

The king watched the holy man until he disappeared in the crowded passage; then a deadly paleness overspread his face, and he sunk almost to the platform. The nobles rushed around, and bore him to his palanquin, their brave souls astonished that the warrior and priest and mighty monarch could be so overcome. They carried him to his palace, and left him to a solitude full of unkingly superstitions.

Guatamozin, serene amid the confusion, called the *tamanes*, and ordered the old Othmi and the dead removed. The Tezcucan still breathed.

"The reviler of the gods shall be cared for," he said to himself. "If he lives, their justice will convict him."

Before the setting of the sun, the structure in the *tianques* was taken down and restored to the temples, never again to be used. Yet the market-place remained deserted and vacant; the whole city seemed plague-smitten.

And the common terror was not without cause, any more than Mualox was without inspiration. That night the ships of Cortes, eleven in number, and freighted with the materials of conquest, from the east of Yucatan, came sweeping down the bay of Campeachy. Next morning they sailed up the Rio de Tabasco, beautiful with its pure water and its banks fringed with mangroves. Tecetl had described the fleet, the sails of which from afar looked like clouds, while they did, indeed, whiten the sea.

Next evening a courier sped hotly over the causeway and up the street, stopping at the gate of the royal palace. He was taken before the king; and, shortly after, it went flying over the city how Quetzal' had arrived, in canoes larger than temples, wafted by clouds, and full of thunder and lightning. Then sank the monarch's heart; and, though the Spaniard knew it not, his marvellous conquest was half completed before his iron shoe smote the shore at San Juan de Ulloa.\*

\* Cortes' squadron reached the mouth of the river Tabasco on the 12th of March, 1519.

## BOOK TWO.

### CHAPTER I.

#### WHO ARE THE STRANGERS?

MARCH passed, and April came, and still the strangers, in their great canoes, lingered on the coast. Montezuma observed them with becoming prudence; through his lookouts, he was informed of their progress from the time they left the Rio de Tabasco.

The constant anxiety to which he was subjected affected his temper; and, though roused from the torpor into which he had been plunged by the visit to the golden chamber, and the subsequent prophecy of Mualox, his melancholy was a thing of common observation. He renounced his ordinary amusements, even *totoloque*, and went no more to the hunting-grounds on the shore of the lake; in preference, he took long walks in the gardens, and reclined in the audience-chamber of his palace; yet more remarkable, conversation with his councillors and nobles delighted him more than the dances of his women or the songs of his minstrels. In truth, the monarch was himself a victim of the delusions he had perfected for his people. Polytheism had come to him with the Empire; but he had enlarged upon it, and covered it with dogmas; and so earnestly, through a long and glorious reign, had he preached them, that, at last, he had become his own most zealous convert. In all his dominions, there was not one whom faith more inclined to absolute fear of Quetzal' than himself.



One evening he passed from his bath to the dining-hall for the last meal of the day. Invigorated, and, as was his custom, attired for the fourth time since morning in fresh garments, he walked briskly, and even droned a song.

No monarch in Europe fared more sumptuously than Montezuma. The room devoted to the purpose was spacious, and, on this occasion, brilliantly lighted. The floor was spread with figured matting, and the walls hung with beautiful tapestry; and in the centre of the apartment a luxurious couch had been rolled for him, it being his habit to eat reclining; while, to hide him from the curious, a screen had been contrived, and set up between the couch and principal door. The viands set down by his steward as the substantials of the first course were arranged upon the floor before the couch, and kept warm and smoking by chafing-dishes. The table, if such it may be called, was supplied by contributions from the provinces, and furnished, in fact, no contemptible proof of his authority, and the perfection with which it was exercised. The ware was of the finest Chalcapan manufacture, and, like his clothes, never used by him but the once, a royal custom requiring him to present it to his friends.\*

When he entered the room, the evening I have mentioned, there were present only his steward, four or five aged councillors, whom he was accustomed to address as "uncles," and a couple of women, who occupied themselves in preparing certain wafers and confections which he particularly affected. He stretched himself comfortably upon the couch, much, I presume, after the style of the Romans, and at once began the meal. The ancients moved back several steps, and a score of boys, noble, yet clad in the inevitable *nequen*, responding to a bell, came in and posted themselves to answer his requests.

\* Prescott, Conq. of Mexico.

Sometimes, by invitation, the councillors were permitted to share the feast; oftener, however, the only object of their presence was to afford him the gratification of remark. The conversation was usually irregular, and hushed and renewed as he prompted, and not unfrequently extended to the gravest political and religious subjects. On the evening in question he spoke to them kindly.

"I feel better this evening, uncles. My good star is rising above the mists that have clouded it. We ought not to complain of what we cannot help; still, I have thought that when the gods retained the power to afflict us with sorrows, they should have given us some power to correct them."

One of the old men answered reverentially, "A king should be too great for sorrows; he should wear his crown against them as we wear our mantles against the cold winds."

"A good idea," said the monarch, smiling; "but you forget that the crown, instead of protecting, is itself the trouble. Come nearer, uncles; there is a matter more serious about which I would hear your minds."

They obeyed him, and he went on.

"The last courier brought me word that the strangers were yet on the coast, hovering about the islands. Tell me, who say you they are, and whence do they come?"

"How may we know more than our wise master?" said one of them.

"And our thoughts, — do we not borrow them from you, O king?" added another.

"What! Call you those answers? Nay, uncles, my fools can better serve me; if they cannot instruct, they can at least amuse."

The king spoke bitterly, and looking at one, probably the oldest of them all, said, —

"Uncle, you are the poorest courtier, but you are discreet and honest. I want opinions that have in them more wis-



dom than flattery. Speak to me truly: who are these strangers?"

"For your sake, O my good king, I wish I were wise; for the trouble they have given my poor understanding is indeed very great. I believe them to be gods, landed from the Sun." And the old man went on to fortify his belief with arguments. In the excited state of his fancy, it was easy for him to convert the cannon of the Spaniards into engines of thunder and lightning, and transform their horses into creatures of Mictlan mightier than men. Right summarily he also concluded, that none but gods could traverse the dominions of Haloc,\* subjecting the variant winds to their will. Finally, to prove the strangers irresistible, he referred to the battle of Tabasco, then lately fought between Cortes and the Indians.

Montezuma heard him in silence, and replied, "Not badly given, uncle; your friends may profit by your example; but you have not talked as a warrior. You have forgotten that we, too, have beaten the lazy Tabascans. That reference proves as much for my caciques as for your gods."

He waved his hand, and the first course was removed. The second consisted for the most part of delicacies in the preparation of which his *artistes* delighted; at this time appeared the *chocolatl*, a rich, frothy beverage served in *xicaras*, or small golden goblets. Girls, selected for their rank and beauty, succeeded the boys. Flocking around him with light and echoless feet, very graceful, very happy, theirs was indeed the service that awaits the faithful in Mahomet's Paradise. To each of his ancients he passed a goblet of *chocolatl*, then continued his eating and talking.

"Yes. Be they gods or men, I would give a province to know their intention; that, uncles, would enable me to determine my policy, — whether to give them war or peace.

\* God of the sea.

As yet, they have asked nothing but the privilege of trading with us; and, judging them by our nations, I want not better warrant of friendship. As you know, strangers have twice before been upon our coast in such canoes, and with such arms;\* and in both instances they sought gold, and getting it they departed. Will these go like them?"

"Has my master forgotten the words of Mualox?"

"To Mictlan with the paba!" said the king, violently. "He has filled my cities and people with trouble."

"Yet he is a prophet," retorted the old councillor, boldly. "How knew he of the coming of the strangers before it was known in the palace?"

The flush of the king's face faded.

"It is a mystery, uncle, — a mystery too deep for me. All the day and night before he was in his Cû; he went not into the city even."

"If the wise master will listen to the words of his slave, he will not again curse the paba, but make him a friend."

The monarch's lip curled derisively.

"My palace is now a house of prayer and sober life; he would turn it into a place of revelry."

All the ancients but the one laughed at the irony; that one repeated his words.

"A friend; but how?" asked Montezuma.

"Call him from the Cû to the palace; let him stand here with us; in the councils give him a voice. He can read the future; make of him an oracle. O king, who like him can stand between you and Quetzal?"

For a while Montezuma toyed idly with the *xicara*. He also believed in the prophetic gifts of Mualox, and it was not the first time he had pondered the question of how the holy man had learned the coming of the strangers; to satisfy

\* The allusion was doubtless to the expeditions of Hernandez de Cordova, in 1517, and Juan de Grijalva, in 1518.



himself as to his means of information, he had even instituted inquiries outside the palace. And yet it was but one of several mysteries; behind it, if not superior, were the golden chamber, its wealth, and the writing on the walls. They were not to be attributed to the paba: works so wondrous could not have been done in one lifetime. They were the handiwork of a god, who had chosen Mualox for his servant and prophet; such was the judgment of the king.

Nor was that all. The monarch had come to believe that the strangers on the coast were Quetzal' and his followers, whom it were vain to resist, if their object was vengeance. But the human heart is seldom without its suggestion of hope; and he thought, though resistance was impossible, might he not propitiate? This policy had occupied his thoughts, and most likely without result, for the words of the councillor seemed welcome. Indeed, he could scarcely fail to recognize the bold idea they conveyed,—nothing less, in fact, than meeting the god with his own prophet.

"Very well," he said, in his heart. "I will use the paba. He shall come and stand between me and the woe."

Then he arose, took a string of pearls from his neck, and with his own hand placed it around that of the ancient.

"Your place is with me, uncle. I will have a chamber fitted for you here in the palace. Go no more away. Ho, steward! The supper is done; let the pipes be brought, and give me music and dance. Bid the minstrels come. A song of the olden time may make me strong again."

## CHAPTER II.

## A TEZCUCAN LOVER.

TRACES of the supper speedily disappeared. The screen was rolled away, and pipes placed in the monarch's hand for distribution amongst his familiars. Blue vapor began to ascend to the carved rafters, when the tapestry on both sides of the room was flung aside, and the sound of cornets and flutes poured in from an adjoining apartment; and, as if answering the summons of the music, a company of dancing-girls entered, and filled the space in front of the monarch; half nude were they, and flashing with ornaments, and aerial with gauze and flying ribbons; silver bells tinkled with each step, and on their heads were wreaths, and in their hands garlands of flowers. Voluptuous children were they of the voluptuous valley.

Saluting the monarch, they glided away, and commenced a dance. With dreamy, half-shut eyes, through the scented cloud momentarily deepening around him, he watched them; and in the sensuous, animated scene was disclosed one of the enchantments that had weaned him from the martial love of his youth.

Every movement of the figure had been carefully studied, and a kind of æsthetic philosophy was blent with its perfect time and elegance of motion. Slow and stately at first, it gradually quickened; then, as if to excite the blood and fancy, it became more mazy and voluptuous; and finally, as that is the sweetest song that ends with a long decadence, it was so concluded as to soothe the transports itself had awakened. Sweeping along, it reached a point, a very climax of abandon and beauty, in which the dancers ap-



peared to forget the music and the method of the figure; then the eyes of the king shone brightly, and the pipe lingered on his lips forgotten; and then the musicians began, one by one, to withdraw from the harmony, and the dancers to vanish singly from the room, until, at last, there was but one flute to be heard, while but one girl remained. Finally, she also disappeared, and all grew still again.

And the king sat silent and listless, surrendered to the enjoyment which was the object of the diversion; yet he heard the music; yet he saw the lithe and palpitating forms of the dancers in posture and motion; yet he felt the sweet influence of their youth and grace and beauty, not as a passion, but rather a spell full of the suggestions of passion, when a number of men came noiselessly in, and, kneeling, saluted him. Their costume was that of priests, and each of them carried an instrument of music fashioned somewhat like a Hebrew lyre.

"Ah, my minstrels, my minstrels!" he said, his face flushing with pleasure. "Welcome in the streets, welcome in the camp, welcome in the palace, also! What have you to-night?"

"When last we were admitted to your presence, O king, you bade us compose hymns to the god Quetzal' —"

"Yes; I remember."

"We pray you not to think ill of your slaves if we say that the verses which come unbidden are the best; no song of the bird's so beautiful as the one it sings when its heart is full."

The monarch sat up.

"Nay, I did not command. I know something of the spirit of poetry. It is not a thing to be driven by the will, like a canoe by a strong arm; neither is it a slave, to come or go at a signal. I bid my warriors march; I order the sacrifice; but the lays of my minstrels have ever been of their

free will. Leave me now. To you are my gardens and palaces. I warrant the verses you have are good; but go ask your hearts for better."

They retired with their faces toward him until hidden behind the tapestry.

"I love a song, uncles," continued the king; "I love a hymn to the gods, and a story of battle chanted in a deep voice. In the halls of the Sun every soul is a minstrel, and every tale a song. But let them go; it is well enough. I promised Itzli', the Tezcucan, to give him audience to-night. He comes to the palace but seldom, and he has not asked a favor since I settled his quarrel with the lord Cacama. Send one to see if he is now at the door."

Thereupon he fell to reflecting and smoking; and when next he spoke, it was from the midst of an aromatic cloud.

"I loved the wise 'Hualpilli; for his sake, I would have his children happy. He was a lover of peace, and gave more to policy than to war. It were grievous to let his city be disturbed by feuds and fighting men; therefore I gave it to the eldest son. His claim was best; and, besides, he has the friendly heart to serve me. Still — still, I wish there had been two Tezcucos."

"There was but one voice about the judgment in Tezcuco, O king; the citizens all said it was just."

"And they would have said the same if I had given them Itzli'. I know the knaves, uncle. It was not their applause I cared for; but, you see, in gaining a servant, I lost one. Itzli' is a warrior. Had he the will, he could serve me in the field as well as his brother in the council. I must attach him to me. A strong arm is pleasant to lean on; it is better than a staff."

Addressing himself to the pipe again, he sat smoking, and moodily observing the vapor vanish above him. There was silence until Itzli' was ushered in.



The cacique was still suffering from his wounds. His step was feeble, so that his obeisance was stopped by the monarch himself.

"Let the salutation go, my lord Iztli'. Your courage has cost you much. I remember you are the son of my old friend, and bid you welcome."

"The Tlascalans are good warriors," said the Tezcucan, coldly.

"And for that reason better victims," added the king, quickly. "By the Sun, I know not what we would do without them. Their hills supply our temples."

"And I, good king—I am but a warrior. My heart is not softened by things pertaining to religion. Enough for me to worship the gods."

"Then you are not a student?"

"I never studied in the academies."

"I understand," said the king, with a low laugh. "You cannot name as many stars as enemies whom you have slain. No matter. I have places for such scholars. Have you commanded an army?"

"It pleased you to give me that confidence. I led my companies within the Tlascalan wall, and came back with captives."

"I recollect now. But as most good warriors are modest, my son, I will not tell you what the chiefs said of your conduct; you would blush—"

Iztli' started.

"Content you, content you; your blush would not be for shame."

There was a pause, which the king gave to his pipe. Suddenly he said, "There have been tongues busy with your fame, my son. I have heard you were greatly dissatisfied because I gave your father's city to your elder brother. But I consider that men are never without detractors, and I can-

not forget that you have perilled your life for the gods. Actions I accept as the proofs of will. If the favor that brought you here be reasonable, it is yours for the asking. I have the wish to serve you."

"I am not surprised that I have enemies," said Iztli', calmly. "I will abuse no one on that account; for I am an enemy, and can forgive in others what I deem virtue in myself. But it moves me greatly, O king, that my enemies should steal into your palace, and, in my absence, wrong me in your opinion. But pardon me; I did not come to defend myself—"

"You have taken my words in an evil sense," interposed the king, with an impatient gesture.

"Or to conceal the truth," the Tezcucan continued. "There is kingly blood in me, and I dare speak as my father's son. So if they said merely that I was dissatisfied with your judgment, they said truly."

Montezuma frowned.

"I intend my words to be respectful, most mighty king. A common wisdom teaches us to respect the brave man and dread the coward. And there is not in your garden a flower as beautiful, nor in your power a privilege as precious, as free speech; and it would sound ill of one so great and secure as my father's friend if he permitted in the streets and in the farmer's hut what he forbade in his palace. I spoke of dissatisfaction; but think not it was because you gave Tezcucan to my brother, and to me the bare hills that have scarcely herbage enough for a wolf-covert. I am less a prince than a warrior; all places are alike to me; the earth affords me royal slumber, while no jewelled canopy is equal to the starred heavens; and as there is a weakness in pleasant memories, I have none. To such as I am, O king, what matters a barren hill or a proud palace? I murmured, nay, I did more, because, in judging my quarrel, you overthrew the indepen-



dence of my country. When my father visited you from across the lake, he was not accustomed to stand before you, or hide his kingly robes beneath a slave's garb."

Montezuma half started from his seat. "Holy gods! Is rebellion so bold?"

"I meant no disrespect, great king. I only sought to justify myself, and in your royal presence say what I have thought while fighting under your banner. But, without more abuse of your patience, I will to my purpose, especially as I came for peace and friendship."

"The son of my friend forgets that I have ways to make peace without treating for it," said the king.

The Tezcucan smothered an angry reply.

"By service done, I have shown a disposition to serve you, O king. Very soon every warrior will be needed. A throne may be laid amid hymns and priestly prayers, yet have no strength; to endure, it must rest upon the allegiance of love. Though I have spoken unpleasant words, I came to ask that, by a simple boon, you give me cause to love. I have reflected that I, too, am of royal blood, and, as the son of a king, may lead your armies, and look for alliance in your house. By marriage, O king, I desire, come good or evil, to link my fortune to yours."

Montezuma's countenance was stolid; no eye could have detected upon it so much as surprise. He quietly asked, "Which of my daughters has found favor in your eyes?"

"They are all beautiful, but only one of them is fitted for a warrior's wife."

"Tula?"

Iztlil' bowed.

"She is dear to me," said the king, softly, "dearer than a city; she is holy as a temple, and lovelier than the morning; her voice is sweet as the summer wind, and her presence as the summer itself. Have you spoken to her of this thing?"

"I love her, so that her love is nothing to me. Her feelings are her own, but she is yours; and you are more powerful to give than she to withhold."

"Well, well," said the monarch, after a little thought; "in my realm there are none of better quality than the children of 'Hualpilli,—none from whom such demand is as proper. Yet it is worthy deliberation. It is true, I have the power to bestow, but there are others who have the right to be consulted. I study the happiness of my people, and it were unnatural if I cared less for that of my children. So leave me now, but take with you, brave prince, the assurance that I am friendly to your suit. The gods go with you!"

And Iztlil', after a low obeisance, withdrew; and then the overture was fully discussed. Montezuma spoke freely, welcoming the opportunity of securing the bold, free-spoken cacique, and seeing in the demand only a question of policy. As might be expected, the ancients made no opposition; they could see no danger in the alliance, and had no care for the parties. It was policy.

### CHAPTER III.

#### THE BANISHMENT OF GUATAMOZIN.

THE palace of Montezuma was regarded as of very great sanctity, so that his household, its economy, and the exact relation its members bore to each other were mysteries to the public. From the best information, however, it would seem that he had two lawful and acknowledged wives, the queens Tecalco and Acatlan,\* who, with their families, occu-

\* These are the proper names of the queens. MSS of Muñoz. Also, note to Prescott, *Conq. of Mexico*, Vol. II., p. 351.



pied spacious apartments secure from intrusion. They were good-looking, middle-aged women, whom the monarch honored with the highest respect and confidence. By the first one, he had a son and daughter; by the second, two daughters.

"Help me, Acatlan! I appeal to your friendship, to the love you bear your children, — help me in my trouble." So the queen Tecalco prayed the queen Acatlan in the palace the morning after the audience given the Tezcucan by the king.

The two were sitting in a room furnished with some taste. Through the great windows, shaded by purple curtains, streamed the fresh breath of the early day. There were female slaves around them in waiting; while a boy nearly grown, at the eastern end of the apartment, was pitching the golden balls in *totoloque*. This was prince Io', the brother of Tula, and son of Tecalco.

"What is the trouble? What can I do?" asked Acatlan.

"Listen to me," said Tecalco. "The king has just gone. He came in better mood than usual, and talked pleasantly. Something had happened; some point of policy had been gained. Nowadays, you know, he talks and thinks of nothing but policy; formerly it was all of war. We cannot deny, Acatlan, that he is much changed. Well, he played a game with Io', then sat down, saying he had news which he thought would please me. You will hardly believe it, but he said that Iztlil', the proud Tezcucan, asked Tula in marriage last night. Think of it! Tula, my blossom, my soul! and to that vile cacique!"

"Well, he is brave, and the son of 'Hualpilli," said Acatlan.

"What! You!" said Tecalco, despairingly. "Do you, too, turn against me? I do not like him, and would not if he were the son of a god. Tula hates him!"

"I will not turn against you, Tecalco. Be calmer, and tell me what more the king said."

"I told him I was surprised, but not glad to hear the news. He frowned, and paced the floor, now here, now there. I was frightened, but could bear his anger better than the idea of my Tula, so good, so beautiful, the wife of the base Tezcucan. He said the marriage must go on; it was required by policy, and would help quiet the Empire, which was never so threatened. You will hardly believe I ventured to tell him that it should not be, as Tula was already contracted to Guatamozin. I supposed that announcement would quiet the matter, but it only enraged him; he spoke bitterly of the 'tzin. I could scarcely believe my ears. He used to love him. What has happened to change his feeling?"

Acatlan thrummed her pretty mouth with her fingers, and thought awhile.

"Yes, I have heard some stories about the 'tzin —"

"Indeed!" said Tecalco, opening her eyes.

"He too has changed, as you may have observed," continued Acatlan. "He used to be gay and talkative, fond of company, and dance; latterly, he stays at home, and when abroad, mopes, and is silent; while we all know that no great private or public misfortune has happened him. The king appears to have noticed it. And, my dear sister," — the queen lowered her voice to a confidential whisper, — "they say the 'tzin aspires to the throne."

"What! Do you believe it? Does the king?" cried Tecalco, more in anger than surprise.

"I believe nothing yet, though there are some grounds for his accusers to go upon. They say he entertains at his palace near Iztapalapan none but men of the army, and that while in Tenochtitlan, he studies the favor of the people, and uses his wealth to win popularity with all classes. Indeed,



Tecalco, somehow the king learned that, on the day of the celebration of Quetzal', the 'tzin was engaged in a direct conspiracy against him."

"It is false, Acatlan, it is false! The king has not a more faithful subject. I know the 'tzin. He is worth a thousand of the Tezcucan, who is himself the traitor." And the vexed queen beat the floor with her sandalled foot.

"As to that, Tecalco, I know nothing. But what more from the king?"

"He told me that Tula should never marry the 'tzin; he would use all his power against it; he would banish him from the city first. And his rage increased until, finally, he swore by the gods he would order a banquet, and, in presence of all the lords of the Empire, publicly betroth Tula and the Tezcucan. He said he would do anything the safety of the throne and the gods required of him. He never was so angry. And that, O Acatlan, my sister, that is my trouble. How can I save my child from such a horrid betrothal?"

Acatlan shook her head gloomily. "The king brooks defeat better than opposition. We would not be safe to do anything openly. I acknowledge myself afraid, and unable to advise you."

Tecalco burst into tears, and wrung her hands, overcome by fear and rage. Io' then left his game, and came to her. He was not handsome, being too large for his years, and ungraceful; this tendency to homeliness was increased by the smallness of his face and head; the features were actually childish.

"Say no more, mother," he said, tears standing in his eyes, as if to prove his sympathy and kindness. "You know it would be better to play with the tigers than stir the king to anger."

"Ah, Io', what shall I do? I always heard you speak well of the 'tzin. You loved him once."

"And I love him yet."

Tecalco was less pacified than ever.

"What would I not give to know who set the king so against him! Upon the traitor be the harm there is in a mother's curse! If my child must be sacrificed, let it be by a priest, and as a victim to the gods."

"Do not speak so. Be wise, Tecalco. Recollect such sorrows belong to our rank."

"Our rank, Acatlan! I can forget it sooner than that I am a mother! O, you do not know how long I have nursed the idea of wedding Tula to the 'tzin! Since their childhood I have prayed, plotted, and hoped for it. With what pride I have seen them grow up, — he so brave, generous, and princely, she so staid and beautiful! I have never allowed her to think of other destiny: the gods made them for each other."

"Mother," said Io', thoughtfully, "I have heard you say that Guatamoziu was wise. Why not send him word of what has happened, and put our trust in him?"

The poor queen caught at the suggestion eagerly; for with a promise of aid, at the same time it relieved her of responsibility, of all burthens the most dreadful to a woman. And Acatlan, really desirous of helping her friend, but at a loss for a plan, and terrified by the idea of the monarch's wrath incurred, wondered they had not thought of the proposal sooner, and urged the 'tzin's right to be informed of the occurrence.

"There must be secrecy, Tecalco. The king must never know us as traitors: that would be our ruin."

"There shall be no danger; I can go myself," said Io'. "It is long since I was at Iztapalapan, and they say the 'tzin has such beautiful gardens. I want to see the three kings who hold torches in his hall; I want to try a bow with him."



After some entreaty, Tecalco assented. She required him, however, to put on a costume less likely to attract attention, and take some other than a royal canoe across the lake. Half an hour later, he passed out of a garden gate, and, by a circuitous route, hurried to the canal in which lay the vessels of the Iztapalapan watermen. He found one, and was bargaining with its owner, when a young man walked briskly up, and stepped into a canoe close by. Something in the gay dress of the stranger made Io' look at him a second time, and he was hardly less pleased than surprised at being addressed, —

"Ho, friend! I am going to your city. Save your cocoa, and go with me."

Io' was confused.

"Come on!" the stranger persisted, with a pleasant smile. "Come on! I want company. You were never so welcome."

The smile decided the boy. He set one foot in the vessel, but instantly retreated — an ocelot, crouched in the bottom, raised its round head, and stared fixedly at him. The stranger laughed, and reassured him, after which he walked boldly forward. Then the canoe swung from its mooring, and in a few minutes, under the impulsion of three strong slaves, went flying down the canal. Under bridges, through incoming flotillas, and past the great houses on either hand they darted, until the city was left behind, and the lake, colored with the borrowed blue of the sky, spread out rich and billowy before them. The eyes of the stranger brightened at the prospect.

"I like this. By Our Mother, I like it!" he said, earnestly. "We have lakes in Tihuanco on which I have spent days riding waves and spearing fish; but they were dull to this. See the stretch of the water! Look yonder at the villages, and here at the city and Chapultepec! Ah, that

you were born in Tenochtitlan be proud. There is no grander birthplace this side of the Sun!"

"I am an Aztec," said Io', moved by the words.

The other smiled, and added, "Why not go further, and say, 'and son of the king?'"

Io' was startled.

"Surprised! Good prince, I am a hunter. From habit, I observe everything; a track, a tree, a place, once seen is never forgotten; and since I came to the city, the night before the combat of Quetzal', the habit has not left me. That day you were seated under the red canopy, with the princesses Tula and Nenetzin. So I came to know the king's son."

"Then you saw the combat?"

"And how brave it was! There never was its match, — never such archery as the 'tzin's. Then the blow with which he killed the Othmi! I only regretted that the Tezcucan escaped. I do not like him; he is envious and spiteful; it would have been better had he fallen instead of the Otompan. You know Iztli!'?"

"Not to love him," said Io'.

"Is he like the 'tzin?"

"Not at all."

"So I have heard," said the hunter, shrugging his shoulders. "But — Down, fellow!" he cried to the ocelot, whose approaches discomposed the prince. "I was going to say," he resumed, with a look which, as an invitation to confidence, was irresistible, "that there is no reason why you and I should not be friends. We are both going to see the 'tzin —"

Io' was again much confused.

"I only heard you say so to the waterman on the landing. If your visit, good prince, was intended as a secret, you are a careless messenger. But have no fear. I intend entering the 'tzin's service; that is, if he will take me."



"Is the 'tzin enlisting men?" asked Io'.

"No. I am merely weary of hunting. My father is a good merchant whose trading life is too tame for me. I love excitement. Even hunting deer and chasing wolves are too tame. I will now try war, and there is but one whom I care to follow. Together we will see and talk to him."

"You speak as if you were used to arms."

"My skill may be counted nothing. I seek the service more from what I imagine it to be. The march, the camp, the battle, the taking captives, the perilling life, when it is but a secondary object, as it must be with every warrior of true ambition, all have charms for my fancy. Besides, I am discontented with my condition. I want honor, rank, and command, — wealth I have. Hence, for me, the army is the surest road. Beset with trials, and needing a good heart and arm, yet it travels upward, upward, and that is all I seek to know."

The *naïveté* and enthusiasm of the hunter were new and charming to the prince, who was impelled to study him once more. He noticed how exactly the arms were rounded; that the neck was long, muscular, and widened at the base, like the trunk of an oak; that the features, excited by the passing feeling, were noble and good; that the very carriage of the head was significant of aptitude for brave things, if not command. Could the better gods have thrown Io' in such company for self-comparison? Was that the time they had chosen to wake within him the longings of mind natural to coming manhood? He felt the inspiration of an idea new to him. All his life had been passed in the splendid monotony of his father's palace; he had been permitted merely to hear of war, and that from a distance; of the noble passion for arms he knew nothing. Accustomed to childish wants, with authority to gratify them, ambition for power had not yet disturbed him. But, as he listened, it

was given him to see the emptiness of his past life, and understand the advantages he already possessed; he said to himself, "Am I not master of grade and opportunities, so coveted by this unknown hunter, and so far above his reach?" In that moment the contentment which had canopied his existence, like a calm sky, full of stars and silence and peace, was taken up, and whirled away; his spirit strengthened with a rising ambition and a courage royally descended.

"You are going to study with the 'tzin. I would like to be your comrade," he said.

"I accept you, I give you my heart!" replied the hunter, with beaming face. "We will march, and sleep, and fight, and practise together. I will be true to you as shield to the warrior. Hereafter, O prince, when you would speak of me, call me Hualpa; and if you would make me happy, say of me, 'He is my comrade!'"

The sun stood high in the heavens when they reached the landing. Mounting a few steps that led from the water's edge, they found themselves in a garden rich with flowers, beautiful trees, running streams, and trellised summer-houses, — the garden of a prince, — of Guatamozin, the true hero of his country.

---

#### CHAPTER IV.

##### GUATAMOZIN AT HOME.

GUATAMOZIN inherited a great fortune, ducal rank, and an estate near Iztapalapan. Outside the city, midst a garden that extended for miles around, stood his palace, built in the prevalent style, one story high, but broad