Tezcatlipoca, who could hardly conceal his satisfaction as he furtively beheld the ready wit of the guard, who studiously avoided a solitary glance in the direction of the hidden trophy, and during the remainder of his watch kept his head bowed upon his breast as if fearful of again displeasing the great and exacting spirit of the mighty Tezcatlipoca.

When the welcome shades of night settled down upon the scene, Meconetzin drew the precious key from its hiding place to ascertain if possible whether the hidden spring was really there as his sweet dream had described, and also the parchment as stated by his angel mother.

It was with great difficulty that he controlled his emotions as he carefully felt over the entire surface of the quaint, heavy metal and failed to discover any signs of a secret spring until his thumb nail sank between two

raised rings, which had been used to ornament the base of the curious device—the scroll was there—and with the knowledge of its presence as had been described to him, came a feeling of veneration which enveloped his senses and he clasped the treasure in his grateful fingers and waited eagerly and sleeplessly for the first welcome rays of a new day.

After the religious ceremonies of the morning were over, during which time he had managed to read the precious scroll and commit it to memory, and, fearful that the cumbersome key might be discovered in his possession, he resolved to manage some amended devotional exercise which would enable him to bury the trophy upon the hillside leading to the prophet's cavern.

Since he had been successful in convincing the king and all of his retinue that the true spirit of the sun-god animated his being, any capricious whim of his was hailed by them as fresh evidence of the fact, a theory which had never been advanced by any other youth who had been offered up in sacrifice.

As they filed out of the temple he astonished the high-priests who were in advance of him by chanting a sweet Toltec hymn, beginning in a low, clear tremulous tone which gradually ascended until the beautiful valley joyfully caught up the strain in echoes, which seemed to peal with rapture like tinkling silver bells and then died away in a long drawn sob; the blessed privilege exhilarated and inspired him, and a torrent of words rushed to his lips which resolved themselves into the most fervent appeal to the Supreme Deity for aid that was ever wafted toward the dome of heaven.

His large lustrous eyes soul-filled with reverent longing were raised in supplication and as he extended his beseeching arms aloft, a wave of intense passion glorified

his countenance and aroused some hidden depths of pity in the savage bosoms of the vast multitude who could not resist the voice of some urging spirit within them which found vent in wails that ended in hoarse lamentation.

Meconetzin turned slowly and thoughtfully in the direction he had mapped out, and with eyes bent upon the ground and his hands clasped together, he wandered on, followed by the priests and people as far as he deemed it expedient for him to venture with those superstitious hosts in that mooted direction.

He sank upon an inviting rock by the wayside, and affected to gather up particles of dust and swallow them in imitation of their favorite devotional humility, and anon he beckoned to the priests to sound the piping Huehuetl, while prayers were offered up by the multitude. Then he arose and gathered some thorns from an orange tree with which he pierced the flesh of his forearm until it bled, then he dipped each thorn into the blood and deliberately scooped out little holes to bury them in, and in this way he adroitly managed to secret the key in the shadow of the rock toward the sunrise.

When the delicate task was accomplished he solemnly invoked the guiding spirit of the great and only Tezcatlipoca to inspire him with further instructions which he devoutly promised to obey. Then the crowd dispersed at his command exhibiting in look and tone the veneration which they felt toward the wonderful representative of their hitherto silent and sullen Tezcatlipoca.

When he again sought the embrace of slumber, it was with a feeling of relief and fervent gratitude toward the Supreme Deity of the sun and to his guardian angels for his success thus far, for although he was deprived of his liberty, the wily and treacherous Topiltzin was surely deprived of the key.

The time arrived for him to be escorted by a number of guards to the rendezvous of the alert crane which, after many ineffectual attempts he finally succeeded in securing. Then they wandered farther up the lake in quest of the coy and watchful kingfisher, which proved to be a much more difficult venture than the fleet-footed crane had been. Patiently he persevered day after day during which time he superintended the building of new and unique floats of various shapes, to be used as gardens, and more fantastic than those built by his illustrious ancestors.

He soon learned with dismay that the source of natural events conflicted greatly with all of his plans, for the attentive crane mother produced a fine brood of fledglings before he had been successful in capturing any kingfisher. Nothing remained for him to do but to start out again in quest of another crane, and he reluctantly gave the command to release the noisy little prisoners.

The second attempt proved much more difficult of accomplishing than the first had been, owing to the lateness of the season, and in despair he ordered all of the guards and servants to aid him in capturing as many as they could manage, and with them he ventured nearer the city.

One evening at the early twilight hour he startled his guards and servants by making the solemn declaration that the invincible spirit of the supreme Tezcatlipoca commanded him to arise and go without delay to the prophet's cavern where the will of the revered deity would be revealed to him; that if he dare disobey the command grave consequences would be visited upon him. In apparent trepidation he besought several of the guards to accompany him as far as their fears would permit them, but they all knelt down and besought every god in the heavens, the air, the earth and the sea to bring him back

in safety from such a dangerous mission. At the very moment when he made known the request of the prompting spirit, the three savage-appearing animals were dolefully awakening the resounding echoes with hoarse howls that ended in low vicious rasping snarls.

He departed sturdily toward the rock-bound orifice which loomed up dark and forbidding against the night-mantled sky.

Again and again they besought him to brave the anger of an injured spirit rather than risk his life at the mercy of those untamed beasts that haunted the cavern, but he pointed significantly to his lips thereby conveying the idea that a spell was already upon him which deprived him of speech. They were horrified at this evidence of the supreme spirits influence, and offered no further resistance, and waited with fearful anxiety pictured upon each countenance as he mounted the towering cliff and stood erect and bravely outlined against the moonlit sky with those shaggy animals fawning about him; he then waved them a triumphant salute and turned and entered the cavern.

To his surprise and pleasure he aroused many cucuyos that had taken up their abode in the cavern, and as they spread their wings a wave of light illumined every recess of the novel resort, and with a deep sense of veneration he beheld the wonderful plant just as it had been described to him, and he carefully gathered every heart-shaped leaf and star-shaped blossom, while a subdued feeling of peace and veneration permeated his entire being as he masticated a liberal portion of the tender juicy leaves.

After making a circuit of the cavern, and fearful of exciting the suspicion of the guards he refrained from visiting the sacred sepulchre and treasure house.

As he emerged, the strange animals ceased their yelps

and eagerly flocked about him. The moon had arisen and the beautiful surroundings were lighted up distinctly by its mellow lustre, and the awe-struck guards and servants huddled together in fear and trembling until the prince solemnly advanced toward them and assured them that he was in the full possession of his faculties; and this wonderful exhibition of his nerve and power inspired such a depth of veneration in the simple-minded people that they were ready to offer up their very lives at his command.

He was quite amused as he retreated a few paces from them to see them stoop down and critically examine his footprints as if to assure themselves that he were really human and trod the earth as before, then they reverently laid their trembling hands upon his gaily embroidered robe while muttering words of devotion to their favorite gods.

One after another of the different broods were obliged to be released until there remained but two handsome cranes and one kingfisher, which promised to insure the arrival of their brood at or about the same time; then he ordered the floats to be festooned with trailing vines and a choice collection of beautiful wild-flowers, over which was arched a bower of cleverly entwined evergreens that lent a picturesque charm to the pretty device.

The birds did not disappoint them; they cleaved their shells simultaneously one auspicious morning, and they immediately entered the city and announced to the king the fulfillment of his wishes.

The king summoned them to appear before him, and questioned a guard relative to the incidents which transpired upon the journey, and he detailed every occurrence, expatiating liberally upon the silent summons of the imperative Tezcatlipōca, and the manner in which it was

obeyed. The prince thus became the hero of the hour, but he received the homage in such a spirit of lofty unconcern that it amazed and mystified the great Tenochtitlan, who furtively watched every movement of the prisoner, and grew half afraid and suspicious of the wonderful exploits and the esteem which amounted to absolute worship which the distinguished prisoner elicited without the least apparent effort, and he resolved to divest him of his unusual popularity in some galling and humiliating manner, for he was determined that no influence, however brief, should be allowed to conflict with his royal sway.

A grand feast was prepared in honor of the new acquisition to the king's gardens, which was followed by a brilliant ball and the usual sacrifice of prisoners.

Six priests always officiated at their sacrifices, one of them being the great high priest and executioner who wore a bright red tunic straight in front and back with a square hole in the center through which he thrust his head. This flaming emblem of his rank was guadily adorned with cotton fringe of vivid colors, and he wore a coronet of green and yellow plumes, massive gold pendants in each ear set with rare and beautiful emeralds which gleamed coldly in the blazing sunlight. His upper lip presented a ghastly appearance, having a circle of gold set with turquoise forced through it and fastened underneath the nostrils.

The other priests were dressed in long white garments, cut in the same manner as that of the great high priest, and embroidered in black. Their bristling dark hair hung long and loosely, and was heightened in its uncanny appearance with tiny paper wheels of various colors cunningly secured upon it, and their bodies were painted black.

At a given signal from the great high priest they seized the rude victim and carried him to the highest rostrum in the temple upon which the Cuaxicalli-tizoc was situated, upon which they hurled him, after announcing to the assembled multitude to which god he should be sacrificed. The high priest crossed his hands over the forehead of the victim and began in stentorian tones to call down upon him the wrath of every god and the menace of every evil which might afflict the people. Then four priests secured his hands and feet while the fifth one fastened his head with a wooden instrument made in the shape of a coiled and tongue protruding serpent which extended securely about his throat.

The altar was made convex, which arched the body considerably and reared the breast and abdomen in such a manner that resistance was impossible; then the high priest in imitation of the Toltec custom laid his hands upon the victim's head and prayed loudly for health and blessings upon the king, because he governed his people well and entered into a long list of his virtues and prayed for more victories and more prisoners, and for peace and contentment throughout the kingdom, and again called down upon him all the curses and afflictions which might otherwise be visited upon their people; he then seized the blade of obsidian with which he opened the breast and tore out the heart which he piously offered to the lips of the idol, then threw it at its feet for the third time, then upon a pan of living embers, and reverently gazed upon it until it was consumed, thus destroying any possibility of a future existence of their enemy; then he annointed the lips of the idol and the entrance to the temple with the blood. He then returned and severed the head from the body throwing the latter down into the outstretched hands of the soldiers who had captured him and they joyfully,

hastened to their homes with the trophy to prepare a feast.

With horror and amazement the prince beheld the brutal demonstration and his gentle soul shivered in agony at the barbarous ignorance and fiendish superstition of the cannibal Chichimecas, committed in the name of worship. He forgot that to such a fate he too was doomed; forgot all save the consuming wish to appeal to the multitude before him and arouse if possible some latent phase of humanity which he believed only needed kindling to awaken a flame. Repulsion was alive in every lineament of his expressive features through which shone that lofty soul no king or curse could humble, for he was unable to restrain his indignation. He plunged through the wondering crowd, leaped upon the blood-stained rostrum and in ringing tones he commanded the attention of the astounded multitude saying:

“Hear me, you king priests, and nobles; hearken, ye ignorant children of a deluded faith, for the spirit of the Supreme Deity of the sun inspires me to appeal to you! In His name I denounce the inhuman and disgusting spectacle here enacted in the name of worship! No god of the sun, of earth, of air, or of sea, demands of you a human sacrifice! Beware how you offend Him who holds the keys of heaven and wields the power to make each one and all of you to feel the sting of death more bitterly than he whom you have just tortured into eternity. He will send the grumbling earthquake to crumble these templed halls, and mad darting tongues of flame will leap from the frowning sky indignant at the despoliation of His handiwork which your gory hands have wrought. Beware, the fury of the Supreme Deity is now about to burst upon you; a wave of destruction forbodes the very air you breathe!”

Scarcely had the last echoes of his brave tones ceased to reverberate the vast audience hall when, at a given signal from the king the guards sprang forward and seized the doomed hero and turned in obedience to the great high priest to hurl him upon the reeking martyr-stone. At that precise moment a loud boom of thunder awoke the dormant echoes as if an injured Divinity had called out from the heavens, "beware!" The threatening voice from on high appaled the multitude and called up every superstitious fear in their savage bosoms. The surly tones of the king took on a contrite cadence as he beckoned the guards to escort the distinguished prisoner back to his temporary abode, while the crowd gazed upon him in admiration mingled with fear.

The copious shower of rain which followed was considered miraculous, and received added significance from the fact that the cloudless sky had been appealed to for moons and moons to allay the ravages of a terrible drouth which had continued and threatened to destroy all of the vegetation. In the beginning of the drouth they had, as was their barbarous custom, offered up in sacrifice to the god Tlaloc two little boys of six years each, whom they had entombed in the tower at Palpan heights and left to perish of fear, hunger and thirst in the hope of allaying the evident anger of the rain-god. Then they waited another moon, and still in vain, when a score of victims were offered up on the martyr-stone, but the drouth still continued.

As a final resort or appeal to heaven they took a male and a female child fantastically adorned with jewels, feathers and flowers to the banks of Atechpanomochocho, which name they had changed to Tezcuco, and after offering up loud and long supplications, they plunged the

children into the lake and drowned them. But still Tlaloc refused to grant their plea.

These solemn facts were fresh in the minds of those superstitious people who had borne witness to the direct manifestation from on high even as the trumpet voice of the prince had warned them, and their breasts were filled with strange misgivings as a bountiful supply of rain burst from the heavens accompanied by the most deafening thunder and dazzling lightning which they had ever beheld. For several days the rain poured down incessantly, rejuvenated the parched earth, and filled the streets until they appeared like rivers, and the remarkable event caused a demur among the thoughtful ones, although they dare not express their sentiments openly, but the alert priests surmised the growing germ of doubt and uncertainty which might lead to discord in the minds of some of their followers, which fact was portrayed in their tell-tale countenances. It was in consideration of these surmises, and at the close of the protracted rainfall that they decided to offer up a fresh vote of thanks in the shape of another ball, festival and sacrifice upon a grander scale than the preceding one in order to regain the lost vantage ground in the minds of their subjects occasioned by the impressive words of the *Son of Maguey*.

The priests themselves in order to destroy any possible influence which they feared might have unconsciously entered their own souls, pierced their flesh repeatedly with thorns of maguey; their ears, lips, tongues, arms and legs, and into each cavity they inserted pieces of cane. The exudations were carefully placed into the tyzompantli, and the thorns were buried in balls of hay which they solemnly exposed in the temple.

After the scourging was considered sufficiently impressive and effectual, the priests removed the wedges of

cane, and immediately bathed in a large basin prepared for the purpose called an Ezapan, where the discolored water was preserved as an emblem of penance; the reeds were hung conspicuously upon the walls of the temple, and then the preparations for the thank-offering began.

Slaves were commanded to plant six stout trees into the earthen floor of the temple, and during that time young priestesses were told to bring heated plates to the foot of the altar that the vapor arising from them should serve as food for the immortal gods.

A large and a small cross were erected at the base of the rostrum, upon which were tied two aged Toltec slaves, whose sorrowful countenances betrayed their knowledge of their fearful doom. But they uttered no groan nor word of protest, as the recently captured prisoners were doing, who knew that their fate would soon be sealed in some brutal manner.

The Toltec upon the large cross was shot to death with arrows in the hands of juvenile Chichimecas, who were thus permitted to exhibit their prowess as future warriors, and the one upon the small cross was beaten to death by a stout club in the hands of the great high priest.

Prisoners were forced to mount the six trees, whereupon they were secured with cords of ixtl, and they, too, were made a target for the practice of arrow shooting by small boys. When life was extinct, priests ascended the trees untied the bodies and allowed them to fall to the floor, where they were seized by waiting slaves who were ordered to skin them and separate the bones from the flesh and muscles, and in the ghastly strips of skin the priests arrayed themselves, then filled their hands with the bones and sallied forth with slow and measured tread while the admiring crowd in advance of them cried in loud, exultant tones:

“Behold our gods approaching!”

The bodies of the Toltec slaves were left tied to the crosses until the return of the priests when they were placed side by side in front of the sanctuary as a terrible warning, which they felt quite confident was sufficiently impressive to obliterate any influence created by the condemned words of Meconetzin, who had been solemnly warned that any further remonstrance from him would call down complete annihilation of the Toltec slaves in Tenochtitlan.

The hot blood of indignation surged madly through his veins and flamed his soul-filled eyes that flashed defiance to the mocking faces of the priests, who bent upon him a supercilious stare while in the performance of their diabolical exertions.

He was relieved somewhat of the taut strain upon his excited nerves when the soothing waves of music enraptured the zephyred air as the ball was opened, bringing another scene laden with tender memories, where his own eager feet responded to the tune of the areyto. All of the gruesome scenes before him melted away as a vision of girlish loveliness appeared to him as he had last gazed upon her. A subdued mellow light glowed upon his features, and the muscles of his face relaxed and softened as he lived again that sweet dream of love and peace. He heeded not the many admiring glances flashed upon him until he was persuaded to join the dancers, when his manly figure glided gracefully in the circling dance, and his gleaming carcanet, which reflected every ray of the flaming torches, added lustre to his height and made him the observed of all observers.

Upon the following morning when a guard brought him a steaming breakfast, he utterly refused to partake of it, and at the noontide hour he again turned away from

the meal in apparent disgust, and the day ended without his having partaken of food. A fact of such importance was considered worthy of the king and high priests' immediate attention and was considered by them a calamity indeed, as they foresaw in the future the prospect of an uninviting meal upon the most auspicious feast day of the whole year. They debated at great length upon the best method of creating a good appetite for the distinguished Tezcatlipoca who should be served up in the most approved manner known to the cuisine of the Chichimecas.

The guards were commanded to summon the prisoner without delay, and again lead him to the lakes to construct another float upon which he should bring a live deer into the garden of the king; the violent exercise necessary to the feat would, they devoutly hoped, awaken a ravenous appetite, the one adjunct necessary to the proper appearance of the next victim to the sun-god, very much to the gratification of all concerned.

The command was welcome to the Son of Maguey, who received it with apparent indifference, and with an extra cordon of watchful guards they set out to accomplish the mission. All nature was especially inviting, and the cool breath from the beautiful lake was very refreshing. Days followed each other swiftly in the quick succession of the novelty of the chase, but the guards were nonplussed beyond measure at the distinguished prisoner's total abstinence from food. Yet he was always foremost in the line of pursuit. At last, they began to fear him, as a disembodied spirit for his ever cheerful frame of mind suggested such an utter indifference to bodily comfort that it filled their souls with chagrin. It proved to be a very difficult task to capture a live deer, for no sooner did fleet Meconetzin lay hands upon one than it

bounded away closely pursued by him, and the whole band, who were obliged to exert themselves to their utmost, and then could not keep pace with him, and they believed that spirits fed him some mysterious leaven which provided him with the marvelous endurance which he manifested, and they feared that he would mount some low hanging cloud and sail away from their gaze forever.

A stout thong of ixtl was prepared by them to noose about the neck of the next deer which might be reached by an expert thrower, who was allowed to keep well in advance in order to test his dexterity, and in this manner a sleek, graceful one with large liquid eyes, that carried a look of human intelligence in their depths, was captured.

They then commenced their return to the city, and as they neared the path leading to the prophet's cavern, the guards increased their vigilance over the prisoner, who was in the meantime devising a ruse to outwit them, and he gazed determinedly toward the cavern, and announced in calm positive tones that his controlling spirit urged him to return to the cavern for a moment where an important communication awaited him; that if he was not permitted to do so a terrible vengeance would be visited upon those who sought to restrain him. But the potent effect of the last horrible sacrifice was too vividly impressed upon them to harbor the least suspicion of leniency, for they had been strictly enjoined to prevent him from visiting the prophet's cave; and they were more willing to bear the malice of an unseen spirit than that of the effective demons who dwelt in the bosoms of those in power. It was absolutely necessary for Meconetzin to provide himself with a fresh supply of the precious

leaves, which alone had sustained him during the period that he had abstained from food.

His stately form took on an attitude of majestic defiance as he exclaimed :

“Unless you permit me to go to the cave in peace, beware of the wrath of the messenger from the sun, who will yet make his appearance when all things mentioned and predicted by the prophets shall have been fulfilled. He is coming, and will bring rejoicing to those of Toltec blood, and all who believe in him! Even *you*, if you discard your ignorant, brutal ways! He will appear in the flesh, you will recognize him; for his imperial head, arms and breast will be fashioned like man, but the remainder of his body will be like unto a four-footed beast, unknown to our land, and he will arrive with a retinue of guards having the same form as himself, which will permit them to make double progress upon the march, and unless you give him the most abject homage he will shake the heavens with thunder, and the earth with fearful convulsions! You *dare* not disregard his warning *then* nor *now!* Release your detaining hands until I kneel and implore *Him* to permit me to give you solemn and tangible proof that I but obey his will.”

At these words they reluctantly released him, and he strode a few paces in the opposite direction from the path leading to the cavern, where he saw a well-known plant of singular properties growing, concerning which he possessed knowledge that was known only to his people, and his fertile brain conceived the way to mystify and prey upon the susceptibilities of the obdurate guards. He knelt down in apparent devotion, and surreptitiously gathered several of the leaves, and then wandered farther on until he saw and possessed himself of the antidote for the same which fortunately grew near. Armed with those

articles which were heaven-sent, and which he cleverly concealed in the palm of each hand, he solemnly advanced toward them and said:

"You are commanded by men, and obey the orders of mortal beings, but I *obey* the *divine laws* of *immortal tongues* and as you strive to detain my mortal being thereby defying the wish of the divine Tezcatlipoca, the immortal and unseen messenger from the sun, has warned me that my spirit shall at once be *released!* That is something which you *cannot* detain and you can then carry *my* lifeless body which you *must deliver* to king Tenochtitlan." As he said these words, he pressed his right hand to his face for a moment as if in deep meditation when the horrified guards saw streams of blood gushing through his fingers and when they attempted to remove his hand a red stream spurted from both nostrils and they were greatly alarmed and held a hurried consultation to consider the advisability of giving consent to his request, for they feared that the king would be far more exasperated at his untimely death than at the act of disobedience on their part.

Meconetzin appeared to be losing his strength remarkably fast and swayed from side to side, although supported by two frightened guards.

"We grant you permission to go to the cavern," said their leader in wavering tones, and Meconetzin raised his left hand tremulously to his face for a moment as if to gather his wandering thoughts and behold, the hemorrhage ceased and he arose with difficulty and without a word advanced toward the haunted cavern.

The guards displayed sufficient presence of mind to separate, and part of their number hurried in a circuitous route to the forest side of the cavern as near as their trembling limbs would carry them. They were determin-

ed that he should effect no further escape even if the imperative and apparently capricious spirit of Tezcatlipoca urged him to do so.

With care and deliberation the prince gathered each leaf and blossom and secured them in a compact form as possible, then hid them in the folds of his robe as he had done before; his prolonged absence excited the guards, who were about to forward a runner to the city to raise the alarm, when he emerged from the cavern and descended the cliff and quietly joined them, offering no response to their eager questions other than that he was forbidden to reveal anything further.

Great was the consternation of the king and all of his distinguished followers, when the full account of their adventures were reported to them especially as to his continued abstinence from food; he viewed their growing displeasure with nonchalance as the guards rehearsed each trivial action which was repeated several times, and at each repetition the king became more furious. When he commanded them to silence he turned to the Son of Maguey and exclaimed:

“What is the meaning of all this, which I hear regarding a messenger from the sun?”

“King Tenochitlan, if you were conversant with the “book of truths” compiled by the late prophet of Tollantzingo you had had no need to enquire of me further evidence of my authority for these recent utterances.”

“Was it like the Teoamoxtli?”

“The Teoamoxtli,” contained a history of our people, and the book of truths was the religious records which was an auxiliary to the former work.”

“Who has these works?”

“Our king, Nouhyotl, has a portion of the works, the

remainder were probably destroyed by your people, and by your commands."

"No, there was nothing resembling records found by my people. Was this prophesy referred to, made by the 'Toltec Savior Quetzalcoahlt?'"

"No, it was handed down by Votan, the founder of the Toltec nation, who assured his people of the coming of a messenger from the sun."

"Why were you summoned to the prophet's cavern, and why do you persist in abstaining from food?"

"In the name of the divine and supreme Tezcatlipoca, I *refuse* to answer you!"

The words of the prisoner were calmly and deliberately spoken, and a hush intense fell upon the audience while the priests compressed their lips firmly. The king seemed more alarmed than offended, and he held a long consultation with his priests and nobles. The former urged upon him the immediate necessity of his exerting his authority over the prisoner whose influence they declared was dangerous to the future welfare of their nation inasmuch as he utterly disregarded his commands, and defied him to the world.

After mature deliberation upon the important subject, the king followed his counselor's advice and ordered that he be taken to certain portions of the temple, and at each designated corner blood was to be drawn from his arms, and he was condemned to remain in the temple five successive days and nights with watchful priests, who were commanded to keep him from sleeping during that period, and they chanted hymns continually and four times during each night the watchers regaled the rancid air with noxious vapors.

One of the conscience-smitten priests who had, he said, unwillingly borne witness to the effective warnings given

by Meconetzin, although fulfilled in a manner advantageous to them, still desired to impress upon their followers the suggestion that it was a dreadful calamity. So he went to the woods to do penance, and had a hut made for himself of green boughs in which he took up his abode, giving strict orders that it should be kept green during his self-enforced sojourn there; and he announced that he should subsist upon raw corn and water, and would remain until the sacrifice of Tezcatlipoca.

Four other priests who lived in the temple of Teohuacan dressed themselves like the poor, and reduced their food to two ounce corn cakes and a mug of corn porridge daily. Their deluded followers were far from indifferent to the accumulating manifestations of remorse and fidelity to their faith, and yet their hearts leaped with suppressed exultation toward the inspired being who had been instrumental in calling forth such a torrent of emotion in the breasts of their most important rulers, and they all looked eagerly forward to the crowning event of all the commotion which had no parallel in the history of the sun-god.

CHAPTER XII.

TIME, with relentless austerity, rolled on until but five days remained to the Son of Maquey before the auspicious fifteenth day antedating the execution. Upon the latter date four of the most beautiful young maidens of the realm were always chosen to whom doomed Tezcatlipoca's were always married. Knowing that the obnoxious custom would be carried out in his case he resolved to make his escape or die in the attempt before submitting to the mockery of such a marriage.

The king and priests ceased to demur at his refusal to partake of food, and as he still presented quite a wholesome appearance, and the time was drawing near, they restored him to his former favor, and his worshippers became more devout than ever.

He adroitly managed to unearth the precious key and fasten it securely upon his person.

The third day previous to the nuptials arrived, and no feasible plan had presented itself to him as an avenue of escape. Upon that particular day each one of his predecessors had been subjected to the humiliation of marching through the streets asking alms, and he, too, was elected to the same ordeal.

The blazing sun beat down with unrelenting fury at the noontide hour when he was escorted through admiring crowds carrying a silver tray. A mild look of apparent resignation masked his expressive features, while

his fertile brain was devising means of escape, for he decided that the day and hour had arrived, and he was rerved to a wonderful sense of desperation.

At every street corner he scanned the motley crowd, and measured the chances for a start. Not one brave in that vast assembly was more fleet of foot than he, a fact of which he had had ample proof during his enforced journeyings to the lakes.

All through that eventful afternoon he watched in vain for a break in the surging throng which would insure him a little advantage. The dusky twilight began to gather, and the crowd became thinned as they turned their steps toward the temple and he felt that the precious moment had at last arrived. Just as he turned to enter the sanctuary he dropped the ringing silver with its jingling metals and gems as if by accident, and when the eager guards knelt down to recover the precious offerings, the Son of Maœuey turned quickly toward the path leading toward the prophet's cavern, and sped onward, as if on the wings of the wind.

A wild demoniac yell of horror sounded loudly in his wake but he plunged forward. On, on, it seemed as if the mysterious aid of angels helped him on, and he seemed to hear the gentle swishing of their tireless wings beating the balmy air.

The huge parapet loomed up darkly before him, and for a brief moment his manly form was outlined against the solid wall of the sheltering cavern which he entered safe from all intrusion. He knew that each Chichimeca in the Tenochititlan kingdom would meet his fate at the sacrifice rather than venture into the haunted cavern. That they would be sent to surround the place at a given distance he felt assured, but he feared not their vigilance, and a deep sense of gratitude welled up to the Supreme

Deity in behalf of his success thus far, and his faith wavered not in his ability to reach the goal of liberty as he gazed upon the guiding light which beamed forth from the starlit dome of heaven—the smiling Quetzalcoatl.

One fact he had learned through careless enquiry, that in the case of the death of a temporary Tezcatlipoca, the high priest was privileged to choose the second officer of the army to take his place, and he remembered with satisfaction that the said officer of the present time was quite advanced in years, and so attenuated that he seemed to have undergone the process of ossification.

While he dwelt upon these things he was trying to dispel a cry of nature that was making itself heard more entreatingly each moment, and he could not but dwell with concern upon the craving that was consuming his vitals with intolerable thirst!

He strove to engage his thoughts upon Xolotli, and wondered if he would remember to follow the minute directions which he had given him—in case he managed to escape—a feat which they knew would be far more difficult of accomplishing for himself than for the slave, who had after a cruel punishment from the lash, been set to work at his former vocation, and had met the doomed prince but twice during the term of his captivity. That Xolotli would learn of his escape at once he was convinced, as such a calamity would create a panic, not having a parallel in the history of the sacrifice to the sun-god; that he could easily make his way unobserved past the cordon of police who affected to guard the cavern, he felt convinced, knowing full well that their superstitious fears by far exceeded their vigilance; but, would he have the courage to come to the shelter of the cavern?

For a couple of days the king and high priest fondly

believed that the imperative spirit which ruled his destiny had only issued a fresh command, and when it was fulfilled that he would voluntarily return and resume the responsibilities involved in his distinguished position. While he was striving to overcome the terrible thirst which was fast unnerving him, his lips became parched from the intense heat to which he had been subjected so many long hours with no cooling draught to stay the wretched longing. The fresh leaves of the life-giving plant yielded great relief and renewed his powers of endurance for many long hours while he lay prone upon the cool rock floor panting and restless until every echo of the sighing night-winds seemed burdened with the tantalizing cry of water, water!

Finally the wish entered his mind to visit the treasure-house and sepulchre. He secured a supply of cucuyos to light his way, and descended the rock stairway which had last echoed to the faltering foot-steps of gentle Hueman and dying Topiltzin, bearing the lifeless body of queen Xochitl.

A dense growth of creeping vines completely obscured the secret entrance which bore the appearance of being a solid wall of stone, and it was with difficulty that he found the exact portion of the rock upon which he brought to bear the full force of his agile form in order to remove it from the socket and caused it to revolve and slowly roll away, and he entered the sacred hall and released the willing cucuyos which fluttered about the spacious room revealing wonderful objects upon every side in the heavy threatening silence; the wierd flashes of light, and the three ghastly skeletons lying side by side caused a spasm of pain to contract his heart as he gazed earnestly and reverently upon them. He forgot his thirst and all else save the still outlines of she who had

given him an earthly existence; he seemed to feel her power and spiritual presence more rapturously than ever before, and he knelt down in the dust of the marble floor and offered up the first prayer that had ascended from that sacred room since noble Hueman besought the Supreme Deity to grant him immunity from being born again.

After his devotion he arose more hopeful, more confident of ultimate success in regaining his coveted liberty, and as he wandered through the spacious room and into the second one he heard a sound of gurgling falling water, and he eagerly followed the inviting murmur until his glad eyes rested upon a limpid stream at the base of a towering boulder, which to him was heaven-sent.

Relieved and refreshed, he ventured to the chamber of wealth and death, and feasted his astonished eyes upon the magnificent monuments of the Toltec treasures. He could scarcely believe the evidence of his own senses, as he examined the lavish array which surrounded him in such marvelous profusion awaiting the longed for appearance of the messenger from the sun.

Upon a beautifully carved table of onyx he beheld an object which riveted his attention, and as he drew nearer he was startled, for there lay a volume addressed to himself. With a strange mingling of emotions he opened the sealed documents which had been carefully prepared by the last act of the prophet, Hueman. Upon a separate leaf were inscribed these words: "Meconetzin, son of Maguey, to you I dedicate this volume, containing the concluding chapters of the Teoamoxtli, of which the first portion is in the hands of Huemac to be kept in the possession of each ruling Toltec power. You will find my time-bowed tenement of clay beside that of my nearest kin and that of your queen mother. Our spirits will pro-

tect you and guide you hither to this buried palace of unmeasured wealth. And here guide the messenger from the sun when he arrives, for no earthly power can oppress his supreme sway. Should the time ever come that you can make use of a portion of this wealth to benefit a new kingdom and thereby increase it, do so in the name of our blessed savior—Quetzalcoatl.

“Keep your thoughts pure, Meconetzin, for they are things which influence your entire actions and being, and will build an impregnable barrier about you which will protect your physical being and keep you from falling a prey to evil power.

“I hereby inscribe myself the author of the Teoamoxtli, and the Toltec prophet and high priest Hueman.”

The prince gathered up the precious documents and returned to the upper chamber more composed, more hopeful of ultimate success, and he hugged the precious treasure to his bosom in an ecstasy of gratitude for having been secretly led to the longed for missing numbers of the Teoamoxtli.

CHAPTER XIII.

By special appointment a new officer was chosen to take charge of the army; who was a splendid specimen of Chichimeca manhood, and the doubt which had lingered in the minds of the people as to which one should become the martyr was soon cleared away, by the younger man having been chosen; but he was assured that if the formerly appointed Tezcatlipoca returned—as they fondly hoped that he would do after obeying the divine injunctions of the immortal spirit whom he represented—that all things would be carried out as previously planned.

The important day arrived for the nuptials to be solemnized, and as the former appointed victim did not put in an appearance the great high priest urged the king to waive all conflicting opinions and advance an amendment which should compel the newly recruited officer to become the bridegroom of the four young ladies chosen for the occasion, and he was arrayed in a new robe less elegant than usual, having been hurriedly prepared for him.

Before the ceremony began the high priest solemnly assured the attentive multitude that the former victim to the sun-god had overstepped the bounds of authority granted to him, and thus incurred the enmity of the Supreme Tezcatlipoca, who had become so incensed at his brazen assertions that he would not allow him the honor of becoming a victim to the sacrifice dedicated to the sun,

and had inveigled him to the haunted cavern to be devoured by those huge animals that had taken up their abode there, which was a just and righteous punishment for his denouncing their faith.

The new Tezcatlipoca, under the exhilarating influence of liberal potations of octli, gave himself up to the inevitable with apparent resignation, and reveled in the adoration bestowed upon him by his four wives during the fifteen days honeymoon.

The seventeenth day of May arrived, and the lords and nobles brought fine new robes in which they arrayed the idol, keeping the old ones as a relic in a certain portion of the temple. They also adorned the idol with insignias of gold and gems and beautiful feathers, and then they elevated the doors of the temple that all might see and admire its imposing appearance. All of the people who could do so crowded into the temple, and thousands were compelled to remain upon the outside. Some of the priests painted black and dressed like the idol, placed it upon a litter which was festooned with garlands of popcorn, which was a symbol of drouth—the most feared and dreaded of nature's elements.

The most prominent persons, old and young, who were permitted to join the procession, were also adorned with strings of popcorn which they wound about their necks and arms. The procession started from the upper hall and slowly descended to the lower one which was liberally strewn with flowers and sweet scented herbs.

The priests removed the litter from their shoulders at intervals to incense the idol, also the victim who followed next to them, and in the meantime the people all knelt down and scourged themselves with thick knotted ropes of ixtla.

After the procession had returned to the temple the

idol was placed upon the altar to receive presents of gold, silver, jewels, feathers, etc., and dainty viands. The latter were prepared by the young ladies who served in the temple, and some privileged young men were permitted to carry the tempting luxuries to the dwelling of the priests.

The victim was then commanded to bid farewell to his four wives, and he was immediately hurled upon the martyr-stone, and the great high priest, after a protracted supplication, proceeded to perform his barbarous task. At its conclusion came the most distinguished ball of the season, to which the lords, nobles and students were all invited by the king and priests.

At sunset the priestesses made an offering to the god of hunger, Apizteotl, which consisted of bread thoroughly kneaded with honey, and also many other dainty dishes, appropriate to the occasion, which they placed before the altar, and which were promised to the young men who became victorious in first reaching the coveted feast by running around and through the temple at a given signal from the priest; the foremost and victorious brave received as a special reward, besides the dainties which were served to them, some handsome garments, and was greatly honored by all.

The grand festivities were drawn to a close by granting the permission to all of the eligible young people to leave the seminaries and get married if they chose to do so, all who had served the allotted time of five years. Those who chose to remain in servitude made great sport of those leaving, and amused themselves by hurling showers of herbs upon them, and saluted them sarcastically for wishing to leave the service of the gods.

CHAPTER XIV.

NIGHT had unfolded her silent curtain, and the busy hum of the excited populace had died away in the quiet of their abodes when Xolotli, who had managed to outwit the guards who had indulged in liberal allowances of octli, which was always their privilege upon such occasions, tremblingly approached the outer wall of the cavern and gave the peculiar signal known only to the Toltec fraternity, whose secrets the grim sacrifice could never wring from the sealed lips of a solitary slave, and which aroused Meconetzin from a troubled slumber. He bounded to his feet and hurried to the entrance, well knowing that a brotherly friend was near, and he answered the challenge and welcomed Xolotli, bidding him ascend the parapet and enter the cavern until they could decide upon the most feasible manner of making their escape; but Xolotli answered him thus:

“Prince Meconetzin, I would willingly risk my life in greater peril than I am now undertaking; or which may be necessary before our liberty is accomplished; and I will valiantly prove to you my true devotion to our brotherhood of whom you are now our chief and legitimate king, and also to our lost cause. But, really, I have not the depth of moral courage to enter that cavern, and as long as it is not a matter of moment to you, I humbly trust that you will excuse me from so doing. I have brought you some substantial food, and if you will descend the stairway I will gladly deliver it to you.”

“Thank you kindly, Xolotli, I am deeply grateful to you for your thoughtfulness. I certainly feel the need of other nourishment than the life sustaining herb; but, really, Xolotli, I am indeed sorry to see a Toltec brother so degenerated by the influences of the ignorant and barbarous Chichimecas as to hesitate to follow where I may lead.”

“Oh, my Prince, if you *command* me to enter the cavern you shall be obeyed.”

“No, no, I do not and shall not command you, Xolotli, but I am sorry to see the bent of your inclination; it makes me fear that the day may come when the sweet and gentle influence of our self-martyred Savior will be lost! It seems to be waning now under the barbarous methods of these people and among our own race, and it grieves me. The brotherhood existing here has no chance to hold secret meetings has it, Xolotli?”

“Not under the present system of surveillance—not since a meeting was surprised and each member was put to a horrible torture to compel him to divulge the secret object of that meeting—but every one of them died under the terrible torture with sealed tongues.”

“Oh, how pitiful! May our Quetzalcoatl preserve them henceforth and forever! Since coming here I have had so much quiet thought and also deep regret that I could learn nothing concerning the fate of our golden garden for the sun-god, although I tried by every conceivable measure to learn something without exciting further suspicion on account of the dastardly charge made against me by Topiltzin, but all of my efforts were unavailing. Can you tell me anything regarding it?”

“Only that the gardner’s son once lamented in my presence the sacrilegious act which he had to do in converting some of the statuary and shrubbery from that

precious garden into trifling articles, and I very much fear that it is or was the signal for the destruction of all of those precious relics, for these ignorant people would like to impress posterity with their wisdom, and would rather destroy any traditional landmark of our people than preserve it; or at least change them in such a manner that they would be utterly unrecognizable.”

“Alas, I feared as much, and my soul is filled with indignation that I am unable to save them from those destructive people; but we will not linger, Xolotli, we must strive to make a start at once, and there is one thing which troubles me greatly, and that is this odd and conspicuous robe. How may I *ever* expect to escape in this bright yellow and heavily embroidered garment with its glinting golden fringe?”

“Oh my Prince, you give me but little credit for forethought; I have brought you a garment such as is worn by the herb gatherers, who are all Toltecs, for no Chichimeca has yet been able to comprehend the difference between herbs and would make a sorry decoction if left to his own device. You see that I have on the dress of a full-fledged Chichimeca guard—which outfit I have been a long time in arranging with the aid of Hatsutl, the wife of the gardner whom we visited upon that fatal night—I have kept it in readiness for the moment when you should make your escape, as you declared you would do the last time we met. In this manner we may be able to travel over a great portion of Tenochtitlan unmolested, for I can so disguise you that you cannot be recognized—I hardly believe that you would have known me to be even a Toltec if you had seen me before I gave the challenge?”

“Quite true indeed, you have almost wrought a miracle in transformation, and if you can do as well for me I

shall have no fears and will believe that we may soon breathe the free air of the new Tollan."

"May the good spirits of Tollantzingo aid us as they did the pilgrims who founded the new Tollan."

The prince bade him tarry until he returned, and mounting the hewn stairway, he passed through the cavern and down to the treasure palace, and he knelt beside the remains of those whom his memory cherished and poured forth a fervant petition for aid and guidance through the perils of his coming journey and breathed a fervent wish that he might be enabled to recover the lost Tollan and make good use of the vast wealth so securely hidden from the conquerors. He cast a lingering farewell upon the scenes of splendor and death and passed through the ingenious portal, which he carefully forced back into its socket and trailed the vines across it as before.

He secured the volume written by Hueman in the folds of his girdle and divested the prolific herb of every leaf and blossom, which he secured in a compact form and fastened upon his person. Then he descended the declivity and joined the anxious slave, and they started upon the hazarous journey while Quetzalcoatl gleamed tenderly upon them.

Both being fleet of foot they made considerable progress before the first glimpse of day broke in opalescent shafts upon the grand old crests of the towering mountains, which warned them to seek some safe retreat until they broke their fast and they considered it more expedient to remain in seclusion during the day until they were far from the city. The only shelter which presented itself to view was the waving branches of a stately cypress tree, and they quickly ascended it and concealed themselves therein.

The glaring heat of the broiling sun beating down up-

on them mercilessly nearly overpowered them and caused a tantalizing thirst to assail them, made more imperative by the shimmering glimpse of a waste of water bordered by the shores of a beautiful lake.

Flights of birds sailed screaming above them and some glad warblers poised their graceful little forms upon the farthest branches of the sheltering tree and coquettishly plumed their elegant robes of bright hues and then burst forth in glad notes of greeting, which caused Meconetzin to vaguely wonder if the soul of gentle Hueman had inspired the effort. They envied them their power to glide the heavens, while their hearts were cheered and grateful for their song.

At the close of the day they were alarmed to see a band of warriors approaching, and they made their way directly under the tree wherein they were sheltered and their consternation increased when they saw that it was none other than treacherous Topiltzin and his followers. They halted and engaged eagerly in conversation, which revealed the fact that they were waiting to meet some one from Tenochtitlan by special appointment.

The refugees were keenly alive to the shadowy chance which stood between them and escape, for one upward, suspicious glance from the baleful eyes of the traitor would reveal their presence, and it seemed to them that the mad throbbing of their indignant hearts might be heard by the cowardly crew.

Meconetzin avoided a solitary glance toward Xolotli, whom he knew was convulsed with nervous terror! Twilight never appeared so far away nor so deliberate in arranging her drapery. Suddenly their attention was riveted upon an approaching warrior, who hurried forward and saluted Topiltzin; he was recognized by Xolotli as the gardner's son, who exclaimed:

"You see, Topiltzin, that I have managed to keep good my word; now how about yours?"

"First tell me about the sacrifice; have the festivities ended?"

"They have."

"The gods be praised! then I have no earthly rival to fear!"

"Not quite so positive of that; the young prince outwitted the priests, guards, and all of the king's people by escaping to the haunted cavern after fasting for moons and moons, it is said."

"My eternal curses be upon those blundering guards! why did they not follow him there?"

"Follow him to the haunted cavern? ye gods! they would sooner attempt to follow him barefooted on coals of fire!"

"Are you *sure* that he is hiding there?"

"No, I am not *sure* of anything; I believe that he is no more human than those black, shaggy animals which haunt the cavern, and the priests declare that he has been devoured by them. No chieftain, I am not sure of anything, no, not even your promise to me; why did you not bring the maiden?"

"She was very ill and could not undertake the journey, but she shall be returned to you; I am now on my way to the new Tollan to wed my sweet princess Centeotl. You have brought me the key, have you not?"

"Yes, and I have labored early and late to complete it undiscovered, and my friends do say that it is an exact counterpart of the one which *is lost*—I have been afraid to carry it upon my person since I have completed it, for the rumor has been verified that the original one is lost or spirited away, and I would lose my heart if it were found on me."

"Can it be possible that he has really outwitted me too! Can he have obtained the true one? Oh, what a beastly stupid lot those Chichimecas are—if I had only thought of this recent plan before, I would have informed—or I mean I would have acted differently from the first—give me the key?"

"But why shall I deliver this key to you until you have done that which you promised me you would do? Lead me to the maiden whom I so dearly love and I will at *once* deliver up the key."

"Fool! do not provoke me; do you imagine for a moment that *we* care to be encumbered with that love-sick squaw of a Chichimeca? You are indeed grateful to me for having risked my life to rescue her from that savage horde of Tezcocans."

"Here take the key; I am ashamed to doubt you, but you did impose upon me at first, when you represented yourself to be the true prince, until Xolotli revealed your true identity to me—but that was after I had given you my promise, and a loyal Toltec never goes back on his word. I did cause my father and friends to believe that this key was to replace the one which was lost or stolen in order to save the guard's life, who was given a certain length of time to replace it, but he was chosen to take the place of the prince at the sacrifice and it makes no possible difference with him now. Do you observe how carefully I managed to give it age."

"Oh, I guess it is all right; one key is as good as another when it answers my purpose—Meconetzin can never escape from that cavern, or if he does attempt it, he will surely be captured, being now so widely known throughout the kingdom, for he has no braves to protect him"——

"Oh, it is cruel, very, very heartless and cruel, the

manner in which you betrayed him—I do see it all now—you never could have persuaded his men to join you if you had not sworn to the lie, declaring that he had been captured while on the way to my father's house. I shall never cease to regret the ignoble part which I unwittingly played and shall constantly beseech of the gods to forgive me; but my gratitude for the great service which you have rendered me in rescuing my loved one from that marauding band and caring for her needs until I can claim her—that is the only thing which could ever have tempted me to be urged into this disgraceful act of preparing a duplicate key.”

“Odds is the difference to me, you are quite comely; what if they choose you for the next Tezcatlipoca?”

“I am the best jeweler in all of the Chichimeca kingdom, and I think that they would not willingly dispense with my services—but tell me—how am I to manage about the maiden? Being ill, as you say, and you starting upon your homeward journey, what will become of her? I told you that I dare not wander further up the lake than here, and I have promised her anxious parents that she shall be restored to them at once, for I had informed them of your willingness to pursue the search for her, and told them, too, of your success in so doing, and now what *am* I to do?”

“Tell them *exactly* what I have told you, dolt. My mother has charge of her and she will undoubtedly be better tomorrow, and you can come here again at this time and I will leave an escort to bring her here to meet you. I shall push on with all possible speed to the new Tollan; I have already sent a runner to announce to king Nouhyotl the death of the prince.”

“But he is not dead!”

“I am not supposed to know that, besides, he cannot

escape, if he does he shall never reach the new Toltec kingdom, I will see to it that he never does"—

"Oh, do not harm him! I implore you do not, how *can* you have a *drop* of Toltec blood in your veins and possess such an inhuman soul. You are now armed with a weapon which will deprive him of his sweetheart, and if he loves her one half as well as I do mine, the punishment of losing her will be worse than death in any form. But you will surely send my love to me tomorrow?"

"If she can come, she *shall*, yes, rest assured of that fact, and if she is unable to tomorrow I will see that she is well cared for until she can make the journey and will detail a runner to meet you here at all events."

"Thank you kindly, please say to her some cheerful words for me—and now farewell, I must be gone to explain her continued absence to her anxious parents."

"Farewell, I wish you joy with your sweetheart," "when you get her," he added under his breath, as the trusting slave departed.

"Now my men, we will away, our line of march leads directly homeward," and suiting the action to the words, they hurried out from under the cypress tree and were soon lost to view.

With glad relief the anxious refugees descended from the sheltering boughs and bounded toward the shores of the lake to quench their terrible thirst.

"Xolotli, my very soul is famishing for want of sleep. I will lay me down a spell while you stand guard, and then I will relieve you on the watch while you too enjoy a nap."

"Do so Meconetzin, and have a sleep, for my eyes are propped with nervous fears and all of my senses are alert upon these dangerous grounds."

Despite his boast, Xolotli's fears and fancies became

strangely intermingled, courted by the soporific melody of the rippling waters which laved the pebbled beach, and gleaming Quetzalcoatl gazed down in pity upon the two sleeping pilgrims. When the prince awoke, he smiled upon the tired slave, whose eyes were no longer propped with nervous fears.

Roving bands of Xochimilcas, Tezcocans and many other lawless tribes were in constant activity and they were obliged to travel cautiously and often resorted to the expedient suggested by Xolotli whenever a band came near, especially the Chichimecas.

The prince chafed at the necessary delay, although the year had passed and the king had said that at the expiration of that time the conditions of the contract would become null and void; yet the desperate thought was ever present that there would be no one to contradict the unscrupulous statements of prevaricating Topiltzin, and it nerved the prince to greater exertion than his constitution could endure.

When they were well out of the Chichimeca realm he attempted to walk night and day with but short intervals of rest, and thus at the expiration of about two moons he was warned by the fast failing powers to desist and hasten slowly; but he heeded not the imperative cry of wounded nature and strove to buoy up poor Xolotli with encouragement, that he might forget his own failing strength. He was forced to give up, and he sank under the rays of the scorching sun, which seemed deliberately focused upon him; Xolotli was terror stricken when he saw his fainting form prone upon the earth, but he managed to carry him to the welcome shelter of an olive tree and showered water upon his still face and fanned him back to life. The attack was followed by a raging fever, and it was several days before he was sufficiently recov-

ered to continue his tedious journey, which caused his fears to become tantalizing in the extreme.

Xolotli had learned, while making his previous escape, that the same king ruled at Tetlilicuan who reigned when the wandering band of Toltecs had made it their halting place when they fled from their native land, and it was there that they had left their wounded, aged and infirm people at the generous king's invitation, and he hoped to aid the suffering prince to that haven, where he would endeavor to persuade him to remain while he should press on to the new Tollan and contradict the false statements of Topiltzin, in order to prevent the untimely marriage.

When he unfolded his plans to the prince, he was pleased and relieved to hear him promise to submit to his suggestion.

King Icoatzin, the wise ruler of Tetlilicuan, was a direct descendent of the great Chalchiutlanctzin, who ruled the kingdom of Huehuetlapallan, which was founded by prince Cukulcan under the direction of the intrepid founder of the Toltec race, Votan.

The travelers were warmly welcomed by the hospitable king of Tetlilicuan, who took pride in showing his distinguished guest every attention and courtesy which his rank merited, and he furnished him and Xolotli with plenty of suitable clothing of which they were greatly in need and then he insisted upon sending an armed escort with the slave to the new Tollan kingdom to apprise King Nouhyotl of the deception being practiced upon him by the subtle and unprincipled Topiltzin.

After Meconetzin had related his terrible experience among the conquerors, king Icoatzin enquired:

"How have the Chichimecas prospered since their daring victory?"

“They have grafted upon their barbarous forms of worship all of the gentle ones taught by our people, and they toil early and late to carry them into execution. Their victorious achievement excited an ambition within their ignorant bosoms which they have not as yet learned how to manage, and I question if they ever will.

“Our colleges which were the seat of learning, where all of the arts and sciences were taught by our wise and good priests, are now given over for the abodes of their ignorant priests, who have had gods molded for everything, and if it were not for the element of thrift among the Toltec slaves, they would certainly relapse into worse profligacy than ever. The Toltec priests, who were taken prisoners at the fall of Tollantzingo taught them forms of government and judiciously endeavored to instil the germs of civilization within them and their heroic efforts were not entirely lost upon them, but they chose men from among their people who were instructed as priests and they saw many visions and dreamt many dreams which were prolific of promoting their selfish interest while impressing the ignorant multitude with a latent show of knowledge. The absurd tendency has reached such mammoth proportions that their religious mockery consumes every hour of the day and reaches far into the night in many instances, and the farce leaves no room for anything else to be accomplished, except by the slaves, and I verily believe that the only reason that they do not add more to them is that time limits them to those.”

“In that case Meconetzin, I firmly believe in the prophecies of noble-minded Hueman, which have been related to me by your people who remained here. The Chichimecas have never discharged a single obligation which they promised to the other nations, who thus joined with them to conquer the Toltecs, and this fact has aroused a

deep rebellious spirit which threatens eruption at the slightest provocation."

"Very true indeed, and they have burdened their allies with such heavy tributes yearly that they have become very indignant and resentful, and I hardly believe they will bear the yoke much longer. I am amazed and grieved at the demoralizing influence exercised by the conquerers and I am sorry to say that it has not been lost even upon the slaves. To be sure there will always cling to them some of the arts and sciences which they in their love of display will encourage, but the children's children of the enlightened slaves will, I fear, narrow down to a level with those savages about them; their minds cannot improve when every element of advancement is conspired against their progression."

In the seclusion of the room allotted to him, the prince read and reread the precious documents concluding the Teoamoxtli, and his indignation was boundless when he read that portion relating to the sufferings of his revered mother, facts which had been grossly misrepresented by designing Ezcolotl, assertions of vile import which had been hurled at him by her malicious tongue to humble his proud spirit and humiliate his loyal soul were there explained. As the time drew near for the return of Xolotli he became nervous and anxious, a dim foreboding of coming grief or evil overshadowed him and as his general health had greatly improved, he resolved to start upon the journey homeward as soon as Xolotli should return and take a sufficient breathing spell to enable him to again make the jaunt.

The moment that he did arrive the prince saw at a glance that something grave and unusual had disturbed him, and king Icoatzin rallied him upon his inability to

endure so long a march without proper rest, but the undaunted Xolotli made haste to explain :

“We were not permitted an audience with the king, for brazen Topiltzin pompously informed us that all of the affairs of the kingdom were entrusted to his management and declared that the king was too ill to admit any one into his presence.”

“And you entrusted my messages to him, Xolotli?”

“My Prince, I was obliged to do so after waiting two days to see one of the royal family or their servants whom I had hoped that I might trust, but I waited in vain, for a terrible calamity has befallen the royal family and when I became assured that it was not a rumor, I went at once to the palace and delivered my message from you, and as Topiltzin really does represent the king in his great bereavement, I really had to deliver it to him, and these were his answering words—‘you go and tell your prince that I, being the chosen husband of princess Centeotl and heir to the throne of the New Tollan, advise him to keep a proper distance between himself and *my* people, we have no desire to pay allegiance to two royal houses.’—Then we turned abruptly away and left him without making any reply and had gained the outskirts of the city when a comely maiden hastened toward us and beckoned us to halt, when she said :

“I am a daughter of the powerful Chichimecas, and that crafty villain with whom you have just had speech at the palace, brought me here from my beautiful home under the solemn promise of marriage. We were wed under the laws of my people, but I was not satisfied until he promised to have a Toltec ceremony when we arrived here. I stole away from my parents and friends like a thief in the night and joined him, but as soon as we arrived here he ignored his promise and declared to his

people that I belonged to one of his braves; and more, he commanded one of his men to take me for his wife. Ye gods! What have I not suffered! Then I learned that he contemplated marriage with the beautiful princess Centeotl, and I vowed that I would lay in wait and secrete myself in the palace and strangle her as she slept. I did creep in one night and made my way behind the drapery of her couch, while my leaping pulses were *burning* with fury, and my heart was bound with bands of searing hatred which kept it from bursting in twain, and when she came to meet her doom, instead of wearing a countenance wreathed in smiles, she paced the floor wringing her hands and murmuring between choking sobs, 'My Meconetzin, dead! Oh, Thou Supreme Deity, do release my spirit that I may be with his; oh, I implore Thee in mercy aid me to escape from *hated* Topiltzin'; then my clenched hands relaxed, for you see that I understand your language very well. I have a lover in my native land who is a Toltec slave, and he taught me his language, and all else in which he could interest me except to love him as he loved me, and that I could never learn to do but when Topiltzin came he soon taught me the sweet pleasure while he engaged the services of my admirer upon some difficult job, for he is the best jeweler in all of the Chichimeca kingdom. I stole out of the room of the princess glad that my hands were not stained with the dreadful crime of murder. Upon the following day she went out for a walk as usual, and when she did not return the king sent guards in all directions, and they found the dead bodies of the guards, who had accompanied herself and her maids, with Chichimeca arrows pierced through their hearts. Those braves were certainly sent to rescue me; I am sure that they followed us here; now *he* is wild with grief, and it does my soul good to see

him suffer, knowing so well as I what grief can do. I have come to tell you all of these things for this one purpose"—but Ezcolotl sprang toward her at that moment and hurried her away before she could make known her wish to us."

The prince seemed stunned and dazed with horror, grief and astonishment. Several times he attempted to interrupt Xolotli, who seemed unable to hesitate until his remarkable disclosures were all related. At length the prince managed to overcome his emotions sufficiently to say:

"Then the marriage ceremony has not been performed?"

"No, my prince, Topiltzin *lied* when he called himself the heir by marriage. I learned that from others, and I did speak in a very loud and excited tone when I delivered your message, hoping that others of the king's household might hear it also, and perhaps contradict the report of your having been sacrificed."

"Oh, my friend and king, what *am* I to do? This news completely unnerves me; it is worse than anything which could have happened to my refined loved one to be made a prisoner in the hands of the *cruel* Chichimecas. She *shall* be released at once, even if I have to return and surrender myself as hostage!"

"Do not worry, Meconetzin, the thought has just occurred to me that King Aztec of Culhuacan, who has at various times evinced a willingness to be on friendly terms with me and my people will lend us his aid in rescuing the princess at the time of the festival to Tlaloc, which event takes place very soon. Invitations have already been issued to all of the friendly nations, the same as when your people ruled at Tollantzingo. I have but once accepted an invitation of theirs to attend, but it was

such a lasting horror to me that I had vowed to never attend one again, for they have changed the program to such a carnival of blood. But, for your sake, I shall accept this one, and will immediately forward a runner to Culhuacan to inform King Aztec of my decision, for it were better for our purpose that we accompany him."

"King Icoatzin, words fail me in which to express my deep gratitude to you, but I cannot wait; it were, perhaps, unwise of me to accept their hospitality, although they are under solemn pledge to harm not friend or foe during the festival. I must devise some quicker method of assuring the princess that she *shall* be rescued—Xolotli and I will at once attempt to find their trail."

"King Nouhyotl sent out a large body of men to overtake the murderous and thieving band; I fear that you are unable to take the trail as yet my prince."

"Oh yes, I cannot remain here idle; we will start at once; we may perchance overtake our men, and can be of inestimable assistance, knowing the route far better than they."

"Then, if you really insist upon so doing, I shall place a detachment of selected braves at your command, and will go at once to give them final orders," said the king.

As he left the room the Son of Maguey paced the floor with rapid strides, regretting that a single moment's delay was necessary which seemed unbearable to him then, but owing to the excellent management of the king they were soon upon their journey, and as they hurried out of the city the prince was attracted to a bevy of chirruping birds which alighted upon a tree ahead of them, and in clear trilling voices they screamed in unison, "Tihui, ti-hui." He motioned his men to halt, and all eyes were riveted upon the imperative little messengers who repeated the magical words, "Tihui, tihui!" which in the Toltec

language meant, "Let us go, let us go!" and they impressed Meconetzin in such a manner that he resolved to follow in the direction of their flight.

They soon met a runner from Culhuacan, who told them that he had evaded meeting a hurrying band of Chichimecas, who had several Toltec maidens as prisoners, and that they were avoiding the public highway and were carefully covering up their tracks. and were hastening in the direction of Tenochtitlan.

The news was disheartening to Meconetzin, who had hoped that they would remain in the vicinity of the new Tollan until they regained possession of the girl, who had volunteered the news to the messengers

For three successive days and nights they marched without resting, and then as night came on the prince saw that it would be an act of extreme cruelty to urge them further without halting for a spell and indulging in sleep.

He sank upon his blanket surrounded by his sleeping braves, but he lingered in wakefulness too fatigued and anxious to sleep. He feared that the over-tired fellows who were on guard would not be able to resist the demands of outraged nature before their relief came on; nor was he mistaken. Too soon he became aware that stealthy bodies were approaching them in all directions, and he carefully reached out a hand and awakened Xolotli who slumbered nearest to him, and he was quick to apprehend the danger, and at once conveyed the warning in a like manner to the brave nearest him, and thus the signal was given, and the entire band seized their weapons and breathlessly awaited the advancing enemy. A deathly stillness reigned, save for the whispering zephyrs which toyed with scattered leaves and gently swayed some creaking branches. The very stars of heaven seemed huddled together as if in fear. Every brave

was nerved for the attack, whether from man or beast. Slowly those gleaming eyes were raised aloft higher, and still higher, until the doubt was cleared, and they knew that they were human foes. They had not reached their full height until the disciplined army of Tetlilicuan arose simultaneously and defiantly measured the distance with keen and well aimed blows that broke the charmed circle, and they fled in all directions from the wrath of the valient defenders. When the watch of night was over, the rising sun shone upon the dead upturned faces of several fantastically painted Xochimilca warriors.

Some ugly wounds had been inflicted upon the braves of Tetlilicuan, but none of them serious enough to prevent them from continuing their rapid march onward toward Tenochtitlan.

CHAPTER XV.

“NOUHYOTL, you ask of my child and I that which our souls revolt against; you know that the time has expired to which you limited the fulfillment of your promise—a degrading one, it was, Nouhyotl, which had I been consulted, should *never* have been made—and now you are completely absolved from it by the interposition and wish of the Supreme Deity, and how *can* you find it in your heart to entertain the thought of consenting to a marriage of our only child to one whose very name is repugnant to her?”

“Xinhtlatzin, I fear that you encourage Centeotl in the vain-glorious thought that she is far above him.”

“Do you then forget his questionable origin?”

“Do you forget the fact that I was chosen king from among the common people on account of my military skill? Topiltzin exceeds me by far in military tactics now and has learned the different dialects of the friendly nations who have joined ours; and you know that the whole army aside from the imperial guards are at his command, and the majority of them could not understand commands given by any other general, for there is no other Toltec who has undertaken such an enormous task upon himself as that of learning the different tongues, and he deserves great credit and marked consideration. That he sprang into existence in a questionable manner is no fault of his, and should not be a bar-sinister to this

union, for our people are not now in a position to draw the fine lines of propriety which marked us preeminent in the days gone by. Had the unfortunate young prince been less head-strong and listened to the successful plan which Topiltzin laid before him, he would undoubtedly have returned with his braves unharmed, even if he did fail to get possession of the key. But imagine his audacity! I cannot call it bravery, which tempted him to enter the domain of King Tenochitlan and surround himself with a few brotherhood slaves and pour forth a loud and flaming speech denouncing their faith and religion and forms of government! Why the boy must surely have taken leave of his senses when he beheld the beautiful vale of Tollantzingo which, with all of Tollan, should have been his by right of inheritance but for the success of that victorious alliance."

"Nouhyotl, you seem to forget entirely that you have heard but one side of the story."

"I forget *nothing*; his statements have all been verified by his men. I have reference to the men who accompanied Meconetzin. They say that he and Xolotli started out to visit some Toltec family on the very eve of their arrival at a safe rendezvous, and that they were captured on the way and taken before the king, and those who captured him declared that they overheard him promising to liberate the slaves if they would all join him in an uprising. I really gave him credit for more tact and diplomacy! I must admit that I am not surprised that he met such a fearful death! It is a deplorable fate for one so young, and as I had thought, until his rash act, so full of promise; but now you must prevail upon Centeotl to accept the inevitable in a becoming spirit, for it is really the best course to pursue."

“What great diplomatic feat did Topiltzin accomplish besides getting the key?”

“He has brought us the assurance that the Culhuacas are daily becoming more dissatisfied with the conduct of the Chichimecas regarding the enormous demands for tribute which they increase every year, and still they totally disregard the promises made to them previous to the conquest. The Culhuacas are a very intelligent, progressive and superior people, and will not tamely submit to many more such demands. They have declared to Topiltzin that they are anxious to form an alliance with other powerful nations with the object of defying the oppressors; and he actually had the temerity to venture into the domain of the warring Xochimilcas with but three men in order to make a treaty with their king; why the man is a born diplomat!”

“Ah, I see that you are not disposed to censure him for inciting a rebellion upon a grand scale, while dear Meconetzin’s Toltec blood was fired with indignation when he beheld his people slaves in their once proud land and toiling for such ignorant and barbarous masters. My heart swells with pride at the thought that he *dared* brave their anger and fling his scorn and defiance into their very teeth.”

“You are inclined to be sarcastic toward Topiltzin because you have always disliked him, while Meconetzin was always your hero. I, too, loved the boy as if he were my own son, and I have been aware that they both loved our child. This affection seems to have dated from infancy, and in order to fathom the depth of their affection I sent them upon that mission in order to prove their diplomatic abilities, and also prevent any rash act of jealousy here; then, too, I was very anxious to secure the key for a reason which I have never before disclosed, which is this

—at the battle of Tollantzingo I fought side by side with our beloved leader, General Topiltzin, and I aided in covering him when he seized the queen and her child, and fought inch by inch to aid them in escaping to a canoe to cross the moat, and when I drew the cruel arrows from his mortal wounds he missed the key, which he confided to me was only a misleading device, which contained a secret spring at its base concealing full instructions to the Toltec treasures, and if found should be held for Meconetzin, who would be informed what to do with it. I refrained from explaining these things, as the facts were told me as the dying confidence of my general, and I promised him to use every means in my power to find the key and restore it to the prince. The key which Topiltzin has brought is not the *true* one, for there is no secret spring about it, and the other one cannot have been found, and if I can form an alliance with other powerful nations and conquer the present rulers of Tollan, I will carefully search every foot of ground which our army covered, and hope to yet find the true one that will unlock the greatest treasures the world ever knew. Now you can understand my eagerness in wishing to become possessed of that trophy, and why I could not make all of the explanations referring to the same.”

“Then your champion did not really accomplish any great thing, after all, did he? Unless in the Xochimilca kingdom, and what great diplomatic feat did he——”

“Here he comes, and he shall speak for himself. Topiltzin, your arrival is indeed opportune, your queen desires to know what you have accomplished in the treaty which you made with the king of the mighty Xochimilcas?”

“Indeed, I am greatly honored, and I will simply relate all of the facts leading up to it just as they occurred, for I

have no prevaricating or illustrating eloquence, and I fear that you will be shocked and horrified at some of the disclosures which I shall be obliged to make in order to explain fully the exact motive, and the manner in which he listened to my plans, and why he signified such prompt willingness to join us or any such nation to overpower the cruel conquerors, which really does not reflect very much credit or courage on my part as you will observe."

"Proceed, Topiltzin, without delay; after your *very vivid* description of the horrible death of dear Meconetzin, I can surely bear any other recital concerning those whom I do *not* know or care for, it cannot possibly be worse."

"Queen Xinhltatzin, I am deeply grieved that I was obliged to corroborate those facts as related by my runner, whom I assure you I cautioned to make the disclosures in as mild a form as the facts would admit of, knowing so well what a favorite he always was here at the palace; but I have since learned that he insisted upon explaining the horrible event in all of its gruesome details; that the prince had fallen a victim to his own folly had been quite sufficient, and would have carried out my expressed wishes in regard to his relation of the affair.

"My trip to the Xochimilca kingdom was due indirectly to that impassioned speech made by Meconetzin. Since the conquest, each allied nation has sent a priest as a representative of their affairs at Tenochitlan, where they are supported in regal style. The priest or consul of the Xochimilcas was also a witness to the flaming speech made by Meconetzin, and shortly afterward he electrified the king and the assembled multitude by declaring that he approved of the ideas advanced by the prince. This was considered a *grave* menace to the welfare of the conquerors—that he who represented the least civilized of the

four allied nations should coincide with the views of a mutinous, envious Toltec, and brazenly flaunt the fact in the senate chamber, and before the king. The result was tremendous. He was ordered out of the council, and the moment he reached the street a rabble formed about him who showered savage blows upon him until life was extinct, and then they burned his body and threw the ashes to the four winds of heaven to forever preclude the possibility of his resurrection or after-life. Thus the warring nation which he represented was enraged to such a degree of fury that they threatened to make war upon the conquerors without delay, but were pacified somewhat by promises of less tribute, more privileges and offices of rank for their favorite leaders, and a solemn pledge that their representatives should in future be well and securely protected, and in this manner they patched up a truce with them at the conclusion of which they warned them that if they attempted to break the treaty they would call upon the aid of the other two allies and annihilate them completely.

“The latter threat seemed to have the desired effect, and they sullenly agreed to the stipulation; then King Tenochtitlan commanded the envoy to say to his king that he should send one of his daughters to the city to attend the festivities then in progress, and that he himself should come to escort her home upon the following day as he desired a personal interview with him.

“She came, accompanied by several maids and a retinue of guards, and was royally received and escorted to the temple in great state where a sacrifice was in progress, preceding the ball. The moment that the music pealed forth the young Xochimilca princess was escorted by several priests to the altar, whereon was placed the goddess of love—Xochiquetzalli—and without word or warning

they hurled her upon the great sacrificial stone and tore her heart from her bosom, and thrust it into the mouth of the grinning goddess while it was still beating. This was the first time they had ever been guilty of executing a woman; but they determined to make a horrible example of her as a menace to those who dared transgress their laws in any manner, nor was the tragedy sufficiently impressive until slaves were ordered to skin the body after which they arrayed the goddess in the uncanny habili-ment, and the dance went on.

“Upon the following day when the king arrived he was escorted to the temple, having been informed that his daughter was consecrated therein temporarily. He needed but one horrified glance to tell him all, and the savage shriek of *agony* that rung from his lips was maddening! He was coolly informed that *he* should be served in a like manner if there were any more dissensions among his people who must, one and all, obey Chichimeca laws or be exterminated.

“When he left the city I was informed of the direction which he took, and I followed him, accompanied by two of my men and a slave who could speak their language, and in this manner I learned that they would gladly join with ours or any other nation to overpower the fiendish Chichimecas.”

“What a powerful speech brave Meconetzin must have made to arouse such serious results. He has, with his undaunted courage, eloquence and defiance made it possible for us to form an alliance with that mighty nation, and he relinquished his noble life in so doing.”

“My dear queen, I fail to appreciate the act of that rash youth in the same spirit which you persist in viewing it. The Xochimilcas have always been dissatisfied the same as the other nations who joined in the conquest, and if the

terrible episode just related had not occurred to give them ample pretext for revolt, they certainly would have invented one or refused to pay tribute which would incite a conflict quicker than any other act. I think that it is Topiltzin here who deserves the greatest credit, for he has certainly shown the true spirit of diplomacy by broaching the all important subject to the king at the precise moment when there was no chance of it being rejected, and certainly the suggestion will never be lost upon that vindictive nation."

During the foregoing conversation Centeotl was sitting in an adjoining room which had no outlet save through the one where the gruesome discussion was taking place, and being desirous of avoiding Topiltzin she became an unwilling listener to the shocking details set forth by her enamored suitor, and the moment that he left the palace, she set out upon one of her long rambles and in a desperate frame of mind, utterly regardless of the efforts of her maids, who sought to cheer her, as in the happy days gone by. They gathered choice wild flowers which they garlanded into wreaths and bouquets with which they were wont to array her, but she shook her head sadly and seemed to have lost all appreciation or delight in the beauties of nature which gave no comfort to her aching heart.

She hurried on as if anxious to out-run her thoughts, when a fresh stab entered her quivering soul as she heard her lover's name mentioned by one of the guards who had accompanied Meconetzin upon that memorable trip. They were marveling at his wonderful escape.

Then a wave of ecstasy surged her entire being, and she turned abruptly and confronted them in a commanding tone, saying—"Do you know it to be a fact that Prince Meconetzin was *not* sacrificed! *Did he escape?*"

Frightened at having divulged the secret revealed by the jeweler to Topiltzin at the moment when he had delivered up the key, which facts he had commanded them to reveal at the cost of their lives, they sought to evade an answer, but her pleading eyes and tones wrung the truth from their shrinking lips.

“Did he escape from Tenochititlan?” she enquired eagerly.

“He took refuge in the haunted cavern, and no Chichimeca in the whole kingdom has the courage to follow him there, although the king himself were to command them to do so. It is said that he cannot possibly escape from there as there are three black, shaggy animals that guard the place, and he may have been devoured by them e'er this.”

She asked them no more questions, and the sudden reaction of her intense nature yielded to a flood of tears. This excited the sympathy and indignation of the guards to that extent that they voluntarily revealed the whole shameful facts of the duplicity of Topiltzin, and when they had concluded, she hurried on under the powerful exhilaration of the welcome thought that as he had escaped the horrible doom so barbarously planned, that the Supreme Deity would not forsake him.

They were nearing an abrupt jutting mass of rocks when a band of resolute warriors made their grim appearance which caused the hearts of the guards to falter. They recognized them to be a detachment of Chichimeca braves.

The desperate little band of Toltecs surrounded their princess and her maids, and offered a heroic resistance until the last one sank dead at the feet of the maidens, who were then ordered to march in the direction indicated by their captors.

The terrible fate of the Xochimilca princess flashed across the mind of Centeotl, causing her to writhe in fear, but she bravely determined to show no outward sign of the conflict in her soul if she could manage to control the tumultuous beating of her fluttering heart. Her maids were utterly convulsed with fear and they prayed and wept alternately.

They were marched on through a trackless wilderness in order to avoid stray bands and active pursuit, and they detailed guards to cover up their footprints. Day after day she looked and longed for relief in vain; but the comforting thought that the prince still lived, made her hardship more endurable, until the forbidding walls of Tenochtitlan loomed up before her, then she lost all hope of escape; dark cumulus clouds veiled the orb of day as if in pity when the heart-breaking captives were hurried through those fatal gates.

A dazed and numb sensation enveloped Centeotl and she wandered on like one in a horrible nightmare, through a succession of streets filled with curious staring crowds. They were led on until they reached a particular street near a large elegant temple in the very center of the city; they were ushered into a spacious well-guarded room, where they sank down mute and helpless, realizing that they were in the stronghold of the most demoniac beings who ever raised a bow or poised an arrow.

Several hours elapsed when a guard informed the princess that he was commanded to take her before the king, and she tremblingly obeyed the dreaded summons, and the moment that she appeared before him the king exclaimed, "You are a Toltec maiden?"

She raised her soulful eyes to his basilisk gaze for a moment, and shrank from the admiration which belied the cruelty of his thin compressed lips, and he keenly and de-

liberately studied every wave of emotion which swept across her truthful and refined features.

For several torturing moments the piercing scrutiny continued which seemed to scorch and shrivel her very soul, then to her intense relief he bade the guards escort her back to prison, without his having addressed her another word.

When she returned she sank down beside her maids apathetically, until attracted by the crude outlines of a drawing which was traced with charcoal upon the opposite wall, and something in the bold strokes appeared familiar to her; with conflicting emotions she crossed the wide room and quickly recognized the handsome features of Meconetzin, and close beside his were portrayed her own! A little faint tremor of joy wavered in her bosom for a moment as she realized that the very room which was her prison had been his also, and through all of his hopes and fears he had dreamed and thought of her, and a little wave of comfort was afforded her by the thought that he had gone from there to liberty, instead of the sacrifice!

Fearful that the truthful likeness of herself would be observed and bear significance, she carefully obliterated it, leaving only the handsome features of the Son of Maguey upon the whitened wall.

Each day the king commanded her to appear before him, when he addressed a few words to her, and then dismissed her. The daily occurrence caused a terrible apprehension to assail her, and she feared that he was deliberating upon which particular god or goddess she should be sacrificed to, and that he evidently took savage delight in thus torturing her with suspense; but her fears were soon awakened in an entirely new channel, when he told her that she had taught him his first lesson of

love! Her ill-concealed loathing made him keenly feel his utter insignificance, and taught him sensations which had hitherto been a stranger to his savage bosom, and he knew that in gratifying his heart's wishes he would tear a glowing star from the firmament of beauty and trail its purity into the very dust of earth. Each day he became more painfully aware of his dreadful shortcomings, and a wish formed itself in his desires that he might become more worthy of her.

Each day the priests became more clamorous for a decision regarding her fate, and each day he silenced them with renewed promises of a speedy answer. She was greatly disturbed when he said:

"Fair one, what name have you?" The unmistakable tenderness in his tones frightened her far more than imperative ones could have done, and she answered frigidly,

"Centeotl!" He repeated the name several times in a musing tone, then said, "What a pretty name, and in your language it means the earth. Centeotl, you are both heaven and earth to me!"

The declaration seemed to have rushed to his lips unbidden, and revealed the painstaking effort which he had recently made to converse with her in her own language.

She shrank from the ardent gaze, pale and trembling, while the thought lingered in her heart—almost a wish—that her path should lead her to the sacrifice, rather than to the throne of Tenochtitlan. Emboldened by her silence, he commanded her in all of the gentleness of which he was capable, to make immediate preparations to become his queen. In dismay and horror she besought him to spare her the honor, reminding him that she was the daughter of his bitterest enemy, but he exclaimed:

"Beautiful Centeotl, it is to save you from the clutches

of the high priest, and the horror of the sacrifice that I would wed you."

Raising her dark, expressive eyes unflinchingly to his she said: "King Tenochtitlan, rather than become your queen, *I shall choose the sacrifice!*"

"That shall *never* be; the choice of your destiny is not in your own hands, but *in mine!* Now I *command* you to become my queen."

A groan of anguish fell from her quivering lips as she shrank from his evil gaze, and he motioned the guards to bear her away while he summoned the priests in order to inform them of his decision. Never before had any announcement of a king's wishes created such consternation as his declaration, and his counselors shook their heads ominously as if they meditated severe measures in order to prevent such a dire catastrophe!

With difficulty the princess reached her prison room, where she sank down hopeless and helpless; her terrified maids hovered about her, beseeching her to speak to them, but she gazed upon them with blank staring eyes that seemed to penetrate beyond the veil of tears into the mysteries of eternity. Suddenly she arose, as if by one last and superhuman effort, and uttered one blood-curdling shriek after another until she sank fainting into the arms of her maids; the very light of reason tottered in the balance, and a raging fever followed the prostration of her overwrought nerves, and her recovery was slow and uncertain.

CHAPTER XVI.

WHILE journeying to mount Tlaloc to inspect the progress of the arrangements for the coming festivities, King Tenochitlan was stung by a hooded viper, and despite every effort to alleviate his suffering and destroy the poison, it was soon noised about that his life was despaired of, and hardly had the news been circulated about the city than great ululations broke forth which announced the startling fact that the king was dead! Many were the preparations necessary to the proper disposal of the body of a king, and they were commenced by forming a huge pile of pine logs in the court-yard of the palace, which were arranged in a tessalated form for a foundation, from which was built a pyramid in the same manner which constituted the funeral pyre of the lamented Cazonci. His body was placed upon a litter covered with a gay quilt over which was draped a white spread; a necklace of fish bones was secured about his throat, which they believed possessed a great charm, and which they believed would make a very favorable impression in the land of the sun. Golden bells were fastened about his ankles, and his wrists were adorned with jeweled bracelets and bright plaited feathers. Then a second necklace was placed about his throat consisting of beautiful turquoises. Heavy gold bands were sprung about his arms, and large hoops of gold were placed in each ear, and a ring of turquoise was secured in his lower lip. A cuirass of tiger skins was

placed upon his body, and it was then announced ready for its journey to the sun.

Seven maids of honor were elected to accompany him, one to guard the necklace, one to guard the lip-ring, a cook, a wine server, a water bearer and a general serving maid.

Thirty-three serving men were obliged to accompany him; two who should carry his clothing necessary on the trip, one to make garlands of clover, one to carry his chair, one to carry a hatchet to cut wood, one to carry a fan, one to carry his sandals, one to carry his perfume, one as oarsman who carried an oar, one to make coronets of feathers, one to make arrows, one to make bows, also the physician who failed to save his life, some dancers to amuse him, and also some musicians. They were all dressed in white, and were obliged to wear the insignia of the office in which they had served in the royal household.

They were all garlanded with clover, and had their faces painted a bright yellow color, and when the moment came for the procession to move they all formed into line and followed the lords and their sons who carried the body of the king upon their shoulders, and each member of the procession elected to follow on the death-journey played briskly upon bones of alligator and tortoise. The body was carried around the huge funeral pyre four times upon the bier while the musicians blew their trumpets with shrieking blasts.

At intervals during this period the forty selected followers were urged to drink octli until they were inebriated, and then the body was placed upon the summit of the funeral pyre, and all of the relatives of the dead king turned away and commenced chanting the death song while the flaming torch was applied on all sides, and when the blazing tim-

bers were all under way the doomed followers were forced into the flames and kept there by a body of guards detailed for the purpose, until they all perished, and the vivid carnival of death lighted up the whole city.

One of the guards informed Centeotl of the tragic fate of the king when she enquired in one of her lucid moments as to the cause of the strange commotion, and he took special care to rehearse all of the gruesome details at great length, and he declared that each servant of the king's household, who had not elected to follow him, showed great disappointment, as it was considered a privilege of rare distinction, and would insure them a place of rank and prominence in the land of the sun.

She listened in a dazed manner, trying to realize that she had really escaped from the obnoxious cause of her extreme misery and her tensioned nerves relaxed their fearful strain, and she sank into a peaceful slumber despite the hoarse screams borne upon the breeze from the palace which sounded more like savage growls and snarls of beasts than men.

The flickering shafts of flame gradually died out while dense rifts of smoke swerved in dark clouds rank with the fetid fumes which arose from the ghastly furnace, befouling the waves of air that shrank from the grim burden and refused to ascend toward heaven.

Octli was served as free as water, and all of the participants of the ceremonies staggered about the mourning city bewailing the untimely fate of the king.

The final obsequies having been accorded the deceased king, the next important step necessary was to establish a new king as the late Tenochtitlan left no progeny.

They, like the Toltecs in a similar case, chose four electors from the highest nobility to represent the nation pro tem, and they had the privilege of choosing a king,

and if the electors and their chosen king were approved of by the masses they were then privileged to remain in office, but if objections were made four other electors were appointed, and they chose another king, and after the choice was made known to the people a law was passed that the crown of the dead king should remain in the family of his nearest kin.

The most noble appearing and inspiring of the four electors led the newly appointed king to the temple, and a grand procession was then formed. First came the greatest lord of state adorned with the insignia of his rank, followed by all of the court in their gala dress, and an abundance of feathers; then came the lords of court bearing the insignia of their office, and followed by two friendly kings; behind them came the newly appointed king, nude with the exception of a loin sash or *mactli*; he mounted the temple stairs leaning upon the shoulders of two prominent lords of court, and they were received in an impressive manner by the austere high priest, and were immediately surrounded by those holding the highest offices in the temple; he then advanced to the war-god, *Huitzilopochtli*, to do him honor, touching the floor with his hand and then raising it solemnly to his mouth.

The high priest then painted his body black, and sprinkled him with water which had been blest with due ceremony at the last festival to the war-god, and he used a whisk for the purpose made of cedar twigs, willow and corn blades; then a long cloak was draped about him which was covered with paintings of skulls and bones; then they covered his head and face with two veils. The first one was blue and the second one was black, painted in the same manner as the cloak.

A gourd filled with *titzli*, a kind of sacred black bean, was hung about his neck. These beans were believed to

possess the wonderful charm of subduing witchcraft, overcoming disappointment and preventing anyone from cheating him, and also possessed the rare charm of making him happy.

He then knelt down to receive the censer, and a bag of copalli with which to incense the idols, and then the high priest seated himself and delivered the following congratulatory speech:

“Revered, elected and annointed king, before you stand your worthy subjects, who have this day elevated you to the enviable rank of monarch of Tenochititlan, in the divine presence of our attentive gods and admiring people.

“I command you to have zeal in every religious cause, to mete out justice whenever and wherever needed, to protect the poor within your realm and provide for them, to defend your fatherland and kingdom from all enemies, and to keep these instructions fresh and true in your memory and receive my congratulations to you, our king.”

When the stern impressive voice of the priest died away, one of the friendly kings made a brief speech, followed by the other, then one of the nobles also made a speech, and to each and all of them the newly appointed king manifested deep gratitude, and promised to do all in his power to benefit his people and kingdom.

The great high priest then advanced, and in an impressive manner commanded him to take the following oaths and to keep them faithfully:

“To observe and adhere to the old religion.

“To promote the laws of his forefathers.

“To make the sun move!

“To bring rain from the heavens when needed.

“Never to allow the waters of the earth to decrease.

“Never to allow the fruits of the earth to fail.

“Never to allow any alien to usurp him as king.”

All of these vows depended solely upon his conduct as king, and if he were well appointed, himself nor his subjects would ever lose the protection of heaven.

At the conclusion of the ceremony they all adjourned to the lower hall where the tributes of the nobles to the new king awaited him, and they consisted of handsome and elaborate garments especially woven for a king, and also costly jewels and elegant feathers. After receiving these offerings, and bestowing gracious thanks upon the donors, he was led into an inner sanctuary called the Tlacateco, or hall of double truth, where they left him for four days in solitude, and during that period he was allowed to partake of food but once a day, and was compelled to bathe twice each day, and after each bath he was obliged to pierce his ears until they bled upon the copalli in the censer which served as a burned offering while he prayed to the gods to send him knowledge to reign wisely.

Upon the fifth day the nobility returned and conducted him to the palace, where his distinguished subjects were assembled to receive him.

After the ceremony and feast was over a grand ball was given, and great illuminations were displayed, and then he was invited to make plans for his crown which was prepared exactly as he desired; but he was not allowed to claim it until he had shown his courage in battle and had brought victims for the sacrifice which invariably followed the coronation.

He was then arrayed for battle, and his brilliant habili-ment consisted of a tiger-skin cuirass covered with a gold breast plate, half-boots banded with gold, and wide bands of gold upon each forearm; a gold ring in his lower lip set with emeralds. An elaborate gold-chain set with precious gems was fastened about his neck, and a tower-
ing coronet of beautiful feathers was placed upon his

head, large bright colored plumes were secured in such a manner as to fall upon his shoulders, and thus equipped he marched forth at the head of his imposing army until they were lost to view.

They moved rapidly in a northerly direction, and soon came upon a small band of roving marauders, which they overpowered in a short unequal struggle, and at once set about to return, the king having thus satisfied every demand in order to wear his crown with all of its grand succession of honors.

The crown which he had designed was made of gold leaves adorned with rare and beautiful feathers interlaced with threads of plaited gold. The copilla, or crown, was to be worn upon all occasions.

The robe prepared for him to wear in the palace was made of blue cloth with fine white threads running through it, and the one which he wore to the temple was pure white; and each particularly impressive occasion had its particular robe.

Whenever he left the palace he was invariably accompanied by some of the nobility, of whom the most distinguished preceded him carrying in his hands rods of odoriferous wood, set in gold with which he announced the approach of the king.

When the carnival and coronation ceremonies were over the entire attention of the populace was consumed with the coming festivities of Tlaloc, as there was no other festival which called for such mammoth demonstrations and ceremony. It combined the efforts of the four allied nations, and all of the friendly nations who accepted the invitation to join with them at that auspicious season.

Centeotl devoutly hoped that her very existence

might be overlooked in the excitement of the coming carnival, and she rapidly regained her health and strength.

Upon several occasions when she had been able to sit near the open doorway she had been somewhat annoyed at the persistency of a young man who seemed to embrace each opportunity to pass the door when it was open. One of the guards who had observed her ill-concealed annoyance remarked that the young man was a Toltec slave and the best jeweler in the Tenochititlan kingdom, that he had recently shown marked evidence of his ability and ingenuity in making the beautiful crown for the newly appointed king.

Centeotl wisely gave no outward evidence of interest in the guard's explanation, but her heart secretly rejoiced at the episode, and she felt convinced that he had some motive in trying to attract her attention.

The guards became quite lenient during her illness, and the unusually exciting events that crowded upon each other seemed to occupy their minds far more than vigilance.

When the slave again appeared the guard was taking a nap, which having been induced by octli, was deep and prolonged, and he ventured near the doorway and Centeotl addressed him thus:

"Are you the Toltec jeweler?"

"Yes, and my name is Ptahtl. I have written you a few lines which I am afraid to repeat as we cannot tell who may overhear us, for there are many Chichimecas who understand the Toltec language, having been taught by the slaves. He then handed her a note which described the whole plot carried out by unscrupulous Topiltzin, which account tallied exactly with the one given by the guards who died in her defense upon the fatal day that she was taken captive, and it contained still more, a com-

plete description of the treacherous manner in which he had inveigled the Chichimeca girl Sekhetl, into following him to the new Tollan. When she had finished reading it he enquired eagerly:

"Does Sekehtl appear to be happy in her new home?"

"I know nothing whatever about such a girl," answered the princess, but one of her maids ventured to say that she knew of the girl, and that she came to Tollan with Ezcolotl, the mother of Topiltzin, and that she was well aware of the fact that Sekhetl was very much dissatisfied, and was anxious to return to her people. These words acted like magic upon the features of the slave, and his solemn countenance relaxed into a smile as he said:

"She *shall* return, and *very soon*, ladies. I thank you for your kind attention, you have lifted a heavy load from my aching heart. Sekehtl is my sweetheart, and she shall yet become my wife. She was inveigled away by the wiles of the worst villain I ever knew who belonged to any nation except the Chichimecas. Now if there is anything you wish me to undertake for you I will gladly attempt it at any cost."

"Oh, if you could only manage to assist us in escaping from this *dreadful* place?"

"I shall certainly endeavor to aid you, keep up your courage."

At that moment a crowd commenced forming in the street near, and the slave started on fearful of being observed by some guard who would report him as conversing with prisoners, which was strictly against their laws.

A sorcerer was in the midst of the crowd amusing them with feats of daring and mimicry. The moment that Centeotl's attention was attracted toward him, she became strangely fascinated. He was markedly deliberate in all of his movements, and his broad-brimmed drooping hat

which was fantastically decorated, concealed every feature of his magnetic countenance except his finely moulded chin, which was hideously painted. His hands, which were often upraised in gesticulation, she observed were exquisite and refined, and they seemed to her like helpful hands that would brave any danger to clasp and aid a friend.

At last as the eager crowd importuned him he proceeded to unravel a marvelous and pleasing fortune to certain of his attentive listeners, and the moment that his voice was wafted to her ears she was startled, delighted and frightened! Those deep mellow impassioned tones of the sorcerer awakened a melody in her soul which seemed to make her heart stand still for very joy. There was but one other voice in all of the world like his— *surely, but just one*—she arose and moved nearer the entrance that she might drink in those tones which charmed and soothed her, but the king's messenger appeared like an imp of evil framed in the doorway, and her bounding pulses contracted in alarm.

Spurning the sleeping guard vigorously with his sandaled foot, the messenger reprimanded him for sleeping at his post, and then he curtly informed him that the princess was to be brought before the new king. The moment he departed she noticed the dazed and bewildered expression of the guard, and she resolved upon a desperate plan of action, urged on by some unseen force which she could not resist. Seizing her own beautifully embroidered mantle from off her shoulders, she beckoned to one of her maids and quickly draped it about her head in a manner to conceal her features except the eyes which were widened with astonishment, and as the guard pulled himself together, she commanded her in tremulous tones to follow him. Stunned at the unusually stern admonition, and

fearful that the princess had relapsed into a fever again she hastened to obey, and the muddled unsuspecting guard ordered her to advance toward the palace.

Centeotl then flung the maid's shawl about her own regal head, in order to join the crowd. The sorcerer, who seemed intent upon watching the guard and maiden, until she moved forward, then turned with evident relief and ventured nearer Centeotl as she emerged from her prison door, and joined the eager crowd, unobserved by the gaping, relief guard, who imagined that she was on her way to the king.

Her breath came in quick gasps, and her frightened eyes were glued to the earth while she struggled with emotions which she could hardly control. Some strange element in the air about her gave her courage. A luring fascination led her on she knew not, cared not, whither, and filled her soul with ecstasy. The rise and fall of sonorous voices about her sounded afar off, and it seemed to her that heaven was near, and the gates of paradise were flinging wide their portals to receive her, and the enraptured tones of whispering angels peopled the perfumed air. Her feet seemed scarce to press the earth, and at last a strong clinging hand clasped hers which sent a wave of joy throughout her being, while that matchless voice whispered in her ear:

"Flee for your life!"

Swift as an arrow hurled from an angry hunters bow they leaped away from the crowd, and the agile sorcerer turned his fleeting footsteps in the direction of the prophet's cavern, while hoarse cries of horror and dismay sounded in their wake, which were taken up by many answering shouts. Life, liberty, and love were battling bravely to outrun the approaching guards, and the cruel sacrifice.

The grade was steep, and a shower of arrows ploughed into the dust at her feet, then the sorcerer seized the fainting form of the princess in his strong arms and bounded up the parapet as a fresh volley of arrows beat viciously against the haven of shelter made doubly so by superstitious fears; no word was said, but the intrepid *Son of Maguey* clasped the princess in one long, loving embrace, a foretaste of heaven.

Two days only intervened between the important one which would usher in the opening ceremonies of the festival of Tlaloc, and the mountain was covered with sheltering bowers prepared from fragrant boughs and trim carrizo; and as night came on the scene presented a picturesque appearance, when the camp-fires of the visiting revelers were brightly outlined against the grim background of Mount Tlaloc. The armies of King Icoatzin, and those of King Aztec were congregated there, as were also the Tezcocans and Xochimilcas. The latter nation was somewhat mollified toward the Chichimecas, as the new king was favored and approved of by their representatives at Tenochtitlan, who had succeeded in gaining the promise of less tribute during his reign.

CHAPTER XVII.

WHEN Topiltzin returned from an extended reconnoiter, bringing with him the force sent out by King Nouh-yotl, burdened with the unwelcome news that no trace of the missing princess had been found, he announced his intention of marching on to Tenoehititlan, and he secretly determined to take the troublesome Sekhetl with him, trusting to his ingenuity to make terms with the conquerors to exchange her for the fair princess by offering a generous tribute also.

His sway had been so absolute since the disappearance of the princess that he did not consult the king in regard to the course which he intended to pursue, but he assured the royal pair that their child should soon be returned to them, and he hinted darkly that he had just learned that a deep, well-laid, dangerous plot had been planned to ensnare the princess by one who had been reported to him as dead. Without waiting to be questioned further by the startled and bewildered pair, he hastened away to enmass a substantial army and equip them for the long march.

The airs and graces which he assumed delighted the grimalkin Ezcolotl, as she proceeded to inform him regarding the stolen interview between the messengers from Tetlilicuan and the troublesome Sekhetl, whom she denounced in unmeasured terms, especially since she became aware that the girl was determined to assert her rights and maintain them, and it had never before occurred to

Topiltzin that she could ever have the power to interfere with any of his plans other than to be of service to him—but armed with any message which the runners from Tetlilicuan might have disclosed to her in the stolen interview, he trembled at the bare possibility of her daring to deliver it to the king or any of the royal household.

“Does that girl ever go to the palace in my absence?” he enquired nervously of Ezcolotl.

“No, indeed; I am too careful to allow that. But I tell you that she is a *sly* one, and has a heart as cruel as any of her race, and you will yet rue the day that you did not listen to my advice and leave her among her people.”

“Well, she is here now, and a source of great annoyance, but do not allow her out of your sight for a moment. Go tell her that I have accepted the invitation to attend the ceremonies at Mount Tlaloc, and ask her if she wishes to accompany me. She shall go just the same, whether she wishes to or not.”

“Oh, my son, in pity for me in my declining years, do not run the risk of going there again. Oh, *do not*, I implore you, do not!”

“Have no fears for my safety; those people are sworn to treat every person as a guest in these days; and in all of the years which have intervened since the fall of Toltantzingo they have never shown any treachery during that carnival season, and I shall take care to leave Tenochtitlan before the camp-fires of the visitors are destroyed on the mountains.”

“And what of Meconetzin?”

“Never you mind about him! I do not wish you to mention his hateful name again in my presence; there is no doubt but that the messengers from Tetlilicuan knew of the disappearance of the princess, or learned of it here,

and he will hasten to her rescue. But get my provision ready, and inform Sekehtl that I shall start without delay."

When he was ready to depart he found Ezcolotl guarding the girl on the outskirts of the city, and when he halted he exclaimed nonchalantly:

"Sekehtl, I am going to the season's festivities at Mount Tlaloc; will you accompany me, my sweetheart?"

"With great pleasure, Topiltzin. I am really homesick to see my parents again, also my native hills and vales."

A peculiar note of triumph rung in her well modulated voice and shone in her gleaming eyes, which caused her listener to rivet a questioning glance into her mobile face, but the tell-tale windows of her jealous soul sought the ground, and he quieted the uneasiness which was aroused with the thought that she should remain under his strict surveillance.

He positively forbade Ezcolotl to accompany them, and she knew that it were better for her to remain and watch over his interests there as the crazed and prostrate queen had shown confidence in her as a nurse, and the king was very civil to the mother of his greatest general. They left her weeping bitterly while they sped swiftly onward toward the stronghold of the Chichimecas. They were enabled to make rapid progress, and the girl gave no sign that she knew he was in quest of the princess instead of the festivities, and he daily added weight to her injured feelings by making desperate love to her. Toward all of these acts she evinced great pleasure apparently and confidence, but a cruel triumphant smile often lighted up her features as they neared the vale of Tenochitlan.

All through the tedious journey wary Topiltzin was endeavoring to form a feasible plan of action in regard to the girl. He at length decided to place himself in com-

munication with the jeweler Ptahtl, whom he imagined could be easily convinced that the deluded girl had only feigned sickness in order to accompany them to the new Tollan, and that he had not the remotest idea of the fact that she was in love with himself until they were nearly at the end of their long journey, and that she had utterly refused to return with the guards detailed to accompany her to the place of rendezvous where he had planned that she should meet him; all of which statements should be corroborated by his men who dared not contradict a syllable of his utterances.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE welcome and important day of the festival of Tlaloc, the god of rain, dawned beautifully, and all nature was clothed in its most becoming garb; joyous peals of laughter, and snatches of glad song rang out until the hills and dales took up the strains and forced them again in hilarious echoes.

The embowered heights of Mount Tlaloc had the appearance of a fairy scene, so charmingly had been arranged the handiwork of those people. The gay colored festive crowd which emerged from the gates of Tenochtitlan presented a lively scene as they marched forth at the sound of the music while innumerable coronets of beautiful feathers waved majestically at every step, lending added distinction to the appearance of their stately possessors.

The golden god Tlaloc was placed upon a garlanded litter and borne upon the shoulders of two priests. He was adorned with a crown of lilies upon his head, and had a wonderful woven basket in his hand from which depended two golden chains, one of which he held extended in his left hand, while that in the right hand was clasped to his breast. The basket was woven in the shape of long plumes, and within it was the human-headed soul-bird, which the Toltecs believed often returned to the bodies of departed persons bearing in its claws the shenti, which symbolized the sun's path in the heavens and the

direction to the sun, which the Chichimecas had copied from the Toltecs in their religious ceremonies.

Directly behind the god-bearers came four priests carrying a litter composed of closely woven boughs made in a quadrangle, and decorated profusely with roses, wherein was conveyed a child of six years.

As soon as they reached the temple, which had been prepared on the mount, they were met by their king, who bore in his hands elegant new robes for the rain-god, which he immediately proceeded to divest of its old ones, and arrayed in them. He then secured a handsome, necklace of costly gems about its neck, arms and ankles, and a second necklace or chain bearing the cross of life was placed below the waist-line; then a crash of music broke the silence which had reigned supreme during the king's performance of courtesy to the god.

The great high priest then advanced to the litter of boughs and severed the arteries of the throat of the little boy within, while another held a golden cup to receive the life-blood which the great high priest took into the temple and sprinkled upon the idol and also upon all of the people of note who had assembled about the altar; then a place was cleared to receive the yearly offerings to the god Tlaloc.

The representatives of the common people were first permitted to make their offerings, then followed the magnificent donations of the lords and nobles of all of the invited guests, as well as those from the Chichimeca kingdom; then they all adjourned to the base of the cliff where another temporary temple was made, in the center of which was planted one large sacred tree with thick impenetrable branches which had been placed there with two smaller ones upon each side of it.

A handsome little girl dressed in blue to represent the

waters of the lake was brought to view, and a red collar was placed about her throat while plaintive hymns were sung, and the musicians played a mournful dirge.

The child was led to the shores of the lake and placed into a canoe containing a bower of roses and a boatman, who rowed in advance of the mourners who were ferried in the sepulchral barge, which had a decorated shrine or canopy pylon-shaped in which the professional wailing women were beating their faces and breasts, tearing their hair, and uttering hideous and mournful cries.

The three sacred trees were attached to the funeral barge, having been carefully secured together. Following it were many other skiffs all plunging forward at a rapid rate, which were met by the advancing canoes of the kings and nobles who had waited for the crowds to disperse before they made their costly offerings, which had been placed in a secure receptacle, then they hurried to the shore and entered their canoes in time to meet the others at the center of the lake where a whirlpool swerved and threatened.

The three sacred trees were heaved into the turbulent vortex, amid the shrieks and groans and prayers of the wailing women, and when they careered from side to side and finally sank from view, the great high priest ordered his boat to be brought alongside of the one containing the little girl whom he reverently gathered into his arms and raising his right hand as a signal to the musicians, who pealed forth their loudest tones to drown the shrieks of the doomed child, whom he held over the side of the boat he then lanced her throat from ear to ear with a keen obsidian blade, and held her there until her blood dyed the swirling, angry waters, and when she was quite dead he dropped her body into the lake while the musicians chanted solemn anthems, and the wailing women

uttered suppressed groans. As soon as the little blue dress sank forever from view, the king arose and a deep silence reigned as he extended both hands aloft filled with costly jewels, consisting of emeralds, diamonds, rubies, amethysts, turquoises, sapphires and opals, which reflected every ray of the beaming sunlight as he scattered them into the greedy waves, and these concluded the offerings to the rain-god Tlaloc. The boats were then turned shoreward, and the multitude returned to partake of the feast which awaited them, and also to attend the magnificent ball.

King Icoatzin became very nervous as the ceremonies drew to a close, and his searching eyes measured the distance between Mount Tlaloc and the prophet's cavern many times during the revolting ceremonies which he shrank from observing. He had been informed by Xolotli of the wonderful success of the sorcerer's venture, and knew that they would have to exercise great vigilance in order to aid the prince and princess beyond the limit of the Chichimeca dominion. He had brought some beautiful and expensive presents to King Aztec of Culhuacan, and also expensive offerings to the rain-god, which were equal to, if not exceeding in value, any other gift of the occasion.

He refrained from disclosing the facts relating to the Toltec princess to King Aztec, as he felt that he could not thus seemingly infringe upon or betray the hospitality of the Chichimecas with any breach of courtesy in the presence of one of their subjects although a very indignant and dissatisfied one.

He waited until the day was drawing to a close, when he was overjoyed to be informed by the best jeweler in the Chichimeca kingdom that a band of Toltecs had arrived, who had been sent by King Nouyohtl to rescue the

prince and princess, which daring feat had been accomplished during the progress of the recent ceremonies, and that they were then upon their way to Tetlilicuan where they would await his arrival. The welcome news electrified the kind-hearted king with pleasure, and he congratulated himself upon being able to keep from sharing the important secret with anyone however friendly disposed.

He then summoned his army, including those who had been sent as escort to Meconetzin, who had insisted upon their joining the main army when it arrived in order to avoid the suspicion which might have been aroused if they were discovered detached from the main army.

CHAPTER XIX.

As the long evening wore away and no messenger came from King Icoatzin, who had promised to inform the Son of Maguey when it would be expedient for them to make their departure, he grew impatient and alarmed when he no longer saw the camp fires blazing upon Mount Tlaloc, and he knew by that token that all of the friendly nations had taken their departure.

He decided to reconnoiter in order to convince himself whether a messenger lingered near at hand, who through superstitious fears refrained from approaching near enough to make himself known or heard.

With encouraging words to Centeotl, he carefully described to her a given signal, which when she heard she must let herself down on the forest side of the cavern into his waiting arms. Then he descended and stealthily moved away while she waited patiently, inspired anew by his hopeful assurances that he would return after the lapse of a very few moments. He believed that it was beyond the pale of human reason for King Icoatzin to neglect his promise to aid their departure.

Boisterous shouts of laughter rang out from the city, and the mountain echoes hurled them back again hoarse and discordantly; the stars sparkled benignly upon her from out their dense blue settings, and the toying breezes kissed her radiant features and gently lifted the waving tresses from off her broad low brow; her senses were

alert to every passing sound, and she knew no fear until dark cumulus clouds gathered together and shut out the beacon light of the heavens, then her heart throbbed painfully with suppressed emotions.

At last the cheery signal rang forth in guarded tones, and she immediately let herself down into the outstretched arms ready to receive her, and was rapidly borne away. An overpowering sense of fear crept over her which was suffocating; the dense gloom prevented her from beholding the owner of the strong pair of arms that held her, but the divine sense of security, such as she had always known in the presence of Meconetzin, was wanting, and she needed no glare of light to convince her that her rescuer was not the Son of Maguey. Still the thought inspired her that perhaps he had been delayed by King Icoatzin and had thus been obliged to send a substitute, for who else could possibly know the peculiar signal which they had agreed upon, and the manner in which she should answer it; she heard the stealthy foot-fall of many followers, but no word was spoken for several hours.

With miraculous powers of endurance the rescuer fled without halting, until his quick panting breath warned her that his strength was fast failing him, and he staggered to an inviting rock which was surrounded by a body of warriors, who reclined in the flickering shadows of a dying camp-fire, and as he sank down exhausted, a ray of light shone directly upon his face, and the startled princess looked up into the triumphant basilisk eyes of hated Topiltzin.

With a low moan of anguish she sank into a deadly swoon, and the alarmed warriors gathered about her while he endeavored to bring her back to consciousness.

A firm vehicle of boughs was quickly woven together by the men, and he placed her tenderly upon it, and com-

manded a part of his men to hasten on toward Tetlilicuan with the princess that she need not see him among their number when she aroused.

He decided to remain there an hour or so in order to renew his overtaxed strength, which had been sorely tried, and he stretched himself upon the earth, and bade his men put out the camp-fires, and scarcely had the order fallen from his lips than a cautious tread sounded near them followed by many more, and the jeweler with Sekehtl stepped resolutely into their midst like some avenging nemesis, while a sullen look of cowering annoyance and fear crossed the features of Topiltzin.

CHAPTER XX.

THE new king Tenochtitlan being anxious to impress upon his subjects latent depths of wisdom and financial ability, called a council and submitted to them a plan by which they could not only make themselves felt in power to a greater extent than ever, but also replenish their possessions by concentrating them in their stronghold as much as was transportable, and the theory could at once be put into practice by demanding semi-annual tributes of their subjects.

He argued that the Culhuacas were becoming each year more independent and wealthy, and the recent friendliness evinced by them toward the Tetlilcuans and all of the other Toltecs was a decided menace to them with their superior military tactics and advanced methods of warfare, which had proved so efficient in conquering the highly civilized Toltecs, and he argued the possibility of their forming an alliance, which calamity would be a serious one, and to prevent such a catastrophe it were better to cripple their resources at once. These important facts were laid before the council and carefully canvassed by them, but they did not summon the representative of the Culhuacas to attend the meeting. They unanimously seconded the king's views which were then proclaimed amended laws.

An ambassador from Tenochtitlan was sent to the lord of state at Culhuacan requiring him to make known the

fact that a tribute was needed at once to assist in defraying the enormous expense attending the recent festivities, and he carried with him the war-god Huitzilopochtli, by which token the demand should be fulfilled at once, or a declaration of war would follow without further notice or delay.

A second ambassador was sent to the whole nobility, warning them to persuade the lord of state to make the restitution demanded in order to avoid war.

A third ambassador was sent to the people informing them that the tribute was extremely necessary, and explaining why.

As soon as they arrived at Culhuacan and presented their demands, King Aztec called a council, and the list of tributes demanded was placed before them, which was as follows:

Forty bars of gold of stated weight.

Forty bars of silver, ditto.

Twenty cups of gold dust.

Six handsome necklaces of emeralds set in gold.

Twenty pairs of amber ear-pendants set in gold.

Twenty pairs of crystal ear-pendants set in gold.

Ten measures of turquoises.

Forty elegant leaves of gold of stated dimensions.

Twenty bags of cochineal.

Four thousand handfulls of beautiful feathers.

Sixteen thousand large leaves of parchment.

Sixteen hundred loads of rubber.

Four thousand bags of lime.

Four thousand loads of otatl for building purposes.

Ten thousand bundles of canes for darts.

Eight thousand loads of odoriferous canes.

Six hundred measures of honey.

Forty large jars of yellow ochre.

Eight thousand mats.

Eight thousand benches.

Each peasant was notified to contribute a stated number of hewn rocks for building purposes, also a stated number of hewn wooden beams.

A stated amount of copalli for the censer.

Forty live eagles.

Forty quadrupeds of each kind abounding in the forest.

Every peasant unable to provide the above was commanded to come to Tenochtitlan and work out a stipulated tax or be sold into slavery.

King Aztec's indignant council decided at once that the demand was an outrage, it being in excess of the yearly demand, and they declared that it should *not* be paid.

The lord of state seized the war-god from the hand of the ambassador, and placed it among their divinities thereby showing a determination to resist the exorbitant demand for tribute, by force of arms.

The three ambassadors were then held as prisoners in behalf of their representative at Tenochtitlan, and their lives would be forfeited if harm came to him.

Commands were at once given for strong defenses to be made, and a runner was sent to Tetlilicuan with a request to King Icoatzin asking that the aged and infirm men and women and children might be sheltered there until the hostilities should cease. A request which was at once granted by him.

A large battle-field was laid out some distance from the city which was prepared with deep trenches and well-planned breastworks, which could resist the flying arrows and pelting slings.

The imposing army of Culhuacan was separated into two divisions of eighteen thousand each, and at the head of each division was a general known in their language

as a Tlacatecatl, and the standard bearer who always stood next to him was the next in importance.

Several days after the departure of King Icoatzin from Culhuacan on his homeward journey from the festival of Tlaloc, Xolotli appeared there excited and careworn, and sought an interview with King Aztec whom he begged to send help to succor Prince Meconetzin, whom he said was dangerously wounded, and that he had concealed him in a cavern several leagues from there on the road leading to Tenochtitlan. The request was promptly granted, and an escort was provided, that started without delay.

Xolotli had thoughtfully walled up the entrance to the cavern, knowing that if any person approached the place during his absence and heard groans issuing from within, that they would imagine the place was haunted, and flee from the vicinity in terror.

When the escort headed by the faithful slave reached the novel retreat, the latter was sinking with exhaustion and fear, as he heard no sound issuing from within, but with the aid of the willing Culhuacas he soon made an opening, and found the prince still alive, although unconscious, and they tenderly laid him upon the cot which they had brought, and returned with him to the city.

The court physicians shook their heads ominously, when they examined the wound which Xolotli had attended to to the best of his ability. Special herbs were prepared and placed upon the wound, and stimulating teas were administered to him until they had the gratification of seeing that the fever had relinquished its grasp. When he had but partially regained consciousness the first word which his parched lips framed was:

“Centeotli!”

Xolotli hastened to assure him with what he fervently

hoped might be true, and he bravely said to the eager sufferer, "She is *safe* and well."

He was fearful that any doubts in that direction might cause a relapse, which they all feared and dreaded. The unusual commotion consequent to the energy of the people who were laboring continually to prepare the necessary resistance against the Chichimecas seemed to lend strength to the emaciated form of wounded Meconetzin, who had so seriously endangered his existence by insisting upon marching on toward the friendly Culhuaca kingdom when he should have quietly nursed the terrible wound, as Xolotli had pleaded with him to do, and only for the timely aid of some slave herb gatherers, who at the risk of their lives framed a litter of boughs and carried him on his journey for nearly a moon, and then hurried back, trusting to the relaxation of their stringent rules at the auspicious month of the festival of Tlaloc, he had never been able to make the journey, but the taunting words of Topiltzin rang in his ears as he fell by his treacherous hand:

"Die! die! you calculating hypocrite! *She is mine* now, my men are bearing her to *my* domain—" and then the black pall of unconsciousness enveloped him, until the faithful Xolotli found him and resuscitated him to the extent that he insisted upon fleeing from the Chichimeca kingdom. He had a growing desire to be of service to the Culhuacas in their noble effort to throw off the galling yoke of greedy Chichimecas.

Xolotli proved himself a host in devising many valuable methods for the improvement of their defenses which were suggested by the prince, who soon became able to walk about for a short time, and he reveled in feasting his eyes upon the smiling face of nature which seemed burnished anew for his delight and admiration.

The ramparts destined to lead an important feature in the approaching crisis arose sullenly before him, and thoughts of the coming conflict recalled the horror he had felt when he saw the keen bronze-blade lunged murderously toward his breast by the cruel hand of Topiltzin.

Several weeks later a Culhuaca scout arrived who announced the near approach of the army of the Chichimecas. The news was welcome to the heroic Culhuacans, who were camped upon their battle-ground with every sense alert and every weapon ready. Meconetzin chafed at the weakness which held him in check, for he longed to aid the friendly nation who had so kindly assisted him in his gravest hour of need, and he devoutly hoped that the coming siege would forever free them from the ignorant rule of the prevaricating conquerors.

The morning sun had not arisen when the enemy appeared to view conspicuous in their hideous war-paint, and grotesque in their crude protecting masks. They were ranked into three divisions, the first being the order of princes, who were commanded by their new king, and each member of that division who had distinguished himself in battle was fancifully adorned with gold breast-plate and huge coronet of beautiful feathers, in addition to the substantial war costume, and masks made to represent gods; but those who had not distinguished themselves in battle were clothed in garments made of coarse white fibres of maguey, and they were painted and masked in the same manner as their victorious comrades.

The king was very imposing in all of his war paraphernalia, and pompously issued his commands with an assurance which was truly alarming.

The second military order was called the Tigers, and each brave in that division wore a spotted cuirass made from the pelt of the carnivorous beast for which they

were named; some of the men of that division by virtue of past bravery wore in addition to their war costume, breast plates of gold, silver and copper, according to the magnitude of their achievements in the past, and each member of that division had a mask made to represent a tiger.

The third military order was called the Eagles, by which name the whole Chichimeca army had been known previous to their alliances and conquest of the Toltecs. Their coronets were made of eagle-feathers, as were also the cuirasses which they wore, and their most distinguished members were provided with breast plates of gold, silver and copper according to their merits, and their masks were made to represent the eagle.

The most esteemed person in their whole army was their general, known in the Chichimeca language as the great Quachictin, who planned the method of attack and engineered the whole army; upon him depended the success or failure of the tide of battle. His long hair was caught up and secured upon the top of his head with a thick crimson cord, from which depended as many tassels as he had won victories, and his head was adorned with many.

The signal of attack given by him, was begun by beating savagely upon a small drum which hung from his left shoulder, and the shrieking Huehuetl took up the challenge, followed by the screaming Teponaztli and the rattling Ajacacxtli, which instruments they manipulated in such a manner as to bring forth every blood-curdling cry.

The courageous and defiant armies of Culhuacan were nerved to the loftiest heights of valor and determination, and they made a splendidly formidable appearance like some vast sea of waving plumes, and they were led by

their great general, called Tlacatacatl, who proudly flaunted quite as many careering tassels upon his dusky hair as adorned his enemy. They wore no masks, but were fantastically painted, and every brave was protected with large breast-plates of various metals and designs according to their merits.

Simultaneous with the first notes of warning from the enemy, the answering band of music made by the able Culhuacas hurled them deafening strains of defiance while their solid wall of human forms leveled their taut bows and burnished arrows to a deadly purpose upon the advancing Eagles.

Again and again the mortal charge was made, while louder and still louder, shriller and yet pathetic, pealed forth the demoniac shrieks of the war-alarm drowning the groans of the wounded and dying—nearer and more deadly became the terrible charge when they dropped their bows and advanced with the dreaded miquahuitls and vicious tlachachtlis which drew rivers of blood from either side, and the Eagles wavered under the magnificent and ferocious charge of the gallant Culhuacas. The Tigers advanced to relieve them, and the flashing breast-plates of the proud princes and reserves advanced in a solid body and were borne to the front where the Eagles and Tigers were straining every nerve and muscle against the deadly onslaught of the liberty-loving Culhuacas, and they were managing to secure many prisoners for the sacrifice by a treacherous flank movement. Their strategy was plainly visible to excited Meconetzin, who had climbed a mammoth cedar tree to witness the fearful siege. His hot-blood leaped and surged within him as he saw with consternation the increasing number of prisoners which the manouvering princes were securing for the sacrifice; he saw too, that the brave Tlacatacatl who

led the Culhuacas was dreadfully wounded. Blood was streaming from his face and neck and gushing from his bosom! A feeling of horror flamed in the breast of the Toltec prince as he measured the chances of defeat for the friendly nation. He saw the Tlacatacatl reel and stagger against the standard-bearer, but still he urged his army on; should he fall before success is assured the whole army will turn and flee in wild confusion, which no power but death can hold in check. They charged with their macuas into the very teeth of the Chichimecas, but the brave Tlacatacatl's right hand caught the staff of the standard to steady his fainting form. The whole army of Culhuacan was wavering! They no longer heard his urging voice in that fearful moment of suspense! Meconetzin waited to see no more, like some avenging spirit he leaped from those sheltering branches, beat his way to the foremost ranks and pressed his burning temple close beside the dying Tlacatacatl, while the drooping folds of the dripping emblem concealed his purpose for a brief moment, and before they realized their terrible loss an inspired leader arose among them wearing the blood-dipped tassels, whose stern words of command thrilled and encouraged the wavering army, urging them to plunge ferociously into the ranks of the Chichimecas and, anew burst forth the maddening crash of music which each moment grew more triumphant, until the ranks of the enemy thinned and they faltered before that trumpet-toned challenging urging voice upon whose steady vibration the whole army of Culhuacan depended.

A hoarse cry of horror rang forth as their Quachictin, the most valiant leader who ever drew a Chichimeca bow, was felled to earth; swiftly the shivered tyrants with their reeking weapons turned and broke in wild confusion, although their imperative king commanded them to

stand their ground, but they heedlessly continued their mad flight, and he was forced to yield and follow them, protected by the remnant of the band of princes, who were urging their prisoners on in the wake of the fleeing army. Among them was Topiltzin, shackled and shrinking until he appeared to be dwarfed to half his natural size, as he was hurried on at the point of the darts in the hands of the retreating princes.

A divine sense of pity entered the bruised but magnanimous bosom of the Son of Maguey, who urged his willing followers to the rescue of the prisoners, and they beat down the king's guards who preferred death to the disgrace of relinquishing them.

All of the murderous jealousy and rivalry in the breast of treacherous Topiltzin was subdued as they severed the searing cords that bound him, and he encountered the eloquent gaze of the noble-hearted prince; he tried to speak, to utter some grateful words of acknowledgement, but his parched tongue seemed too paralyzed to do his bidding, while in the presence of injured Meconetzin. With difficulty he thrust a numbed lacerated hand into his bosom and snatched the key, which he had stolen from the prince at the time he dealt him the murderous blow, and he dropped upon his knees as he returned it to the worthy hero, whose countenance was glorified with the divine light of forgiveness.

An ovation awaited the prince, who was faint and exhausted and glad to seek the welcome shelter of the room allotted to him.

A cordon of assistants headed by Xolotli were detailed to bring in and care for the wounded, and another posse dug trenches and buried the dead.

Many were the trophies found upon the battle-field, in-

cluding bows, arrows, slings, darts, maces, pikes, tlacachtli and miquahuitls and macanas.

Many of the bows were so large that their strings were five feet in length, from which they shot arrows with points of sharpened bone, flint and thorns of maguey, and the warriors were so skilled that they were able to throw three and four of those arrows at a time; the tlacachtlis were made of hardened wood with three long prongs of copper, ixtli or bone, and of sufficient length to pass through a human body, and they were tied securely to the arm of the thrower which enabled him to draw them back again.

The miquahuitl was the most formidable of all of their weapons, and made the greatest havoc during action; it was made in the form of a spade of very hard wood three and one-half feet in length, and with several prongs on either side, which were of sufficient depth and strength to hold immense thorns of maguey, which were glued into grooves thick and close on all sides and at the ends, and were fastened securely to the arm of the throwers who, when they forced it into a body injured him beyond all aid.

The trophies belonging to the dead Quachictin were the most valuable, consisting of victorious badges, his heavy gold breast-plate, and necklace or rare jewels and heavy amulets of gold and his cuirass.

The next of value were the belongings of the princes who wore huge crests of beautiful feathers, and their shields, called chimalli, were of value according to their military degree, and some of them were large enough to protect the whole body. These were made of gold, silver and turtle shells riveted with gold, silver or copper, and some were made of pelts covered with rubber, and some

of canes tied together with coarse cotton threads and covered richly with feathers.

Next to the body was always worn the defensive cuirass which was made of cotton, wadded to a depth of several inches, which was always covered by their shields. The most expensive cuirass was upon the body of the great Quachictin, which was covered with a large plate of gold, and was completely hidden with beautifully wrought leaves of gold and fancifully decorated around the edges with heavy gold fringe made of pure gold wire, which was depended from flat gold braid artistically riveted upon the cuirass, and with his immense breast-plate to shield him he was in very little danger unless off his guard.

By the side of the dead general lay the standard bearer with the royal ensign of emerald green, trimmed with bands of gold and gold leaves and flowery designs of brilliant feathers. The flag was fastened to the standard, which was secured so firmly against the straight body and shoulders of the warrior that it had worn a deep channel into the flesh, which had to be cut away before it could be removed.

Nothing of value was found upon the common soldiers except their loin-sashes, as they went into battle with their bodies painted to represent the garments worn by the nobles.

The proud Culhuacas had never scored such a splendid victory as that which freed them from the tyrannical rule of the crafty and exacting Chichimecas.

King Aztec and all of his subjects showered deep gratitude upon Prince Meconetzin, whose military skill and daring action had saved their army from defeat and given their nation coveted freedom; but the undue excitement caused a relapse and shock to the weak system of the

prince who was therefore obliged to keep his bed for several anxious days; in the meantime he was cheered with the news that a runner sent from Tetlilicuan had assured them that Centeotl and the band belonging to Topiltzin were the guests of King Icoatzin, where they would remain until further orders.

To faithful Xolotli the message was a god-send, for it tallied with that which he had said to Meconetzin when he feared for the consequences if he related to him then the simple truth—that he knew nothing whatever as to her whereabouts—and he was startled and gratified at his own foresight which savored, he thought, of the miraculous for his truthful nature revolted at a falsehood.

The assurance of her safety was a feast to Topiltzin, for he had heard from one of the guards that the avenging Sekehtl had not only laid a snare for himself, which deprived him of his liberty, but had also forwarded troops to overtake the detachment of Toltecs who were conveying the princess, and he pictured her as again a prisoner upon whom some severe punishment would be inflicted for her having escaped; but now that the terrible doubt was set at rest, a complete revulsion of feeling entered his narrow soul. He envied Meconetzin the honors which he had earned, and the increasing ovation which was showered upon him and the lofty position which he was entitled to by right of inheritance, but more than all else combined was the envy which he bore him for the love which he knew Centeotl cherished for Meconetzin, and he could not tear her loved image from his own selfish heart, and his thoughts lingered in sweet memory of the blissful moments when her soft cheek rested against his bosom as he swiftly bore her away from the haunted cavern where she had descended so trustingly into his eager outstretched arms.

He had concealed himself at the foot of the cavern from the moment that the shades of night grew dense enough to aid him, and had heard the prince explain the signal and the manner in which she should answer him, and then he followed the unsuspecting hero until they were far enough from the cave that no sound could possibly reach her, and he then confronted him with the murderous blow!

And now the laudations of his bravery regaling him upon every side aroused and expanded the venom of his evil nature like some mocking demon incessantly reminding him what advantages would be his if the prince had fallen a victim to the sun-god, and yet over all hung that fearful menace from which he had just been rescued by that same noble being whom his jealous soul envied existence.

When he had seen the towering form of brave Meconetzin arise above the dying leader equipped with the insignia of his rank, and had rallied the wavering army of Culhuacan, his very soul shrank within him. He thought that the avenging spirit of the dead prince had arisen to confront him with his villainous treachery and crime.

That the brave, noble and unselfish hero had not divulged the shameful fact that it was his hands had dealt the savage, murderous blow was evident from the considerate manner in which he was treated by the Culhuacas; but still his groveling soul would not be satisfied, and he kept comparing his lot with what it might be if he were the husband of Centeotl; in that secure position he would no longer envy the prince. Finally the thought entered his mind that, despite the insulting message which he had sent to Meconetzin while he was a guest at Tetlilicuan, which was undoubtedly made known to

King Icoatzin also, he would go at once to that domain and take charge of his men, and perhaps he could persuade the princess to accompany him to her home. The thought nerved him greatly, and buoyed up many hopes which had previously suffered keen defeat.

As these plans ran riot in his evil and contracted mind, with them came a *wish*, discarded at first, but gradually gaining ground, to retain at whatever cost that coveted power and influence which his brief reign as the representative of king Nouyohtl had given him. The wish became the evil genius of a terrible suggestion. When the runner from Tetlilicuan was leaving the city he sent a servant to inform him that he should say to his king that the prince had taken a relapse and that his death was momentarily expected and recovery utterly impossible!

After this was done he found various means of keeping the servant employed until he knew that the runner could not possibly be overtaken, then he enquired carelessly:

"Oh, did you carefully deliver the message which was to be sent to king Icoatzin regarding the Prince?"

"Yes sir, exactly as you gave it to me I delivered it."

"Repeat it to me that I may be sure of it?"

"Say to your king that the Prince has taken a relapse and his death is momentarily expected, and that recovery is utterly impossible!"

"Fool! fool, fool! Oh ye gods! ye gods, I said nothing of the kind—oh, you addle-pated know little, you lying, shying reptile! You, you consummate *imp* of every evil power—get out of my sight—no, don't you dare to move until I have broken every bone in your mind-forsaken body—I said to you, you Vermin, exactly the opposite meaning—I said that he had *not* taken a relapse, but that if he did recovery would be utterly impossible—oh, what

a stupid mistake you have made, it will *kill* his promised bride! If I should engage the fleetest runner in this kingdom he could not possibly overtake the one who has now several hours the start and the dreadful mischief will have been *done*"——

"But, pardon me sir, but you—you certainly *did* say so."

"Wretch! *dare* you contradict me? Come here until I wring every drop of carrion blood from out your beastly carcass!

"When this false report is made known to king Aztec *he* will make short work of *you*, why, the prince will soon be able to make the journey himself—well, such a grave mistake as this must be reported without delay and a fresh runner must be forwarded at once, but I very much fear that the princess cannot survive the terrible shock of receiving such a message."

"Oh, whatever *shall* I do? I certainly did understand you to say the *very words* which I gave"——

"Do? Just prepare yourself for a trip to sunland on very short notice, that is about all that you can do."

"Oh, good sir, do not I pray you—oh, I implore you *do not* report this to the king? I am already in disgrace for having kept some of the trophies from the late battlefield which were valuable—I was a king's guard and to punish me I am obliged to do duty as a common servant for a whole year."

"But the report *must* be made and the message corrected as far as possible this very day."

"No, no, sir, the king will surely think I did it maliciously—oh was there ever another such an unfortunate man in this whole world? Is there nothing which I may do to influence you in my favor or at least to have you

make the disclosure in such a manner that the king will not order my execution?"

"Such a blunder is not easily corrected; the young princess is easily shocked, I know her very well, she was my own sweetheart until the prince became enamored of her and tried to show his authority over me, and thus he lured her from me. She was certainly influenced by his title which she certainly does not need, being a princess born, but he really has some uncanny powers or is controlled by them and they seem to delight in exercising their influence through him and grant him whatever he wishes."

"Do you not think that your deluded sweetheart would come back to you if—if, the, if that message *had been* true?"

"Oh, I do not know, I dare not trust myself to think of that, I do not know how long the influence of an evil power may cling to one, but she has set her heart on the prince through that means and the shock of that message will of course kill her; you can understand what a *host* of demons urge him to do, you saw how he was urged on by those unseen spirits who aided him to accomplish what he did upon the late battlefield; I am truly afraid of him and so are all of our Toltec people; but I *must* go and see about this dreadful blunder"——

"Oh, sir, *do spare* me! I should think that you would really be glad if that message were true"——

"Oh, that is nothing to me, I am no prince, neither am I in league with evil powers."

"Pardon me, sir, but pray tell me is it true that he really escaped from the sacrifice of Tezcatlipoca?"

"Yes, it is absolutely true, but where did you hear of it?"

"From one of the prisoners who was at that time one

of his guards—now, if he is such a strange, uncanny person, that message *should come true*—and I am sure that deep down in your heart you agree with me, now is not that a fact?”

“I, oh, I cannot say, I can only think of trying to correct that statement and thus save the woman whom I adore from pain.”

“If sir—if the message *should come true*, then there will be no need of a correction, will there?”

“Why of course *not*, you dolt, but that were impossible, he is reported as gaining rapidly every hour.”

“Sir, if she loved the title better than the man that need not be lost, some one else, perhaps yourself, can wear it, and if she is influenced by the evil spirits that control him, then she is certainly in a dangerous condition and it were better for her to return to her natural existence which she would do in time when not influenced by him—take my word for it, for I have been known as something of a sorcerer myself—that the princess will not die of the disease known as shock! She may grieve keenly but gradually the love which she has borne you will return and she will forget him although he be far more imposing than yourself.”

“You villain! you dare tell me right to my face that the prince is more imposing than I?”

“And is he not *imposing*? Have you not explained to me that he, aided by evil spirits, accomplished the greatest feats known to this generation? Miracles! Victories, and *stole* your love away from you? How can he then accomplish all of those things without *imposing* upon all of us?”

“Well, have your own way about it—are you acquainted with the assistant who relieves Xolotli in watching over him now?”

“Too well indeed, he is my brother-in-law.”

“I will confess to you that I have been *imposed* upon quite recently by him through that undue influence which he exercised over me to get a key away from me which I very much need and which I am very desirous of getting possession of again, and if you will manage to recover it for me I shall spare you until that time, from the disgrace of being reported.”

“And if the message does come true you will not need to report me? Yes sir, I can and *will* return to you the key if it is upon his person or in his room—his evil spirits cannot prevent me from sending him into the land of dreams—oh yes sir, I can do all of these things, for I, too, am a sorcerer, and the *message shall come true!*”

“Nonsense, you are no prophet, but if you should accidentally discover the key and will deliver it to me without mentioning the fact to a living being, I promise you that I shall not report you until after that.”

“Then sir you need never report me, never! Why sir, a being like that is not half-human who is influenced by an army of evil spirits, and I am told that he was fed by them for months with invisible food in an invisible manner, and there is no doubt in my mind that he will demand the half of our kingdom at least for the late services which he rendered our nation—ah, he is certainly a dangerous animal—and it will be better in every possible instance if the message does come true.”

Topiltzin was well pleased to receive the key in a short time after the foregoing conversation, which he had returned to the prince in the first moments of real gratitude which he ever knew, and he made no further enquiry of the servant who again assured him that the message should come true before the setting of another sun and in such a neat manner that the least suspicion could rest upon no one and assuring him in an impressive way that

sorcerers, such as himself, were capable of making things very unpleasant for certain individuals if they chose to exert their power in their direction, but he hastened to assure him that this was not a menace to him but especially to those who were influenced by a host of evil spirits.

Topiltzin was too well pleased to receive the key at his hands to question his ability in any other direction, and he did not apparently notice the well-veiled menace insinuated by the cunning ex-guard, whom he kindly thanked in an abstracted manner and then hastened to make ready for his departure. He first paid his parting respects to the king, showering gracious acknowledgement upon him for his kind hospitality and remarking gravely that he hoped the time was not far distant when the Toltecs, aided by the victorious Culhuacas, could unite to exterminate the grasping Chichimecas; to this well made proposition the king bowed respectfully and bade him good-bye.

He then cautiously approached the room which was occupied by the prince, but before he could enter it Xolotli informed him that the prince was sleeping and he turned away glad to be relieved from a parting interview.

The moment he was far enough upon his journey to be safe from intrusion he eagerly drew the key from its concealment and examined it critically. He forced the secret spring and searched eagerly for the tiny scroll of instructions, which he had overheard king Nouyohtl confess to the queen was the sole object of his great desire in ordering the search to be made for it; and as the space within was empty when he stole it from the supposed dead body of the prince upon the eve of the festival of Tlaloc, he had hoped that the prince would have replaced the coveted scroll when he restored the trophy to him upon the late

field of carnage; but now the thought nerved him that perhaps the scroll had been abstracted by another than he, who probably placed no value upon the same, for he could not believe that Meconetzin would wish to destroy it before having shown it to king Nouyohtl, and what other receptacle could possibly be as secure as it for the carrying of the same?

CHAPTER XXI.

ALTHOUGH greatly fatigued when he arrived at Tetlilicuan Topiltzin decided to push onward to the New Tolan in order to avoid any possible chance of meeting the envoys which king Aztec had proposed to send to bring his people home—and also to carry presents to king Icoatzin which were not quite ready to be sent when he had started. They consisted of jewels, feathers, games, bars of gold and silver, some parchment and many valuable trophies from the recent battle, also a large bejeweled disc and rubber ball for playing their favorite game.

Upon his arrival at Tetlilicuan his band of soldiers hailed him with apparent delight and proceeded to offer every available excuse for having continued upon their journey without him, assuring him that they had waited two days upon the trail hoping that he would overtake them, then fearful that he had been captured, they listened to the pleading of the princess and proceeded on as she was fearful that they might fall victims to some marauding band.

The spirit of Topiltzin was revived as he once more took command of his men, and he courteously informed the king that he desired an interview with the princess Centeotl.

“She is utterly prostrate at the dreadful news which has recently been received from Culhuacan, and I believe that she will be unable to meet you.”

“From Culhuacan? What possible news can interest her from Culhuacan?”

“Are you not aware of the struggle between the Chichimecas and Culhuacas?”

“No, I have been a prisoner for several weeks—was taken in my attempt to rescue the princess and when I managed to escape, I avoided every one until I reached this place; so they have been at war? Who became victorious?”

“The Culhuacas, through the timely assistance of prince Meconetzin, who rallied and led them on to victory when their Tlacatecatl received his mortal wound.”

“Why should such glorious news prostrate the princess?”

“The prince was suffering from a dreadful wound at the time of the conflict and may have been wounded again—the latest report is that he has taken a relapse and that recovery is impossible!”

The crafty features of Topiltzin qualed at the sound of these words uttered in the commanding tones of sympathetic king Icoatzin, while the prophetic words of the ex-guard were continually repeating themselves in his tortured brain; but the demon of jealousy clamored loudly in his being reminding him that the princess would never shed a tear for him were he reported dying, and the bitter knowledge called up a wave of sarcasm in his breast and he exclaimed:

“If the princess is prostrated over this news to the extent that she cannot give a moment’s notice to her royal father’s greatest general, then I must venture onward without delay—I must admit, however, that I am shocked at such terrible news from the prince who seems to have developed a remarkable faculty of escaping from one horrible fate to be menaced by another—it would seem as

if the protecting power of Quetzalcohuatl had deserted him—and he surely cannot have aimed to follow in the footsteps of our meek and lowly Toltec Savior, to meet with such opposition and disaster—I must now bid you adieu for it is my duty to hasten homeward and relieve the anxiety of the king and queen.”

“Indeed Topiltzin, you must imagine that I am wanting in courtesy—I have sent a runner to apprise them of her safe arrival here.” The king was surprised at the look of annoyance which crossed the face of the boastive chieftain with whom he scorned to bandy words regarding heroic Meconetzin.

“Will you kindly despatch a message to the princess to the effect that I am about to move on to her father’s kingdom and if she desires to forward any communication to them that I will gladly deliver the same?”

“I will, I am always ready to be of service in any justifiable cause.”

There was a note of condemnation in the penetrating accents of the king’s voice which conveyed volumes of suppressed scorn and doubts of his integrity, a fact which nettled him exceedingly, but was forgotten when he was informed that the princess would grant the favor of a moment’s interview. A tumult of emotions assailed him the instant her dark, sorrowful eyes were raised to his and they were laden with accusation which seemed to arouse the enormity of his base ingratitude toward the noble prince who had so generously succored him at a time of deadly peril. The very air he breathed seemed laden with reproachful tones aroused by her tear-laden voice as she said:

“Topiltzin, how did you know that I was waiting in the prophet’s cavern for the very signal which you gave?”

He could not control himself sufficiently to meet her

questioning gaze as he made answer to her startling words :

“That signal is well known to Meconetzin and I since we were children, and I supposed that he, too, was with you in the cavern, as Phtatl the jeweler told me that he had rescued you and that was why I knew where to find you—the forest was alive with prowling Chichimeca scouts anxious about the slaves in consequence of the friendly Tetlilicuan having attended the ceremonies, you know that their hospitality ended when the procession left Mount Tlaloc.”

“How can I place any confidence in your statement regarding the signal, knowing that you betrayed him into the hands of the Chichimecas when you first arrived at Tenochtitlan.”

“Princess Centeotl, *believe me*, I have been shamefully maligned in regard to that affair—if the prince and his men had remained with mine all would have turned out differently—but he, with the escaped slave Xolotli, ventured too near the city and was taken prisoner by the guards at Chapultepeatl upon the very eve of his arrival, and this is the truth.”

He had somewhat recovered his customary audacity and he glossed the deception with a fervent glance of adoration from which she visibly shrank, as she said :

“Have the kindness to tell my parents that I am anxious to come home—just as soon as I hear again from Culhuacan”—her voice faltered, but with a supreme effort she continued :

“Tell them to send an escort immediately”——

“My men are at your disposal—I will proceed alone—they have conducted you safely from Tenochtitlan and will gladly continue the espionage if you will permit them to do so ; I cannot understand why the prince should

have left you at the cavern alone and unprotected while he hurried on to Culhuacan to gain laurels?"

"He is utterly incapable of such an act—he was wounded while reconnoitering for the army of king Icoatzin and the friendly Culhuacas probably rescued him and carried him to Culhuacan, for the runner said that he was brought there unconscious several weeks before the opening of the siege; nothing else would have kept him from returning to me. I am really grateful to you, Topiltzin, for having rescued me upon that dreadful night, since you have assured me that you came to rescue the prince also; but I would rather die with him than live to mourn his loss!" Her proud head drooped and hot tears trickled through the delicate fingers which covered her weeping eyes; the sight moved the culprit beyond compare and all of his former diplomacy and caution was flung to the winds when he saw the idol of his heart in tears. Losing control of his emotions he exclaimed:

"Oh Centeotl, loved one, do not say such cruel words to me—what were all of the united heavens and earth to me without your love—I would willingly relinquish all of my hope of Sunland to share my life with yours here."

"Hush! Topiltzin, I will not remain to hear you defile the air I breathe with words which you *must know* are bitterly repulsive to me; I shall ever be loyal to my Meconetzin whether he be alive or dead!"

As she uttered these words she turned abruptly away, leaving him crest-fallen but still persistently hopeful, his lips closed firmly and a deep resolve shining in his restless eyes as he saw her glide away until she vanished from his sight, then he left the palace and summoned his waiting braves and they all marched onward toward the New Tollan. One thought engrossed his mind for hours as they hurried on the march—would the princess change

her mind in time? He scourged his soul with regret for having intruded his declaration upon her in those hours of suspense and fear—but of one thing he felt certain that *the message would come true!* He was powerless to prevent it now, and his guilty conscience struggled to invent some quieting excuse for his base ingratitude and treachery to cling to and in dismay at the overwhelming convictions which forced themselves upon him, he raised his eyes toward heaven as if daring to beseech intercession from on high, but the dazzling purity of the beaming sky seemed to shut out his sight and he staggered for a moment as if from the effect of an unseen blow.

When they arrived at their destination and Ezcolotl rushed forth to meet them, a look of fear mantled her countenance as she nervously enquired:

“Where is Centeotl?”

“Safe and well at Tetlilicuan, she was too proud to come home with me.”

“Oh my Topiltzin, I am so *happy* to have you safe at home again that I do not care what eccentricities have developed in the mind of the princess so long as she is well—a runner came here who informed us of her safe arrival at Tetlilicuan, but, my son, he murdered my poor heart with anxiety by telling me that you were a prisoner at Tenochtitlan.”

“I was and I escaped by a miracle! That Chichimeca beast Sekehtl was all that you prophesied her to be, and more; by and by I will tell you all; I have now the original key, and I am going to the palace.”

He was warmly welcomed by the royal pair, and the moment that he delivered the message sent by their child, the king announced his intention of starting at once for Tetlilicuan, and the queen declared that she would go also, and she said to the king:

“You have left your affairs in charge of Topiltzin before, and may do so again; I cannot wait any longer to see my child; I had thought that the prince would have brought her here before this; why did he not join your band also, Topiltzin?”

She saw him start nervously at mention of that name, and her alert suspicion was aroused. He saw that they knew the prince had not been sacrificed, and what more? His very soul shivered at the thought, but recovering himself he replied:

“We arrived at Tenochtitlan the morning of the festival of Tlaloc, and we knew that we would not be molested that entire day, and through strategy I learned that the prince had succeeded in escaping the sacrifice in some marvelous manner, and that he had ventured into the city disguised as a sorcerer and had managed to rescue the princess, and that they had taken refuge in the haunted cavern. King Icoatzin had arranged to meet them at a certain rendezvous and bring them on to his kingdom. Disguised as a Chichimeca I attended the festival and closely observed King Icoatzin, who seemed worried by the responsibility forced upon him, and grew very nervous while measuring the chances of success. King Aztec was constantly beside him, and I am sure that he insisted upon their returning together to Culhuacan, as they had come together. I then set about making plans to relieve him of his great burden, for it would have been a terrible stigma upon himself and people if they had been discovered aiding any prisoners or slaves to escape while a guest of the Chichimecas. I sent him word that a band of Toltecs had arrived who would rescue the prince and princess, and when it grew dark I stationed my braves at a certain distance from the cavern while I went to the base of the cliff and gave a well remembered signal known

only to he and I, and the princess appeared upon the parapet and let herself down into my arms without a word, and I turned and fled with her thinking that Meconetzin would surely follow. I dared not stop to make any enquiries because the forest was alive with Chichimeca scouts, and I hurried on for several hours until I was forced to halt from sheer fatigue. Then my men made a conveyance of boughs to bear the princess onward, and I bade them proceed with her while I rested for a short time, guarded by a detachment of my men. She had been carried out of the range of my vision, and fortunately too, for we were surrounded by Chichimecas before I had rested an hour, and we were ordered back to Tenochtitlan, where I was made a prisoner for several weeks."

But he failed to add that he had managed to escape, and had been overtaken by the army on their way to Culhuacan to begin the siege, which accounted for his being found among the prisoners at that place.

"During your imprisonment, there did you hear nothing regarding the prince? We are very anxious to know something about him," asked the king eagerly.

"Nothing of his exact whereabouts; there has been a secret reaction in the minds of the Chichimecas which is ominous to the Culhuacans whom they suspect of high treason. The Toltec slaves have always fostered a mutinous spirit quite natural under the surveillance of such ignorant masters, but the feeling was aroused to a greater extent by the prince whom I believe has never relinquished the desire to regain his lost kingdom, and it would appear that he was rather indifferent to our aid, or that he intended to manage the entire affair expecting your majesty and all of your subjects to be subserviant to *his will*. I did hear rumors that he had gone on to Culhuacan to enlist the sympathies of that nation in his behalf

in order to begin the siege at once. Remember, this is a rumor, one which I heard while I was a captive; and it was also said that when King Tenochititlan demanded the customary annual tribute of King Aztec that he utterly refused to pay it, which is a strong proof, a certain proof that the influence of Meconetzin has reached a climax there. You know, King Nouyohtl, that the step is a foolish one now; it is not time to attempt an overthrow of the Chichimecas, unless we can plan and act together with the well-trained Tetlilicuan and the Culhuacas. If the latter nation unaided by other powers should win a battle or two in the outset it will only jeopardize their future interests forever. I learned that the Chichimeca army alone started for Culhuacan, and if they suffer a defeat they can summon the Xochimilcas and the Tezcocans to assist them, and with those two nations they will be in a position to annihilate the Culhuacas root and branch; then where will our hope of conquest be? I consider that the step he has taken is rash folly, I might almost add, *treasonable!* If he could only have curbed his ambition until we could have formed an alliance, as we planned to do with the friendly disposed nations we could easily overthrow the Chichimeca power. I had the solemn promise of the Xochimilca king to join with us to conquer their tyrannical rulers; their recent acts of courtesy toward them will never obliterate that deadly hatred engendered by the brutal sacrifice of the Xochimilca princess at the hands of the great high priest of the Chichimecas."

"Your ideas are quite correct upon that important subject, Topiltzin, and coincide with mine entirely, and I trust that the head strong prince or King Aztec himself will see the absurdity of such a course before a conflict takes place."

"I do know that the ambassadors sent by King Teno-chititlan were held as hostage for the safety of the Culhuacan representative, and they kept the war-god Huitzilopochtli, which you know meant a direct declaration of war. King Icoatzin said that word was sent to him that a conflict *had* taken place and that Meconetzin led the army of Culhuacan, and that they scored a splendid victory, but that the prince was mortally wounded in the engagement, and his death was momentarily expected; of the latter assertion I have my doubts, as the prince seems to lead a charmed existence, but they are in earnest regarding the meditated siege of war, for the aged men, women and children of the Culhuacas are now at Tetlilicuan, whither they were sent two moons ago or more, and thus you see they are not making idle talk."

"Ye gods, Topiltzin, this news is distracting to me! Can it be possible that such is the case? I am disgusted with such precipitant measures, and without so much as a word to me."

"Nouyohtl, I am sure that Meconetzin would *never* enter into any such conspiracy independent of you; he is incapable of any such intrigue; there is some grave mistake; this affair may turn out to be as farce-like as the report of his having been sacrificed to the sun-god. He does lead a charmed existence by a special dispensation; I believe that he is a chosen one of Quetzalcohuatl, our Toltec Savior, who endows him with more superior elements than we can understand, the same as he has given to the present King Zamna of the Yucas, to whom *we* willingly acknowledge allegiance in tributes, laws and honor. I will not believe that Meconetzin has ever committed one disloyal act to disgrace himself or his nation; it were impossible for him to demean himself in any manner; he is not grasping, vain-glorious or designing—he

is the soul of honor! You know that to be a fact, Nouyohtl?"

"I have no idea what delusions entered his mind when he arrived at his native place, but I consider it very un-gallant of him to desert our child and hasten on in the same direction which she must pass in order to escape from the enemy's country, while he attempts to raise a revolt! I *do not* call that loyalty, bravery or honor!"

"But Topiltzin led us to believe that he knew nothing whatever about the prince when he first arrived, to——"

"Queen Xihhtlatzin, please allow me to reiterate what I have already mentioned; that the statement which I made concerning Meconetzin is *not* of *my own* personal knowledge, but a rumor related to me at Tetlilicuan by the estimable ruler of that nation. If you so desire, I will summon the most reliable of my men to corroborate these things—remember that they were at the kingdom of Tetlilicuan during my entire captivity. I have not questioned them, but did hear them remarking about the rashness of the prince, but not wishing to further excite their enmity against him I refrained from joining the conversation, or thus exhibiting the least interest or concern in the affair or their disparaging remarks, but you, King Nouhyotl, *cannot* have been blind to the fact that he has tried to exercise more influence here than any other person in this kingdom, and I believe that he considered himself the lawful king by right of inheritance, and I gathered as much from certain theories which he at various times advanced. The Chichimecas firmly believe that he is ruled by a host of evil spirits, or he never could have abstained from food for the length of time which he did, nor managed to escape the sacrifice to the sun-god and then dared to venture back again to rescue the princess."

"No *evil* spirit aided him to rescue *our* child! How

dare you in our presence insinuate such a thing whether advanced by the Chichimecas or not? You are quite overstepping the bounds of consistency. If his truly diplomatic power aided the abused Culhuacas to revolt, they certainly had a good and just cause for so doing; and he is just the noble hero to have led them on to victory! If he could see you, Topiltzin, bearing in your arms our child, whom he loves better than his life; knowing as we all do that you are his rival in her affections, and still march on to lead a nation to victory, then he is the hero of all heroes, for he allowed no selfish, *personal motives* to stand between himself and the people whom he had promised to aid in freeing themselves from a brutal monarch. He knew that our child was safe in the care and protection of her father's men. Let us no longer listen to *rumor* Noyohtl, we will go and learn if that noble influence which the prince possesses may not be capable of planning a bridge upon which we poor Toltecs may cross to victory too."

"Then, am I to understand that you wish him to rule our people instead of me? Or is this henceforth to be a gynarchy?"

"You two have in your recent conversation caused me to remember that Prince Meconetzin is entitled to rule."

"I am truly amazed, Xinhtlatzin, that such rash and unreasonable measures meet your willing approbation, and were they to be countenanced by me, we would all soon be doing duty to the Chichimecas, as those poor slaves have done since the fall of Tollantzingo. I see nothing but future trouble in such hot-headed valor, and I certainly approve of the cautious measures taken by General Topiltzin. If he had committed any offense toward that brutal nation they would have sacrificed him the moment he was captured. Just call to mind the prob-

able, yes, I am safe to say the *positive* reason that the band of Chichimecas came so near our city; were they not in search of Meconetzin? That was why our child was stolen. Can you be blind to that fact?"

"Yes, Nouyohtl, I *am* blind to that fact, and not wilfully so, but because you are laboring under a mistaken delusion. It is false; false as that creature to whom you so willingly listen and shield. No, you shall not leave this room, Topiltzin, until I have proved at least one *serious* charge against you. When Ezcolotl heard that you had been taken a prisoner and feared that you would at once be slain, she declared in her wild ravings that you brought a Chichimeca girl here to our kingdom, and that you took her back with you upon your recent expedition, and upon that fact was based all of her fears; *is this not true?*"

"No madam, only in part; that *beast* followed us. She was the proxy wife of one of my guards, who was slain while defending the princess."

"Then your mother does not tell the truth, Topiltzin?"

"If she made that assertion while raving and delirious, would you hold her responsible for the veracity of the statement?"

The queen turned in disgust from the voluble culprit, and deigned no reply, but the king in stern measured tones burdened with a menace, exclaimed:

"Topiltzin, did you permit any spy of a Chichimeca woman to enter our domain protected by my army?"

"King Nouyohtl, I am sorry to say that I did; the unfortunate guard to whom I referred, was a brave handsome fellow, and when I endeavored to learn the exact whereabouts of the key, he aided me greatly by showing this girl marked attention. Her brother was a king's guard, and in this manner he preyed upon her suscepta-

bilities and married her according to their rights, and then through her influence the key was forthcoming, and I became possessed of the same."

"And *that* was *your crowning act of diplomacy!*" There was ringing scorn and indignation in the queen's utterances, and he hastened to add:

"When we were several days out on our homeward journey I learned that she had followed us, although I gave strict orders to the man to leave her there, and not to let her know when we intended to make the homeward journey."

"Then, Topiltzin, I think your statement is convincing proof that you do not deserve the magnitude of diplomacy (?) with which you have been accredited, since your guard managed all of the details, and then fell a victim to the snare."

"Queen Xihhtlatzin, it was myself who instigated the plan."

"Enough sir, that acknowledgement is all that I desired to know; you instigated the plan; you saw it carried into effect, and you allowed that girl to come here in the same house with your mother; you and you alone are to blame for a treacherous act toward a race who are only *your* equal in cruelty, as you have through this breach between nations made me keenly feel. Your vanity would convict you in time I very well knew, and if your king is still blind to your deceitful and intriguing nature he is *wilfully* so."

"Topiltzin, I am indeed amazed at these disclosures, this act is one which I cannot calmly overlook; it is utterly unworthy of the principles of a loyal Toltec, and exhibits a depth of depravity in your nature which I never thought existed there, and if the guard referred to were alive I *would compel* him to return with that woman to

Tenochtitlan and live with her there and endure whatever penalty the Chichimecas saw fit to inflict; he would be exiled forever from my domain!"

For a moment the dismayed culprit's volubility failed him as an avalanche of fear overcame him, and he trembled at the thought that the king might be able to wrest the true version of the affair from some of his men, but he finally summoned audacity to say:

"King Nouyohtl, when you made known your desire to possess that key you made no stipulation or restrictions in regard to the manner in which we should proceed to obtain it. I succeeded in procuring it as my ingenuity dictated, and the thought never occurred to me that any measure which I might take against those savages would be objectionable to you or could possibly be construed as a *breach between nations*. I know that the man grew to love that woman, and I considered it my duty—after his death—to provide her with a home until I could restore her to her people, which I have done. I would gladly have explained all of this to you before but it never occurred to me that the affair was of sufficient importance to interest you in the least."

"We will drop the unpleasant subject for the present, Argument were powerless to change it now. As soon as this terrible storm subsides, which has come up so suddenly, and with such extreme violence, we will make arrangements to start upon our journey to Tetlilcuan, and you Topiltzin will, I trust, be more circumspect in the future to uphold the honor of our people, although we are a conquered nation."

He seemed glad to be dismissed from the presence of the royal couple, and when he had taken his departure the king addressed the queen thus:

"I am really quite disappointed in the principles of that

man; he has never appeared before me in such a derogatory light as this."

"I need not tell you that I am not disappointed in him, and I should not be at all surprised if it was himself who made love to that girl instead of a conveniently dead guardsman."

"Oh banish that thought my dear, were it not that I have no desire, under the present circumstances, to excite his direct enmity, I would compel some of his men to substantiate his assertions or make a clean breast of it otherwise, but we cannot now change the pernicious results which have accrued from the treacherous transactions. Ye gods, Xihhtlatzin, this is the most threatening storm I have even seen."

At that precise moment a terrible convulsion of nature took place, followed by another and still another, with that dull, deep warning sound indicative of the earthquake's terrible roar. The palace *tottered*, and screaming servants fled to the streets in dismay; it seemed as if every building would collapse, and the king attempted to cross the courtyard just as one of the swaying walls caved in injuring him severely, and the physician who examined him pronounced the wound to be a very dangerous one, it having crushed in a portion of the skull, which it was necessary to remove, and he skilfully substituted a gold plate therein; the injured king meanwhile was unconscious of the delicate operation performed by the court physicians, for they mercifully administered an opiate taken from the kernel of a wholesome fruit growing abundantly in the Tollan kingdom. Under their skillful care the king soon became convalescent, and the queen, who fortunately escaped uninjured, remained steadfastly beside him until the crisis had passed.

CHAPTER XXII.

SOMETHING in the awful grandeur of that threatening demonstration of nature was welcome to scheming Topiltzin; he reveled in the outburst of divine authority that had power to humble the haughty queen with abject fear.

Confusion and ruin was visible in all directions, and not one building in the new Tollan escaped without more or less injury; it was evident also that many days must elapse before the king would be able to start on a journey, a fact which greatly pleased the conspirator, and he set the machinery of his evil genius into activity, and evolved a plan to undermine the whole Toltec kingdom.

He was in his coveted element as administrator during the severe illness of the king, although he openly advocated the false assertion that he simply obeyed the queen's commands.

He immediately despatched a runner to Tetlilicuan with instructions to King Icoatzin to kindly forward the princess with a suitable escort without delay if she would see her father again alive. Following this announcement was an exaggerated statement regarding the amount of damage done by the terrible storm.

He then called a council to which he summoned all of the able-bodied men to whose opinions he apparently paid great deference while charging them to seriously consider the danger of their unprotected condition.

What would the consequence be if marauding bands learned of their desperate and unprotected condition? The protecting walls were leveled in many places, their stores of supplies were under a mass of ruins, and their fruit trees were made barren of their ripening treasures, and uprooted; their reserved weapons were also buried, and what possible chance remained for aught but total annihilation? Where was their once boasted strength? He flattered them, while apparently giving serious weight to their suggestions, but meanwhile he adroitly guided the current of their minds into the desired channel, drawing them into making the very suggestions which, had he issued as commands, would have caused them to revolt and denounce him as a traitor.

He cunningly forced their minds over every scruple until they were unanimous in declaring that their only safety and future welfare lay in flight.

When these fatal words had been framed, and the utterance given he feigned many protestations, assenting finally with the greatest apparent reluctance, and not until he had exhausted every assailable and vulnerable point, and with secret joy saw them crumble away before the eager argument of their combative natures while parading their depth of wisdom and forethought. He then broached the following subject—Should they inform the dangerously wounded and excitable king, thereby, in all probability, bringing about his speedy dissolution? No, no, the bare suggestion was immediately cried down by the excited multitude.

Should they inform the queen, who might, in some unguarded moment, or perhaps would consider it her *duty* to reveal those facts to the king, and in his precarious condition would thus bring about the dreadful catastrophe which they must strive in every way to avert.

No, no, no, rang out from the lips of every assembled subject, and they vociferously reminded him that *he* was now in command by acclamation as well as by appointment from those in power, and declared that their united wishes were to proceed with all possible dispatch to accomplish their aim under his discreet and judicious management.

He then meekly acknowledged his depth of gratitude to them for their confidence in his skill and leadership, assuring them that no step would be taken, or task imposed upon them without first having gained the consent and approval of the worthy and appreciative subjects. This modest assertion called forth volumes of applause, and when it died away he said: "While we are ostensibly preparing to rebuild the store-houses by removing the debris, we will only transfer what supplies may be saved from the ruins to a well-guarded receptacle in the suburbs of the city, and then arrange to remove it on our way just as fast as practicable, for we do not know at what hour some thieving band may learn of our deplorable condition and attempt to overpower us."

Every person coincided with his views and pronounced his plans admirable, and they at once set about to carry them into execution, and a marked spirit of activity was apparent, and also a respectful deference more manifest than ever was displayed in every action toward Topiltzin as he quietly and unassumingly instructed them how to proceed.

The persevering efforts and humble aspect of the schemer were not lost upon the observing queen who exulted in the thought that the few well-chosen words of the king had taken root in the bosom of Topiltzin and were already bearing fruit, and she rejoiced in the thought that

there was yet in his organization a latent element of Toltec honor.

When the council met again it was to arrange for an immediate departure at the hour of the arrival of the princess. The unwelcome report came from a trustworthy scout that a large band of hostile Indians had encamped a number of leagues distant with the evident intention of making a raid upon them at the most favorable opportunity which might present itself, a menace which made a solid foundation for all of the prophesies ventured by the schemer, and thus their energies were aroused to still greater activity, and the preparations were pushed forward rapidly.

Three substantial separate conveyances were made, and relays of strong, fleet carriers were chosen, and the path marked out for them to pursue, which would finally lead them to the far south to a new country, which they had named Tahuautinsuyu, which was the rich province belonging to one of the princely decedents appointed by the immortal Votan. Their first empire had been founded at Maaya under the leadership of Prince Zamna, and had remained there for many centuries, and their beautiful cities of Palenque, Iztmal, Tulha, Tsequil, and others were deserted after a terrible drouth was visited upon them, which continued for many seasons.

They were ruled at that memorable period by a wise king named Yuca, who led them to the rich province of Tahuautinsuyu, and there they prospered beyond their fondest hopes. At Maaya, the first golden garden to the sun-god had been made which was transformed to their new home, and Votan had, during his illustrious reign, suggested the practicability of each kingdom paying tribute to the followers of Prince Zamna in order to thus provide valuable gifts for the messenger from the sun when

his arrival should take place. This unwritten law was always observed, and the Yucas became the most wealthy of Toltec nations.

It was to the shelter and protection of those powerful descendants and distant allies, that Huemac had advised the band of Toltec refugees to flee for protection when they escaped from Tollantzingo and started upon their pilgrimage; but the goal was so far distant and through such a tangled wilderness, that after the appointment of Nouyohtl as king he announced his intention of locating near enough to the province of Tetlilicuan and Huehuetlapallan, which was founded by Prince Cukulcan appointed by Votan, but which had not prospered as vigorously under his management as the other empires had done and had gradually been reduced by conquering invaders until it occupied less than half of its original territory, that they would be enabled to hold communication with the aged and infirm Toltecs, who were left in the gracious care of generous Icoatzin.

The bearers of the annual tributes to the Yucas—who always retained as a nation the name of the progressive king who had led the way to the land of plenty—always returned enthusiastic of that beautiful country, which greatly interested Topiltzin, and produced a growing desire in his bosom to travel the long intervening distance and behold for himself the chosen and adopted country of a race whose source sprang from the same nation, religious custom and secret brotherhood as his own. Now the opportunity was at hand, and he decided to take the advantage of it without delay.

Scourged by the demon of his memory, Topiltzin hastened from one duty to another, aiding and abetting, cheering and encouraging with words and deeds, while

every second was measured with a fatal accuracy which stood between himself and the object of his love.

Twenty leagues to the southward in the direct path of the proposed journey they had discovered a suitable place among the cliffs for the purpose of storing their supplies, and as the final day drew near, he suggested to them the advisability of removing their stores to that rendezvous, where they should be guarded by a sufficient number of persons, in order to avoid a moment's delay at the appointed time to march onward.

Meanwhile the king was counting the hours which must elapse until he gained sufficient strength to start upon his proposed journey to Tetlilcuan for the purpose of bringing home his child.

The queen daily amused him with glowing accounts of the humbled, obedient and industrious Topiltzin, who was thus ingratiating himself in their esteem by the course which he apparently pursued, and which seemed exemplary to their unsuspecting minds; the king became more enthusiastic at each recital, and his wonted strength hourly increased.

When the queen received the assurance of the physician that the king would recover after a prolonged illness, she had instructed Topiltzin to that effect; she had remarked that it were better not to send any rumor of the state of affairs to Tetlilcuan for the present, but when the alarm of the near approach of the marauding savages, had been revealed to the king, he commanded him to send without delay to King Icoatzin for succor.

CHAPTER XXIII.

EACH night a long line of shadowy forms crept cautiously outside of the crumbling city walls laden with as heavy burdens as they could carry, until all of the available stores were removed beyond the reach of the convalescent king, should he chance to discover the plot and object to the bold course mapped out for him to pursue.

At the very close of a long sultry day, when the welcome breeze of evening swept the gathering shades together and draped the beautiful, though devastated, vale of the new Tollan in their silent folds, the joyous announcement was made that the army of King Icoatzin was fast approaching.

Topiltzin then commanded each person, except the gate-guards and carriers to fall into line outside of the south gate in order to be ready to rush forward the instant that he gave the signal, for the report had come that the Indians were making preparations to advance.

Ezcolotl in order to ingratiate herself in the good-will of her son, who had denounced her in unmeasured terms for the disclosures she had made regarding Sekehtl, which had proved so detrimental to him, imparted a secret which she had kept since his birth, and one which elevated her greatly in his estimation and gave himself added dignity and importance until he had difficulty in acting the humble part which he had assigned to himself in order

to appear more like the follower of his ignominious plans than the leader of them.

At last the announcement was made that the caravan was at the gates, and at that moment Ezcolotl and Topiltzin sought admission to the rooms of the royal pair to inform them of the good news, but at that precise moment the princess appeared upon the opposite threshold, followed by King Icoatzin and *Prince Meconetzin, Son of Maguey*.

Topiltzin stood like one upon whom the sentence of death had been pronounced, his lips parted, his nostrils dilated and his blazing eyes glaring; but just one word fell from the stern lips of Meconetzin as he advanced toward the culprit:

"Traitor!"

Ezcolotl then rallied the full force of her vindictive nature, and in triumphant tones exclaimed:

"Meconetzin, he whom you denounce as *traitor*, has the same royal blood coursing through his veins of which you are so boastful—*He is the second son of King Tecpancaltzin!*"

As she uttered these words, she seized the dazed Topiltzin by his arm and hurried him away as she whispered the magical words in his ear:

"Come, rule your people!"

And they hastened from the presence of the reunited family before they recovered from the surprise occasioned by her revelation.

When they reached the south gate he gave the signal and shouted:

"Onward! March! The indians are upon us! They have slain the king and queen, and the carriers and gate-guards have been taken prisoners!!"

The command was promptly obeyed, and they wound their way like serpents out of the city and kingdom of the new Tollan forever. * * *

When the first glad moments of greeting were over, and the queen attempted to summon a servant, one of the carriers appeared and innocently inquired if he should place the king first upon the conveyance? Then she became aware of the prodigious plot which had been carried to such a successful issue, that not one subject remained to King Nouyohñl but Xolotli, the carriers and gate-guards.

When King Icoatzin became aware of the astounding facts, and also that the Indians were preparing an immediate attack, he persuaded the king, queen, prince and princess to return with him to Tetlilicuan with the remnant of his race, as he did not consider it expedient for him to remain and contest a siege.

They accepted the kind invitation, and soon the dearest wish in the hearts of Prince Meconetzin and Princess Centeotl was fulfilled magnificently at the palace at Tetlilicuan.

At dawn of day when the savages came to make the attack upon the city, with a resounding war-whoop, which was echoed far and wide, they were astonished to hear no defiant cry. They charged upon the ponderous gates, which to their amazement yielded unresistingly to their eager grasp, but the death-like stillness which reigned within alarmed them and they fled in terror, without searching the city, fearful that it was presided over by evil spirits which destroyed the whole Toltec nation, or changed them into invisible beings which were a menace to them.

No other tribe or nation was brave enough to take up

their abode in that city of mysteries, or attempt to investigate the cause of its eternal silence.

The terrible earthquake created great havoc at Tetlilicuan, which king Icoatzin declared was the most severe ever experienced since the advent of the Toltecs upon the continent.

It destroyed ancient landmarks which had withstood the vibrations of many centuries of earthquakes, and serious upheavals of Popocatapetl, Iztaccihuatl and Ciltaltepetl, which had at various periods lifted up their belching, menacing exertions, and it would necessitate the continued labor of many years to restore these wrecks to their former imposing grandeur.

A runner from the province of Tenochtitlan announced the alarming fact that the beautiful vale of Tollantzingo was almost a ruin from the effect of the terrific upheaval, and suffered such damage that it would require the incessant labor of a king's reign to repair it.

Meconetzin imparted the secret of the scroll contained in the unique key to the parents of his bride, also to King Icoatzin, and they learned with dismay that the promontory upon which the prophet's cavern had stood, where noble Hueman had deified the Toltec Savior and read the language of the stars and watched the glowing gate to sunland as it rose and set behind the grand old mountains, had been leveled to the ground, and the whole appearance of that portion of the country was completely changed.

These facts dashed to atoms many brilliant plans which had been fostered in the fertile brain of Meconetzin to gain possession of his lawful inheritance, which was the mammoth treasure accumulated by the thrifty Toltecs for hundreds of centuries awaiting the commands and fulfillment of the prophesy of the coming of the mess-

enger from Sunland. But he was gratified to learn that Palpan heights still existed, and by that land-mark he hoped to trace the exact whereabouts of the former location of the marble treasure-house when an alliance could be formed to overthrow the power of the Chichimecas.

THE END.

APPENDIX.

- 1 Ambistl—God who destroys the heart if it weights too little.
- 2 Amentl—Father of the Gods.
- 3 Atechpanomochocho—Name of lake.
- 4 Azcapozalco—Name of Province.
- 5 Acjojatl—Brown cane.
- 6 Ajacacaxtli—Ponderous rattle.
- 7 Areyto—Cyrcling dance.
- 8 Apizteotl—God of hunger.
- 9 Aztec—King of Culhuacas.
- 10 Atzcapotzalco—Name of Province.

- 11 Cukulcan—Prince who reigned under Votan.
- 12 Ciltlaltepctl—The Toltec name of mountain (Orizaba) signifying the witness.
- 13 Cuaxicalli-Tizoc—Sacrificial stone.
- 14 Chichimeca—Cruel nation who succeeded the Toltecs.
- 15 Cucuyous—Mammoth fire flies.
- 16 Cauhtli—Brother of King Tecpantcaltzin.
- 17 Cuycapicque—Singers of the Temple.
- 18 Culhuacan—Name of kingdom and nation.
- 19 Coatlyapan—Name of Province.
- 20 Chalchihuitl—Precious gem.
- 21 Chapultepec—Palace of Kings.

- 22 Centeotl—Toltec Princess.
 23 Carcanet—A small crown.
 24 Cazonci—Chichimeca King.
 25 Chalchuihtlanctzin—Name of King and Kingdom.
 26 Cacao—Chocolate.
- 27 Ezcolotl—Toltec maiden.
 28 Ezapan—Tank of water.
- 29 Hueman—Toltec Prophet.
 30 Hopitl—God of the water.
 31 Huitzilopochtli—God of war.
 32 Huehue-Tlapallan—Name of Province.
 33 Hatsutl—Toltec woman.
 34 Huehuecauauhtillin—Name of Province.
 35 Huemac—Toltec Priest.
 36 Huehuetl—Musical instrument.
 37 Huepilli—Garment for women.
- 38 Ixtaccihuatl—Volcanic mountain (of Mexico) wife of the one which furnished the sacrificial blade.
- 39 Icoatzin—Name of King.
 40 Ishtartl—Name of goddess.
 41 Itzmal—Name of city.
- 42 Maayha—Land without water.
 43 Meconetzin—Name of Prince (signifying son of Maguey).
- 44 Maxtlatzin—Name of brother of King Tecpantcalzin.
- 45 Mayapan—Name of kingdom.
 46 Miquahuitl—A horrible weapon.
 47 Maguey—Agave, or Aloe.
- 48 Neithtl—Goddess of weaving.
 49 Nouhyotl—Last Toltec King.

- 50 Osiristl—Judge of the dead.
- 51 Octli—Pulque, (A Mexican drink, or beverage).
- 52 Popocatapetl—Volcanic Mountain of Mexico which furnished the first sacrificial blade of obsidian.
- 53 Papantzin—Toltec General.
- 54 Ptahtl—God of creation.
- 55 Panuco—Name of River.
- 56 Palenque—Name of city.
- 57 Palpan—Heights (Hill of Guadalupe, Mexico City).
- 58 Pochotl—Toltec Soldier.
- 59 Quinimas—Race of giants.
- 60 Quetzalcohuatl—"Toltec Savior," also Evening Star. The name signifies great high-priest and ruler over the Continent.
- 61 Quetzalpetlatzin—Wife of the Toltec Savior.
- 62 Quachictin—Chichimeca General.
- 63 Ratl—A Sun God; also Tezcatlipoca.
- 64 Shentl—Path to the sun.
- 65 Sekhetl—Sun flame; also Tonacatexuhtli.
- 66 Tezcatlipoca—Sun-god and Victim to the Sun God.
- 67 Tezcatliquina—Moon Goddess.
- 68 Tollan—Toltec Kingdom.
- 69 Thothtl—Scribe of the Gods.
- 70 Toloache—Datura Stramonium (Loco weed).
- 71 Tulha—Name of city.
- 72 Tsequil—Name of city.
- 73 Topiltzin—Famous General.
- 74 Tepetlacalli—Marble Sarcophagus.
- 75 Teohuehuetl—War alarm.
- 76 Tezcocans—Name of a nation.
- 77 Tezcuco—Lake.

78 Tenochtitlan—King of Chichimecas, and Capital City.

79 "Tihui, Tihui"—"Let us go."

80 Titzli—Sacred black beans.

81 Tlacateco—Inner sanctuary.

82 Tlacatecatl—Culhuaca General.

83 Tlacachtli—Weapon of war.

84 Teohuacan—Name of Province.

85 Tetlilicuan—Name of Kingdom.

86 Tahuautinsyu—Peru.

87 Tyzompantli—Receptacle for human heads.

88 Tilmatl—Robe for King.

89 Teponaztli—Musical instrument.

90 Teamoxtli—Toltec history.

91 Tollantzingo—Capital City of the Toltecs.

92 Tecpantcaltzin—Name of Toltec King.

93 Tlaloc—God of rain.

94 Tlapallan—Name of Province.

95 Toltec—Name signifying the builders.

96 Xochimilcas—Name of a nation.

97 Xolotli—A scout, or runner.

98 Xinhltatzin—The name of a Queen.

99 Xaltocan—Province.

100 Xochiquetzalli—Goddess of love.

101 Xochitl—Toltec maiden who discovered Ocotli (Pulque).

102 Yuca—Incas of Peru.

103 Zantzintl—Guard of the Golden Garden.

104 Zamna—Prince who ruled under Votan.



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