

"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

and wide enough to comfortably accommodate several thousand men. His retainers, a legion in themselves, inhabited it for the most part; and whether soldier, artisan, or farmer, each had his quarters, his exclusive possession as against every one but the 'tzin.

The garden was almost entirely devoted to the cultivation of fruits and flowers. Hundreds of slaves, toiling there constantly under tasteful supervision, made and kept it beautiful past description. Rivulets of pure water, spanned by bridges and bordered with flowers, ran through every part over beds of sand yellow as gold. The paths frequently led to artificial lagoons, delightful for the coolness that lingered about them, when the sun looked with his burning eye down upon the valley; for they were fringed with willow and sycamore trees, all clad with vines as with garments; and some were further garnished with little islands, plumed with palms, and made attractive by kiosks. Nor were these all. Fountains and cascades filled the air with sleepy songs; orange-groves rose up, testifying to the clime they adorned; and in every path small *teules*, on pedestals of stone, so mingled religion with the loveliness that there could be no admiration without worship.

Io' and Hualpa, marvelling at the beauty they beheld, pursued a path, strewn with white sand, and leading across the garden, to the palace. A few armed men loitered about the portal, but allowed them to approach without question. From the antechamber they sent their names to the 'tzin, and directly the slave returned with word to Io' to follow him.

The study into which the prince was presently shown was furnished with severe plainness. An arm-chair, if such it may be called, some rude tables and uncushioned benches, offered small encouragement to idleness.

Sand, glittering like crushed crystal, covered the floor,

and, instead of tapestry, the walls were hung with maps of the Empire, and provinces the most distant. Several piles of MSS., — the books of the Aztecs, — with parchment and writing-materials, lay on a table; and half concealed amongst them was a harp, such as we have seen in the hands of the royal minstrels.

"Welcome, Io', welcome!" said the 'tzin, in his full voice. "You have come at length, after so many promises, — come last of all my friends. When you were here before, you were a child, and I a boy like you now. Let us go and talk it over." And leading him to a bench by a window, they sat down.

"I remember the visit," said Io'. "It was many years ago. You were studying then, and I find you studying yet."

A serious thought rose to the 'tzin's mind, and his smile was clouded.

"You do not understand me, Io'. Shut up in your father's palace, your life is passing too dreamily. The days with you are like waves of the lake: one rolls up, and, scarcely murmuring, breaks on the shore; another succeeds, — that is all. Hear, and believe me. He who would be wise must study. There are many who live for themselves, a few who live for their race. Of the first class, no thought is required; they eat, sleep, are merry, and die, and have no hall in heaven: but the second must think, toil, and be patient; they must know, and, if possible, know everything. God and ourselves are the only sources of knowledge. I would not have you despise humanity, but all that is from ourselves is soon learned. There is but one inexhaustible fountain of intelligence, and that is Nature, the God Supreme. See those volumes; they are of men, full of wisdom, but nothing original; they are borrowed from the book of deity, — the always-opened book, of which the sky is one chapter, and earth the other. Very deep are the

lessons of life and heaven there taught. I confess to you, Io', that I aspire to be of those whose lives are void of selfishness, who live for others, for their country. Your father's servant, I would serve him understandingly; to do so, I must be wise; and I cannot be wise without patient study."

Io's unpractised mind but half understood the philosophy to which he listened; but when the 'tzin called himself his father's servant, Acatlan's words recurred to the boy.

"O 'tzin," he said, "they are not all like you, so good, so true. There have been some telling strange stories about you to the king."

"About me?"

"They say you want to be king," — the listener's face was passive, — "and that on Quetzal's day you were looking for opportunity to attack my father." Still there was no sign of emotion. "Your staying at home, they say, is but a pretence to cover your designs."

"And what more, Io'?"

"They say you are taking soldiers into your pay; that you give money, and practise all manner of arts, to become popular in Tenochtitlan; and that your delay in entering the arena on the day of the combat had something to do with your conspiracy."

For a moment the noble countenance of the 'tzin was disturbed.

"A lying catalogue! But is that all?"

"No," — and Io's voice trembled, — "I am a secret messenger from the queen Tecalco, my mother. She bade me say to you, that last night Iztlil', the Tezcucan, had audience with the king, and asked Tula for his wife."

Guatamozin sprang from his seat more pallid than ever in battle.

"And what said Montezuma?"

"This morning he came to the queen, my mother, and told

her about it; on your account she objected; but he became angry, spoke harshly of you, and swore Tula should not wed with you; he would banish you first."

Through the silent cell the 'tzin strode gloomily; the blow weakened him. Mualox was wrong; men cannot make themselves almost gods; by having many ills, and bearing them bravely, they can only become heroes. After a long struggle he resumed his calmness and seat.

"What more from the queen?"

"Only, that as she was helpless, she left everything to you. She dares not oppose the king."

"I understand!" exclaimed the 'tzin, starting from the bench again. "The Tezcucan is my enemy. Crossing the lake, night before the combat, he told me he loved Tula, and charged me with designs against the Empire, and cursed the king and his crown. Next day he fought under my challenge. The malice of a mean soul cannot be allayed by kindness. But for me the *tamanes* would have buried him with the Tlascalans. I sent him to my house; my slaves tended him; yet his hate was only sharpened."

He paced the floor to and fro, speaking vehemently.

"The ingrate charges me with aspiring to the throne. Judge me, holy gods! Judge how willingly I would lay down my life to keep the crown where it is! He says my palace has been open to men of the army. It was always so, — I am a warrior. I have consulted them about the Empire, but always as a subject, never for its ill. Such charges I laugh at; but that I sought to slay the king is too horrible for endurance. On the day of the combat, about the time of the assemblage, I went to the Cû of Quetzal' for blessing. I saw no smoke or other sign of fire upon the tower. Mualox was gone, and I trembled lest the fire should be dead. I climbed up, and found only a few living embers. There were no fagots on the roof, nor in the court-yard; the shrine

was abandoned, Mualox old. The desolation appealed to me. The god seemed to claim my service. I broke my spear and shield, and flung the fragments into the urn, then hastened to the palace, loaded some *tamanes* with wood, and went back to the Cû. I was not too late there; but, hurrying to the *tianguetz*, I found myself almost dishonored. So was I kept from the arena; that service to the god is now helping my enemy as proof that I was waiting on a housetop to murder my king and kinsman! Alas! I have only slaves to bear witness to the holy work that kept me on the temple. Much I fear the gods are making the king blind for his ruin and the ruin of us all. He believes the strangers on the coast are from the Sun, when they are but men. Instead of war against them, he is thinking of embassies and presents. Now, more than ever, he needs the support of friends; but he divides his family against itself, and confers favors on enemies. I see the danger. Unfriendly gods are moving against us, not in the strangers, but in our own divisions. Remember the prophecy of Mualox, 'The race of Azatlan is ended forever.'

The speaker stopped his walking, and his voice became low and tremulous.

"Yet I love him; he has been kind; he gave me command; through his graciousness I have dwelt unmolested in this palace of my father. I am bound to him by love and law. As he has been my friend, I will be his; when his peril is greatest, I will be truest. Nothing but ill from him to Anahuac can make me his enemy. So, so, — let it pass. I trust the future to the gods."

Then, as if seeking to rid himself of the bitter subject, he turned to Io'. "Did not some one come with you?"

The boy told what he knew of Hualpa.

"I take him to be no common fellow; he has some proud ideas. I think you would like him."

"I will try your hunter, Io'. And if he is what you say of him, I will accept his service."

And they went immediately to the antechamber, where Hualpa saluted the 'tzin. The latter surveyed his fine person approvingly, and said, "I am told you wish to enter my service. Were you ever in battle?"

The hunter told his story with his wonted modesty.

"Well, the chase is a good school for warriors. It trains the thews, teaches patience and endurance, and sharpens the spirit's edge. Let us to the garden. A hand to retain skill must continue its practice; like a good memory, it is the better for exercise. Come, and I will show you how I keep prepared for every emergency of combat." And so saying, the 'tzin led the visitors out.

They went to the garden, followed by the retainers lounging at the door. A short walk brought them to a space surrounded by a copse of orange-trees, strewn with sand, and broad enough for a mock battle; a few benches about the margin afforded accommodation to spectators; a stone house at the northern end served for armory, and was full of arms and armor. A glance assured the visitors that the place had been prepared expressly for training. Some score or more of warriors, in the military livery of the 'tzin, already occupied a portion of the field. Upon his appearance they quitted their games, and closed around him with respectful salutations.

"How now, my good Chinantlan!" he said, pleasantly. "Did I not award you a prize yesterday? There are few in the valley who can excel you in launching the spear."

"The plume is mine no longer," replied the warrior. "I was beaten last night. The winner, however, is a countryman."

"A countryman! You Chinantlans seem born to the spear. Where is the man?"

The victor stepped forward, and drew up before the master, who regarded his brawny limbs, sinewy neck, and bold eyes with undisguised admiration; so an artist would regard a picture or a statue. Above the fellow's helm floated a plume of scarlet feathers, the trophy of his superior skill.

"Get your spear," said the 'tzin. "I bring you a competitor."

The spear was brought, an ugly weapon in any hand. The head was of copper, and the shaft sixteen feet long. The rough Chinantlan handled it with a loving grip.

"Have you such in Tihuanco?" asked Guatamozin.

Hualpa balanced the weapon and laughed.

"We have only javelins, — mere reeds to this. Unless to hold an enemy at bay, I hardly know its use. Certainly, it is not for casting."

"Set the mark, men. We will give the stranger a lesson. Set it to the farthest throw."

A pine picket was then set up a hundred feet away, presenting a target of the height and breadth of a man, to which a shield was bolted breast-high from the sand.

"Now give the Chinantlan room!"

The wearer of the plume took his place; advancing one foot, he lifted the spear above his head with the right hand, poised it a moment, then hurled it from him, and struck the picket a palm's breadth below the shield.

"Out, out!" cried the 'tzin. "Bring me the spear; I have a mind to wear the plume myself."

When it was brought him, he cast it lightly as a child would toss a weed; yet the point drove clanging through the brazen base of the shield, and into the picket behind. Amid the applause of the sturdy warriors he said to Hualpa, —

"Get ready; the hunter must do something for the honor of his native hills."

"I cannot use a spear in competition with Guatamozin,"

said Hualpa, with brightening eyes; "but if he will have brought a javelin, a good comely weapon, I will show him my practice."

A slender-shafted missile, about half the length of the spear, was produced from the armory, and examined carefully.

"See, good 'tzin, it is not true. Let me have another."

The next one was to his satisfaction.

"Now," he said, "set the target thrice a hundred feet away. If the dainty living of Xoli have not weakened my arm, I will at least strike yon shield."

The bystanders looked at each other wonderingly, and the 'tzin was pleased. He had not lost a word or a motion of Hualpa's. The feat undertaken was difficult and but seldom achieved successfully; but the aspirant was confident, and he manifested the will to which all achievable things are possible.

The target was reset, and the Tihuanco took the stand. Resting the shaft on the palm of his left hand, he placed the fingers of his right against the butt, and drew the graceful weapon arm-length backward. It described an arc in the air, and to the astonishment of all fell in the shield a little left of the centre.

"Tell me, Hualpa," said Guatamozin, "are there more hunters in Tihuanco who can do such a deed? I will have you bring them to me."

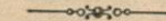
The Tihuanco lowered his eyes. "I grieve to say, good 'tzin, that I know of none. I excelled them all. But I can promise that in my native province there are hundreds braver than I, ready to serve you to the death."

"Well, it is enough. I intended to try you further, and with other weapons, but not now. He who can so wield a javelin must know to bend a bow and strike with a *maqaukuittl*. I accept your service. Let us to the palace."

Hualpa thrilled with delight. Already he felt himself in the warrior's path, with a glory won. All his dreams were about to be realized. In respectful silence he followed Guata-mozin, and as they reached the portal steps, Io' touched his arm :

"Remember our compact on the lake," he whispered.

The hunter put his arm lovingly about the prince, and so they entered the house. And that day Fate wove a brotherhood of three hearts which was broken only by death.



CHAPTER V.

NIGHT AT THE CHALCAN'S.

THE same day, in the evening, Xoli lay on a lounge by the fountain under his portico. His position gave him the range of the rooms, which glowed like day, and resounded with life. He could even distinguish the occupations of some of his guests. In fair view a group was listening to a minstrel ; beyond them he occasionally caught sight of girls dancing ; and every moment peals of laughter floated out from the chambers of play. A number of persons, whose arms and attire published them of the nobler class, sat around the Chalcan in the screen of the curtains, conversing, or listlessly gazing out on the square.

Gradually Xoli's revery became more dreamy ; sleep stole upon his senses, and shut out the lullaby of the fountain, and drowned the influence of his *cuisine*. His patrons after a while disappeared, and the watchers on the temples told the passing time without awakening him. Very happy was the Chalcan.

The slumber was yet strong upon him, when an old man

and a girl came to the portico. The former, decrepit and ragged, seated himself on the step. Scanty hair hung in white locks over his face ; and grasping a staff, he rested his head wearily upon his hands, and talked to himself.

The girl approached the Chalcan with the muffled tread of fear. She was clad in the usual dress of her class, — a white chemise, with several skirts short and embroidered, over which, after being crossed at the throat, a red scarf dropped its tasseled ends nearly to her heels. The neatness of the garments more than offset their cheapness. Above her forehead, in the fillet that held the mass of black hair off her face, leaving it fully exposed, there was the gleam of a common jewel ; otherwise she was without ornament. In all beauty there is — nay, must be — an idea ; so that a countenance to be handsome even, must in some way at sight quicken a sentiment or stir a memory in the beholder. It was so here. To look at the old man's guardian was to know that she had a sorrow to tell, and to pity her before it was told ; to be sure that under her tremulous anxiety there was a darksome story and an extraordinary purpose, the signs of which, too fine for the materialism of words, but plain to the sympathetic inner consciousness, lurked in the corners of her mouth, looked from her great black eyes, and blent with every action.

Gliding over the marble, she stopped behind the sleeper, and spoke, without awakening him ; her voice was too like the murmur of the fountain. Frightened at the words, low as they were, she hesitated ; but a look at the old man reassured her, and she called again. Xoli started.

"How now, mistress !" he said, angrily, reaching for her hand.

"I want to see Xoli, the Chalcan," she replied, escaping his touch.

"What have you to do with him?"

He sat up, and looked at her in wonder.

"What have you to do with him?" he repeated, in a kindlier tone.

Her face kindled with a sudden intelligence. "Xoli! The gods be praised! And their blessing on you, if you will do a kind deed for a countryman!"

"Well! But what beggar is that? Came he with you?"

"It is of him I would speak. Hear me!" she asked, drawing near him again. "He is poor, but a Chalcan. If you have memory of the city of your birth, be merciful to his child."

"His child! Who? Nay, it is a beggar's tale! Ho, fellow! How many times have I driven you away already! How dare you return!"

Slowly the old man raised his head from his staff, and turned his face to the speaker; there was no light there: he was blind!

"By the holy fires, no trick this! Say on, girl. He is a Chalcan, you said."

"A countryman of yours,"—and her tears fell fast. "A hut is standing where the causeway leads from Chalco to Iztapalapan; it is my father's. He was happy under its roof; for, though blind and poor, he could hear my mother's voice, which was the kindest thing on earth to him. But Our Mother called her on the coming of a bright morning, and since then he has asked for bread, when I had not a *tuna** to give him. O Xoli! did you but know what it is to ask for bread, when there is none! I am his child, and can think of but one way to quiet his cry." And she paused, looking in his face for encouragement.

"Tell me your name, girl; tell me your name, then

* A species of fig.

go on," he said, with a trembling lip, for his soul was clever.

At that instant the old man moaned querulously, "Yeteve, Yeteve!"

She went, and clasped his neck, and spoke to him soothingly. Xoli's eyes became humid; down in the depths of his heart an emotion grew strangely warm.

"Yeteve, Yeteve!" he repeated, musingly, thinking the syllables soft and pretty. "Come; stand here again, Yeteve," said he, aloud, when the dotard was pacified. "He wants bread, you say: how would you supply him?"

"You are rich. You want many slaves; and the law permits the poor to sell themselves.* I would be your slave,—asking no price, except that you give the beggar bread."

"A slave! Sell yourself!" he cried, in dismay. "A slave! Why, you are beautiful, Yeteve, and have not be-thought yourself that some day the gods may want you for a victim."

She was silent.

"What can you do? Dance? Sing? Can you weave soft veils and embroider golden flowers, like ladies in the palaces? If you can, no slave in Anahuac will be so peerless; the lords will bid more cocoa than you can carry; you will be rich."

"If so, then can I do all you have said."

And she ran, and embraced the old man, saying, "Patience, patience! In a little while we will have bread, and be rich. Yes," she continued, returning to the Chalcan, "they taught me in the *teocallis*, where they would have had me as priestess."

"It is good to be a priestess, Yeteve; you should have stayed there."

* Prescott, Conq. of Mexico.

"But I did so love the little hut by the causeway. And I loved the beggar, and they let me go."

"And now you wish to sell yourself? I want slaves, but not such as you, Yeteve. I want those who can work, — slaves whom the lash will hurt, but not kill. Besides, you are worth more cocoa than I can spare. Keep back your tears. I will do better than buy you myself. I will sell you, and to-night. Here in my house you shall dance for the bidders. I know them all. He shall be brave and rich and clever who buys, — clever and brave, and the owner of a palace, full of bread for the beggar, and love for Yeteve."

Clapping his hands, a slave appeared at the door.

"Take yon beggar, and give him to eat. Lead him, — he is blind. Come, child, follow me."

He summoned his servants, and bade them publish the sale in every apartment; then he led the girl to the hall used for the exhibition of his own dancing-girls. It was roomy and finely lighted; the floor was of polished marble; a blue drop-curtain extended across the northern end, in front of which were rows of stools, handsomely cushioned, for spectators. Music, measured for the dance, greeted the poor priestess, and had a magical effect upon her; her eyes brightened, a smile played about her mouth. Never was the chamber of the rich Chalcan graced by a creature fairer or more devoted.

"A priestess of the dance needs no teaching from me," said Xoli, patting her flushed cheek. "Get ready; they are coming. Beware of the marble; and when I clap my hands, begin."

She looked around the hall once; not a point escaped her. Springing to the great curtain, and throwing her robe away, she stood before it in her simple attire; and no studied effect of art could have been more beautiful; motionless and lovely, against the relief of the blue background, she seemed actually *spirituelle*.

Upon the announcement of the auction, the patrons of the house hurried to the scene. Voluntary renunciation of freedom was common enough among the poorer classes in Tenochtitlan, but a transaction of the kind under the auspices of the rich broker was a novelty; so that curiosity and expectation ran high. The nobles, as they arrived, occupied the space in front of the curtain, or seated themselves, marvelling at the expression of her countenance.

The music had not ceased; and the bidders being gathered, Xoli, smiling with satisfaction, stepped forward to give the signal, when an uproar of merriment announced the arrival of a party of the younger dignitaries of the court, — amongst them Iztli'l, the Tezcucan, and Maxtla, chief of the guard, the former showing signs of quick recovery from his wounds, the latter superbly attired.

"Hold! What have we here?" cried the Tezcucan, surveying the girl. "Has this son of Chalco been robbing the palace?"

"The temples, my lord Iztli'l! He has robbed the temples! By all the gods, it is the priestess Yeteve!" answered Maxtla, amazed. "Say, Chalcan, what does priestess of the Blessed Lady in such unhallowed den?"

The broker explained.

"Good, good!" shouted the new-comers.

"Begin, Xoli! A thousand cocoa for the priestess, — millions of bread for the beggar!" This from Maxtla.

"Only a thousand?" said Iztli'l, scornfully. "Only a thousand? Five thousand to begin with, more after she dances."

Xoli gave the signal, and the soul of the Chalcan girl broke forth in motion. Dancing had been her *rôle* in the religious rites of the temple; many a time the pabas around the altar, allured by her matchless grace, had turned from the bleeding heart indifferent to its auguration. And she

had always danced moved by no warmer impulse than duty; so that the prompting of the spirit in the presence of a strange auditory free to express itself, like that she now faced, came to her for the first time. The dance chosen was one of the wild, quick, pulsating figures wont to be given in thanksgiving for favorable tokens from the deity. The steps were irregular and difficult; a great variety of posturing was required; the head, arms, and feet had each their parts, all to be rendered in harmony. At the commencement she was frightened by the ecstasy that possessed her; suddenly the crowd vanished, and she saw only the beggar, and him wanting bread. Then her form became divinely gifted; she bounded as if winged; advanced and retreated, a moment swaying like a reed, the next whirling like a leaf in a circling wind. The expression of her countenance throughout was so full of soul, so intense, rapt, and beautiful, that the lords were spell-bound. When the figure was ended, there was an outburst of voices, some bidding, others applauding; though most of the spectators were silent from pity and admiration.

Of the competitors the loudest was Izthil'. In his excitement, he would have sacrificed his province to become the owner of the girl. Maxtla opposed him.

"Five thousand cocoa! Hear, Chalcan!" shouted the Tezcucan.

"A thousand better!" answered Maxtla, laughing at the cacique's rage.

"By all the gods, I will have her! Put me down a thousand quills of gold!"

"A thousand quills above him! Not bread, but riches for the beggar!" replied Maxtla, half in derision.

"Two thousand,—only two thousand quills! More, noble lords! She is worth a palace!" sung Xoli, trembling with excitement; for in such large bids he saw an extra-

ordinary loan. Just then, under the parted curtain of the principal doorway, he beheld one dear to every lover of Tenochtitlan; he stopped. All eyes turned in that direction, and a general exclamation followed,— "The 'tzin, the 'tzin!"

Guatamozin was in full military garb, and armed. As he lingered by the door to comprehend the scene, what with his height, brassy helm, and embossed shield, he looked like a Greek returned from Troy.

"Yeteve, the priestess!" he said. "Impossible!"

He strode to the front.

"How?" he said, placing his hand on her head. "Has Yeteve flown the temple to become a slave?"

Up to this time, it would seem that, in the fixedness of her purpose, she had been blind to all but the beggar, and deaf to everything but the music. Now she knelt at the feet of the noble Aztec, sobbing broken-heartedly. The spectators were moved with sympathy,—all save one.

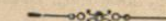
"Who stays the sale? By all the gods, Chalcan, you shall proceed!"

Scarcely had the words been spoken, or the duller faculties understood them, before Guatamozin confronted the speaker, his javelin drawn, and his shield in readiness. Naturally his countenance was womanly gentle; but the transition of feeling was mighty, and those looking upon him then shrank with dread; it was as if their calm blue lake had in an instant darkened with storm. Face to face he stood with the Tezcucan, the latter unprepared for combat, but in nowise daunted. In their angry attitude a seer might have read the destiny of Anahuac.

One thrust of the javelin would have sent the traitor to Mictlan; the Empire, as well as the wrongs of the lover, called for it; but before the veterans, recovering from their panic, could rush between the foemen, all the 'tzin's calmness returned.

"Xoli," he said, "a priestess belongs to the temple, and cannot be sold; such is the law. The sale would have sere your heart, and that of her purchaser, to the Blessed Lady. Remove the girl. I will see that she is taken to a place of safety. Here is gold; give the beggar what he wants, and keep him until to-morrow. — And, my lords and brethren," he added, turning to the company, "I did not think to behave so unseemly. It is only against the enemies of our country that we should turn our arms. Blood is sacred, and accursed is his hand who sheds that of a countryman in petty quarrel. I pray you, forget all that has passed." And with a low obeisance to them, he walked away, taking with him the possibility of further rencounter.

He had just arrived from his palace at Iztapalapan.



CHAPTER VI.

THE CHINAMPA.

BETWEEN Tula, the child of Tecalco, and Nenetzin, daughter and child of Acatlan, there existed a sisterly affection. The same sports had engaged them, and they had been, and yet were, inseparable. Their mothers, themselves friends, encouraged the intimacy; and so their past lives had vanished, like two summer clouds borne away by a soft south wind.

The evening after Itzil's overture of marriage was deepening over lake Tezcuco; the breeze became murmurous and like a breath, and all the heavens filled with starlight. Cloudless must be the morrow to such a night!

So thought the princess Tula. Won by the beauty of the evening, she had flown from the city to her *chinampa*, which

was lying anchored in a quarter of the lake east of the causeway to Tepejaca, beyond the noise of the town, and where no sound less agreeable than the splash of light waves could disturb her dreams.

A retreat more delightful would be a task for fancy. The artisan who knitted the timbers of the *chinampa* had doubtless been a lover of the luxuriant, and built as only a lover can build. The waves of the lake had not been overlooked in his plan; he had measured their height, and the depth and width of their troughs, when the weather was calm and the water gentle. So he knew both what rocking they would make, and what rocking would be pleasantest to a delicate soul; for, as there were such souls, there were also such artisans in Tenochtitlan.

Viewed from a distance, the *chinampa* looked like an island of flowers. Except where the canopy of a white pavilion rose from the midst of the green beauty, it was covered to the water's edge with blooming shrubbery, which, this evening, was luminous with the light of lamps. The radiance, glinting through the foliage, tinted the atmosphere above it with mellow rays, and seemed the visible presence of enchantment.

The humid night breeze blew softly under the raised walls of the pavilion, within which, in a hammock that swung to and fro regularly as the *chinampa* obeyed the waves, lay Tula and Nenetzin.

They were both beautiful, but different in their beauty. Tula's face was round and of a transparent olive complexion, without being fair; her eyes were hazel, large, clear, and full of melancholy earnestness; masses of black hair, evenly parted, fell over her temples, and were gathered behind in a simple knot; with a tall, full form, her presence and manner were grave and very queenly. Whereas, Nenetzin's eyes, though dark, were bright with the light of laughter: