

of them; he was making an obeisance so very low that his face and hand both touched the ground.

"Does the minstrel intend to sing, Yeteve?" asked Nenetzin, stepping into the light that flooded the walk.

The old man bent forward on his seat.

"Heaven's best blessing on the child of the king! It should be a nobler hand than mine that strikes a string to one so beautiful."

The comely princess replied, her face beaming with pleasure, "Verily, minstrel, much familiarity with song has given you courtly speech."

"I have courtly friends, and only borrow their words. This place is fair, but to my dull fancy it seems that a maiden would prefer the great hall, unless she has a grief to indulge."

"O, I have a great grief," she returned; "though I do borrow it as you your words."

"Then you love some one who is unhappy. I understand. Is this child in your service?" he asked, looking at Yeteve.

"Call it mine. She loves me well enough to serve me."

The minstrel struck the strings of his harp softly, as if commencing a mournful story.

"I have a friend," he said, "a prince and warrior, whose presence here is banned. He sits in his palace to-night, and is visited by thoughts such as make men old in their youth. He has seen much of life, and won fame, but is fast finding that glory does not sweeten misfortune, and that of all things, ingratitude is the most bitter. His heart is set upon a noble woman; and now, when his love is strongest, he is separated from her, and may not say farewell. O, it is not in the ear of a true woman that lover so unhappy could breathe his story in vain. What would the princess Nenetzin do, if she knew a service of hers might soothe his great grief?"

Nenetzin's eyes were dewy with tears.

"Good minstrel, I know the story; it is the 'tzin's. Are you a friend of his?"

"His true friend. I bring his farewell to Tula."

"I will serve him." And, stepping to the old man, she laid her hand on his. "Tell me what to do, and what you would have."

"Only a moment's speech with her."

"With Tula?"

"A moment to say the farewell he cannot. Go to the palace, and tell her what I seek. I will follow directly. Tell her she may know me in the throng by these locks, whose whiteness will prove my sincerity and devotion. And further, I will twine my harp with a branch of this vine; its leaves will mark me, and at the same time tell her that his love is green as in the day a king's smile sunned it into ripeness. Be quick. The moment comes when she cannot in honor listen to the message I am to speak."

He bent over his harp again, and Nenetzin and Yeteve hurried away.

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## CHAPTER X.

### THE 'TZIN'S LOVE.

THE minstrel stayed a while to dress his harp with the vine.

"A woman would have done it better; they have a special cunning for such things; yet it will serve the purpose. Now let us on!" he said, when the task was finished.

To the palace they then turned their steps. As they approached it, the walk became more crowded with guests. Several times the minstrel was petitioned to stay and sing, but he excused himself. He proceeded, looking steadily at



the ground, as is the custom of the very aged. Amongst others, they met Maxtla, gay in his trappings as a parrot from the Great River.

"Good minstrel," he said, "in your wanderings through the garden, have you seen Iztli', the Tezcucan?"

"I have not seen the Tezcucan. I should look for him in the great hall, where his bride is, rather than in the garden, dreaming of his bridal."

"Well said, uncle! I infer your harp is not carried for show; you can sing! I will try you after a while."

When he was gone, the minstrel spoke bitterly,—

"Beware of the thing known in the great house yonder as policy. A week ago the lord Maxtla would have scorned to be seen hunting the Tezcucan, whom he hates." \*

They came to a portal above which, in a niche of the wall, sat the *teotl*\* of the house, grimly claiming attention and worship. Under the portal, past the guard on duty there, through many apartments full of objects of wonder to the stranger, they proceeded, and, at last, with a current of guests slowly moving in the same direction, reached the hall dominated by the king, where the minstrel thought to find the princess Tula.

"O my friend, I pray you, let me stay here a moment," said the warrior, abashed by dread of the sudden introduction to the royal presence. The singer heard not, but went on.

Standing by the door, the young stranger looked down a hall of great depth eastwardly, broken by two rows of pillars supporting vast oaken girders, upon which rested rafters of red cedar. The walls were divided into panels, with borders broad and intricately arabesqued. A massive bracket in the centre of each panel held the image of a deity, the duplicate of the idol in the proper sanctuary; and from

\* A household god.

the feet of the image radiated long arms of wood, well carved, crooked upward at the elbows, and ending with shapely hands, clasping lanterns of *aguave* which emitted lights of every tint. In the central space, between the rows of pillars, immense chandeliers dropped from the rafters, so covered with lamps that they looked like pyramids aglow. And arms, and images, and chandeliers, and even the huge pillars, were wreathed in garlands of cedar boughs and flowers, from which the air drew a redolence as of morning in a garden.

Through all these splendors, the gaze of the visitor sped to the further end of the hall, and there stayed as charmed. He saw a stage, bright with crimson carpeting, rising three steps above the floor, and extending from wall to wall; and on that, covered with green *plumaje*, a dais, on which, in a chair or throne glittering with burnished gold, the king sat. Above him spread a canopy fashioned like a broad sunshade, the staff resting on the floor behind the throne, sustained by two full-armed warriors, who, while motionless as statues, were yet vigilant as sentinels. Around the dais, their costumes and personal decorations sharing the monarch's splendor, were collected his queens, and their children, and all who might claim connection with the royal family. The light shone about them as the noonday, so full that all that portion of the hall seemed bursting with sunshine. Never satin richer than the emerald cloth of the canopy, inwoven, as it was, with feathers of humming-birds! Never seen of stars, to the eyes of the wondering stranger, sharper than the glinting of the jewels with which it was fringed!

And the king appeared in happier mood than common, though the deep, serious look which always accompanies a great care came often to his face. He had intervals of silence also; yet his shrewdest guests were not permitted to see that he did not enjoy their enjoyment.



His queens were seated at his left, Tecalco deeply troubled, sometimes tearful, and Acatlan cold and distant; for, in thought of her own child, the beautiful Nenetzin, she trembled before the remorseless policy.

And Tula, next to the king the recipient of attention, sat in front of her mother, never more queenly, never so unhappy. Compliments came to her, and congratulations, given in courtly style; minstrels extolled her grace and beauty, and the prowess and martial qualities of the high-born Tezcucan; and priest and warrior laid their homage at her feet. Yet her demeanor was not that of the glad young bride; she never smiled, and her eyes, commonly so lustrous, were dim and hopeless; her thoughts were with her heart, across the lake with the banished 'tzin.

As may be conjectured, it was no easy game to steal her from place so conspicuous; nevertheless, Nenetzin awaited the opportunity.

It happened that Maxtla was quite as anxious to get the monarch's ear for the benefit of his friend, the Chalcan,—in fact, for the introduction of the latter's newly invented drink. Experience taught the chief when the felicitous moment arrived. He had then but to say the word: a page was sent, the liquor brought. Montezuma sipped, smiled, quaffed deeper, and was delighted.

"There is nothing like it!" he said. "Bring goblets for my friends, and fill up again!"

All the lordly personages about him had then to follow his example,—to drink and approve. At the end, Xoli was summoned.

Nenetzin saw the chance, and said, "O Tula, such a song as we have heard! It was sweeter than that of the bird that wakes us in the morning, sweeter than all the flutes in the hall."

"And the singer,—who was he?"

Neither Nenetzin nor Yeteve could tell his name.

"He charmed us so," said the former, "that we thought only of taking you to hear him. Come, go with us. There never was such music or musician."

And the three came down from the platform unobserved by the king. When the minstrel's message was delivered, then was shown how well the Tezcucan had spoken when he said of the royal children, "They are all beautiful, but only one is fitted to be a warrior's wife."

"Let us see the man," said Tula. "How may we know him, Nenetzin?"

And they went about eagerly looking for the singer with the gray locks and the vine-wreathed harp. They found him at last about midway the hall, leaning on his staff, a solitary amidst the throng. No one thought of asking him for a song; he was too old, too like one come from a tomb with unfashionable stories.

"Father," said Tula, "we claim your service. You look weary, yet you must know the ancient chants, which, though I would not like to say it everywhere, please me best. Will you sing?"

He raised his head, and looked at her: she started. Something she saw in his eyes that had escaped her friends.

"A song from me!" he replied, as if astonished. "No, it cannot be. I have known some gentle hearts, and studied them to remember; but long since they went to dust. You do not know me. Imagining you discerned of what I was thinking, you were moved; you only pitied me, here so desolate."

As he talked, she recovered her composure.

"Will you sing for me, father?" she again asked.

"O willingly! My memory is not so good as it used to be; yet one song, at least, I will give you from the number less ills that crowd it."



He looked slowly and tremulously around at the guests who had followed her, or stopped, as they were passing, to hear the conversation.

"As you say," he then continued, "I am old and feeble, and it is wearisome to stand here; besides, my theme will be sad, and such as should be heard in quiet. Time was when my harp had honor,—to me it seems but yesterday; but now—enough! Here it were not well that my voice should be heard."

She caught his meaning, and her whole face kindled; but Nenetzin spoke first.

"O yes; let us to the garden!"

The minstrel bowed reverently. As they started, a woman, who had been listening, said, "Surely, the noble Tula is not going! The man is a dotard; he cannot sing; he is palsied."

But they proceeded, and through the crowd and out of the hall guided the trembling minstrel. Coming to a passage that seemed to be deserted, they turned into it, and Nenetzin, at Tula's request, went back to the king. Then a change came over the good man; his stooping left him, his step became firm, and, placing himself in front, he said, in a deep, strong voice,—

"It is mine to lead now. I remember these halls. Once again, O Tula, let me lead you here, as I have a thousand times in childhood."

And to a chamber overlooking the garden, by the hand he led her, followed by Yeteve, sobbing like a child. A dim light from the lamps without disclosed the walls hung with trophies captured in wars with the surrounding tribes and nations. Where the rays were strongest, he stopped, and removed the hood, and said, earnestly,—

"Against the king's command, and loving you better than life, O Tula, Guatamozin has come to say farewell."

There was a great silence; each heard the beating of the other's heart.

"You have passed from me," he continued, "and I send my grief after you. I look into your face, and see fade our youth, our hopes, and our love, and all the past that bore it relation. The days of pleasantness are ended; the spring that fed the running brook is dry. O Tula, dear one, the bird that made us such sweet music is songless forever!"

Her anguish was too deep for the comfort of words or tears. Closer he clasped her hand.

"O, that power should be so faithless! Here are banners that I have taken. Yonder is a shield of a king of Michuaca whom I slew. I well remember the day. Montezuma led the army; the fight was hard, the peril great; and after I struck the blow, he said I had saved his life, and vowed me boundless love and a splendid reward. What a passion the field of fighting men was! And yet there was another always greater. I had dwelt in the palace, and learned that in the smile of the noble Tula there was to my life what the sunshine is to the flower."

He faltered, then continued brokenly,—

"He had honors, palaces, provinces, and crowns to bestow; but witness, O gods, whose sacred duty it is to punish ingratitude,—witness that I cared more to call Tula wife than for all the multitude of his princeliest gifts!"

And now fast ran the tears of the princess, through sorrow rising to full womanhood, while the murky chamber echoed with the sobs of Yeteve. If the ghost of the barbarian king yet cared for the shield he died defending, if it were there present, seeing and hearing, its revenge was perfect.

"If Guatamozin—so dear to me now, so dear always—will overlook the womanly selfishness that could find a pleasure in his grief, I will prove that he has not loved unworthily. You have asked nothing of me, nor urged any counsel, and I



thank you for the moderation. I thank you, also, that you have spoken as if this sorrow were not yours more than mine. Most of all, O 'tzin, I thank you for not accusing me. Need I say how I hate the Tezcucan? or that I am given away against my will? I am to go as a price, as so much *cocoa*, in purchase of the fealty of a wretch who would league with Mictlan to humble my father. I am a weak woman, without tribes or banner, and therefore the wrong is put upon me. But have I no power?" And, trembling with the strong purpose, she laid her hand upon his breast. "Wife will I never be except of Guatamozin. I am the daughter of a king. My father, at least, should know me. He may sell me, but, thank the holy gods, I am the keeper of my own life. And what would life be with the base Tezcucan for my master? Royal power in a palace of pearl and gold would not make it worth the keeping. O 'tzin, you never threw a worthless leaf upon the lake more carelessly than I would then fling this poor body there!"

Closer to his heart he pressed the hand on his breast.

"To you, to you, O Tula, be the one blessing greater than all others which the gods keep back in the Sun! So only can you be rewarded. I take your words as an oath. Keep them, only keep them, and I will win for you all that can be won by man. What a time is coming —"

Just then a joyous cry and a burst of laughter from the garden interrupted his passionate speech, and recalled him to himself and the present, — to the present, which was not to be satisfied with lovers' rhapsodies. And so he said, when next he spoke, —

"You have answered my most jealous wish. Go back now; make no objection to the Tezcucan: the betrothal is not the bridal. The king and Iztzil' cannot abide together in peace. I know them."

And sinking his voice, he added, "Your hand is on my

heart, and by its beating you cannot fail to know how full it is of love. Take my blessing to strengthen you. Farewell. I will return to my gardens and dreams."

"To dreams! And with such a storm coming upon Anahuac!" said Tula. "No, no; to dream is mine."

Up, clear to his vision, rose the destiny prophesied for him by Mualox. As he pondered it, she said, tearfully, —

"I love my father, and he is blind or mad. Now is his peril greatest, now most he needs friendship and help. O 'tzin, leave him not, — I conjure you by his past kindness! Remember I am his child."

Thereupon he dropped her hand, and walked the floor, while the banners and the shields upon the walls, and the mute glory they perpetuated, whispered of the wrong and shame he was enduring. When he answered, she knew how great the struggle had been, and that the end was scarcely a victory.

"You have asked that of me, my beloved, which is a sore trial," he said. "I will not deny that the great love I bore your father is disturbed by bitterness. Think how excessive my injury is, — I who revered as a son, and have already put myself in death's way for him. In the halls, and out in the gardens, my name has been a jest to-night. And how the Tezcucan has exulted! It is hard for the sufferer to love his wrong-doer, — O so hard! But this I will, and as an oath take the promise: as long as the king acts for Anahuac, not imperilling her safety or glory, so long will I uphold him; this, O Tula, from love of country, and nothing more!"

And as the future was veiled against the woman and dutiful child, she replied simply, "I accept the oath. Now lead me hence."

He took her hand again, and said, "In peril of life I came to say farewell forever; but I will leave a kiss upon your forehead, and plant its memory in your heart, and some day come again to claim you mine."



And he put his arm around her, and left the kiss on her forehead, and, as the ancient he entered, conducted the unhappy princess from the chamber of banners back to the hall of betrothal.



## CHAPTER XI.

## THE CHANT.

"IF you have there anything for laughter, Maxtla, I bid you welcome," said the king, his guests around him.

And the young chief knelt on the step before the throne, and answered with mock solemnity, "Your servant, O king, knows your great love of minstrelsy, and how it delights you to make rich the keeper of a harp who sings a good song well. I have taken one who bears him like a noble singer, and has age to warrant his experience."

"Call you that the man?" asked the king, pointing to Guatamozin.

"He is the man."

The monarch laughed, and all the guests listening laughed.

Now, minstrels were common on all festive occasions; indeed, an Aztec banquet was no more perfect without them than without guests: but it was seldom the royal halls were graced by one so very aged; so that the bent form and gray locks, that at other places and times would have insured safety and respect, now excited derision. The men thought his presence there presumptuous, the women laughed at him as a dotard. In brief, the 'tzin's peril was very great.

He seemed, however, the picture of aged innocence, and stood before the throne, his head bowed, his face shaded by the hood, leaning humbly on his staff, and clasping the harp close to his breast, the vines yet about it. So well did he

observe his disguise, that none there, save Tula and Yeteve, might dream that the hood and dark gown concealed the boldest warrior in Tenochtitlan. The face of the priestess was turned away; but the princess sat a calm witness of the scene; either she had too much pride to betray her solicitude, or a confidence in his address so absolute that she felt none.

"He is none of ours," said the king, when he had several times scanned the minstrel. "If the palace ever knew him, it was in the days of Axaya', from whose tomb he seems to have come."

"As I came in from the garden, I met him going out," said Maxtla, in explanation. "I could not bear that my master should lose such a promise of song. Besides, I have heard the veterans in service often say that the ancient chants were the best, and I thought it a good time to test the boast."

The gray courtiers frowned, and the king laughed again.

"My minstrel here represented that old time so well," continued Maxtla, "that at first I was full of reverence; therefore I besought him to come, and before you, O king, sing the chants that used to charm your mighty father. I thought it no dishonor for him to compete with the singers now in favor, they giving us something of the present time. He declined in courtliest style; saying that, though his voice was good, he was too old, and might shame the ancient minstrelsy; and that, from what he had heard, my master delighted only in things of modern invention. A javelin in the hand of a sentinel ended the argument, and he finally consented. Wherefore, O king, I claim him captive, to whom, if it be your royal pleasure, I offer liberty, if he will sing in competition before this noble company."

What sport could be more royal than such poetic contest, — the old reign against the new? Montezuma welcomed the idea.



"The condition is reasonable," he said. "Is there a minstrel in the valley to call it otherwise?"

In a tone scarcely audible, though all were silent that they might hear, the 'tzin answered, —

"Obedience was the first lesson of every minstrel of the old time; but as the master we served loved us as his children, we never had occasion to sing for the purchase of our liberty. And more, — the capture of a harmless singer, though he were not aged as your poor slave, O king, was not deemed so brave a deed as to be rewarded by our master's smile."

The speech, though feebly spoken, struck both the king and his chief.

"Well done, uncle!" said the former, laughing. "And since you have tongue so sharp, we remove the condition —"

"Thanks, many thanks, most mighty king! May the gods mete you nothing but good! I will depart." And the 'tzin stooped till his harp struck the floor.

The monarch waved his hand. "Stay. I merely spoke of the condition that made your liberty depend upon your song. Go, some of you, and call my singers." A courtier hurried away, then the king added, "It shall be well for him who best strikes the strings. I promise a prize that shall raise him above trouble, and make his life what a poet's ought to be."

Guatamozin advanced, and knelt on the step from which Maxtla had risen, and said, his voice sounding tremulous with age and infirmity, —

"If the great king will deign to heed his servant again, — I am old and weak. There was a time when I would have rejoiced to hear a prize so princely offered in such a trial. But that was many, many summers ago. And this afternoon, in my hut by the lake-shore, when I took my harp, all covered with dust, from the shelf where it had so long lain untouched

and neglected, and wreathed it with this fresh vine, thinking a gay dress might give it the appearance of use, and myself a deceitful likeness to the minstrel I once was, alas! I did not think of my trembling hand and my shattered memory, or of trial like this. I only knew that a singer, however humble, was privileged at your banquet, and that the privilege was a custom of the monarchs now in their halls in the Sun, — true, kingly men, who, at time like this, would have put gold in my hand, and bade me arise, and go in peace. Is Montezuma more careless of his glory? Will he compel my song, and dishonor my gray hair, that I may go abroad in Tenochtitlan and tell the story? In pity, O king, suffer me to depart."

The courtiers murmured, and even Maxtla relented, but the king said, "Good uncle, you excite my curiosity the more. If your common speech have in it such a vein of poetry, what must the poetry be? And then, does not your obstinacy outmeasure my cruelty? Get ready, I hold the fortune. Win it, and I am no king if it be not yours."

The interest of the bystanders now exceeded their pity. It was novel to find one refusing reward so rich, when the followers of his art were accustomed to gratify an audience, even one listener, upon request.

And, seeing that escape from the trial was impossible, the 'tzin arose, resolved to act boldly. Minstrelsy, as practised by the Aztecs, it must be remembered, was not singing so much as a form of chanting, accompanied by rhythmical touches of the lyre or harp, — of all kinds of choral music the most primitive. This he had practised, but in the solitude of his study. The people present knew the 'tzin Guatamo, supposed to be in his palace across the lake, as soldier, scholar, and prince, but not as poet or singer of heroic tales. So that confident minstrelsy was now but another, if not a surer, disguise. And the eyes of the princess Tula shining



upon him calmly and steadily, he said, his voice this time trembling with suppressed wrath, —

“Be it so, O king! Let the singers come, — let them come. Your slave will fancy himself before the great Axaya’, or your father, not less royal. He will forget his age, and put his trust in the god whose story he will sing.”

Then other amusements were abandoned, and, intelligence of the trial flying far and fast, lords and ladies, soldiers and priests crowded about the throne and filled the hall. That any power of song could belong to one so old and unknown was incredible.

“He is a provincial, — the musician of one of the hamlets,” said a courtier, derisively.

“Yes,” sneered another, “he will tell how the flood came, and drowned the harvest in his neighborhood.”

“Or,” ventured a third, “how a ravenous vulture once descended from the hills, and carried off his pet rabbit.”

By and by the royal minstrels came, — sleek, comely men, wearing long stoles fringed with gold, and having harps inlaid with pearl, and strung with silver wires. With scarce a glance at their humble competitor, they ranged themselves before the monarch.

The trial began. One after another, the favorites were called upon. The first sang of love, the next of his mistress, the third of Lake Tezcuco, the fourth of Montezuma, his power, wisdom, and glory. Before all were through, the patience of the king and crowd was exhausted. The pabas wanted something touching religion, the soldiers something heroic and resounding with war; and all waited for the stranger, as men listening to a story wait for the laughter it may chance to excite. How were they surprised! Before the womanly tones of the last singer ceased, the old man dropped his staff, and, lifting his harp against his breast, struck its chords, and in a voice clear and vibratory as the

blast of a shell, a voice that filled the whole hall, and startled maid and king alike, began his chant.

QUETZAL’.

Beloved of the Sun! Mother of the  
Brave! Azatlan, the North-born! Heard be thou  
In my far launched voice! I sing to thy  
Listening children of thee and Heaven.  
Vale in the Sun, where dwell the Gods! Sum of  
The beautiful art thou! Thy forests are  
Flowering trees; of crystal and gold thy  
Mountains; and liquid light are thy rivers  
Flowing, all murmurous with songs, over  
Beds of stars. O Vale of Gods, the summery  
Sheen that flecks Earth’s seas, and kisses its mountains,  
And fairly floods its plains, we know is of thee, —  
A sign sent us from afar, that we may  
Feebly learn how beautiful is Heaven!

The singer rested a moment; then, looking in the eyes of the king, with a rising voice, he continued, —

Richest hall in all the Vale is Quetzal’s —

At that name Montezuma started. The minstrel noted well the sign.

O, none so fair as Quetzal’s! The winds that  
Play among its silver columns are Love’s  
Light laughter, while of Love is all the air  
About. From its orient porch the young  
Mornings glean the glory with which they rise  
On earth.

First God and fairest was Quetzal’.

As him O none so full of holiness,  
And by none were men so lov’d! Sat he always  
In his hall, in deity rol’d, watching  
Humanity, its genius, and its struggles  
Upward. But most he watch’d its wars, — no hero  
Fell but he call’d the wand’ring soul in love  
To rest with him forever.

Sat he once  
Thus watching, and where least expected, in



The far North, by stormy Winter rul'd, up  
 From the snows he saw a Nation rise. Shook  
 Their bolts, glistened their shields, flashed the  
 Light of their fierce eyes. A king, in wolf-skin  
 Girt, pointed Southward, and up the hills, through  
 The air, to the Sun, flew the name — Azatlan.  
 Then march'd they; by day and night they march'd, — march'd  
 Ever South, across the desert, up the  
 Mountains, down the mountains; leaping rivers,  
 Smiting foes, taking cities, — thus they march'd;  
 Thus, a cloud of eagles, roll'd they from the  
 North; thus on the South they fell, as autumn  
 Frosts upon the fruits of summer fall.

And now the priests were glad, — the singer sung of  
 Heaven; and the warriors were aroused, — his voice was  
 like a battle-cry, and the theme was the proud tradition of  
 the conquering march of their fathers from the distant  
 North. Sitting with clasped hands and drooped head, the  
 king followed the chant, like one listening to an oracle.  
 Yet stronger grew the minstrel's voice, —

## Pass'd

Many years of toil, and still the Nation march'd;  
 Still Southward strode the king; still Sunward rose  
 The cry of *Azatlan! Azatlan!* And  
 Warmer, truer, brighter grew the human  
 Love of Quetzal'. He saw them reach a lake;  
 As dew its waves were clear; like lover's breath  
 The wind flew o'er it. 'T was in the clime of  
 Starry nights, — the clime of orange-groves and  
 Plumy palms.

Then Quetzal' from his watching  
 Rose. Aside he flung his sunly symbols.  
 Like a falling star, from the Vale of Gods  
 He dropp'd, like a falling star shot through the  
 Shoreless space; like a golden morning reach'd  
 The earth, — reach'd the lake. Then stay'd the Nation's  
 March. Still Sunward rose the cry, but Southward  
 Strode the king no more.

In his roomy heart, in  
 The chambers of its love, Quetzal' took the

Nation. He swore its kings should be his sons, —  
 They should conquer, by the Sun, he swore! In  
 The laughing Lake he bade them build; and up  
 Sprang Tenochtitlan, of the human love  
 Of Quetzal child; up rose its fire-lit towers,  
 Outspread its piles, outstretched its streets  
 Of stone and wave. And as the city grew,  
 Still stronger grew the love of Quetzal'.

## Thine

Is the Empire. To the shields again, O  
 Azatlan! 'T was thus he spoke; and feather'd  
 Crest and oaken spear, the same that from the  
 North came conquering, through the valley,  
 On a wave of war went swiftly floating.  
 Down before the flaming shields fell all the  
 Neighb'ring tribes; open flew the cities' gates;  
 Fighting kings gave up their crowns; from the hills  
 The Chichimecan fled; on temple towers  
 The Toltec fires to scattering ashes  
 Died. Like a scourge upon the city, like  
 A fire across the plain, like storms adown  
 The mountain, — such was Azatlan that day  
 It went to battle! Like a monarch 'mid  
 His people, like a god amid the Heavens,  
 O such was Azatlan, victor from the  
 Battle, the Empire in its hand!

At this point the excitement of the audience rose into  
 interruption: they clapped their hands and stamped; some  
 shouted. As the strong voice rolled the grand story on,  
 even the king's dread of the god disappeared; and had the  
 'tzin concluded then, the prize had certainly been his. But  
 when the silence was restored, he resumed the attitude so  
 proper to his disguise, and, sinking his voice and changing  
 the measure of the chant, solemnly proceeded, —

As the river runneth ever, like the river ran the love of  
 Quetzal'. The clime grew softer, and the Vale fairer. To weave, and  
 trade,  
 And sow, and build, he taught, with countless other ways of peace. He  
 broke  
 The seals of knowledge, and unveiled the mystic paths of wisdom;



Gathered gold from the earth, and jewels from the streams; and happy Peace, as terrible in war, became Azatlan. Only one more Blessing, — a religion sounding of a quiet heaven and a Godly love, — this only wanted Azatlan. And alas, for the Sunly Quetzal! He built a temple, with a single tower, a Temple over many chambers."

Slowly the 'tzin repeated the last sentence, and under his gaze the monarch's face changed visibly.

Worship he asked, and offerings,  
And sacrifices, not of captives, heart-broken and complaining,  
But of blooming flowers, and ripened fruits, emblems of love, and peace,  
And beauty. Alas, for the gentle Quetzal! Cold grew the people  
Lov'd so well. A little while they worshipped; then, as bees go no  
More to a withered flower, they forsook his shrine, and mock'd his  
Image. His love, longest lingering, went down at last, but slowly  
Went, as the brook, drop by drop, runs dry in the drought of a rainless  
Summer. Wrath 'rose instead. Down in a chamber below the temple,  
A chamber full of gold and unveiled splendor, beneath the Lake that  
Long had ceased its laughing, thither went the god, and on the walls,  
On the marble and the gold, he wrote —

The improvisation, if such it was, now wrought its full effect upon Montezuma, who saw the recital coming nearer and nearer to the dread mysteries of the golden chamber in the old Cú. At the beginning of the last sentence, the blood left his face, and he leaned forward as if to check the speech, at the same time some master influence held him wordless. His look was that of one seeing a vision. The vagaries of a mind shaken by days and nights of trouble are wonderful; sometimes they are fearful. How easy for his distempered fancy to change the minstrel, with his white locks and venerable countenance, into a servant of Quetzal', sent by the god to confirm the interpretation and prophecies of his other servant Mualox. At the last word, he arose, and, with an imperial gesture, cried, —

"Peace — enough!"

Then his utterance failed him, — another vision seemed

to fix his gaze. The audience, thrilling with fear, turned to see what he saw, and heard a commotion, which, from the further end of the hall, drew slowly near the throne, and ceased not until Mualox, in his sacrificial robes, knelt upon the step in the minstrel's place. Montezuma dropped into his throne, and, covering his eyes with his hands, said faintly, —

"Evil betides me, father, evil betides me! But I am a king. Speak what you can!"

Mualox prostrated himself until his white hair covered his master's feet.

"Again, O king, your servant comes speaking for his god."

"For the god, Mualox?"

The hall became silent as a tomb.

"I come," the holy man continued, "to tell the king that Quetzal' has landed, this time on the sea-shore in Cempoalla. At set of sun his power was collected on the beach. Summon all your wisdom, — the end is at hand."

All present and hearing listened awe-struck. Of the warriors, not one, however battle-tried, but trembled with undefined terror. And who may accuse them? The weakness was from fear of a supposed god; their heathen souls, after the manner of the Christian, asked, Who may war against Heaven?

"Rise, Mualox! You love me; I have no better servant," said the king, with dignity, but so sadly that even the prophet's heart was touched. "It is not for me to say if your news be good or evil. All things, even my Empire, are in the care of the gods. To-morrow I will hold a council to determine how this visit may be best met." With a mighty effort he freed his spirit of the influence of the untimely visitation, and said, with a show of unconcern, "Leave the morrow to whom it belongs, my children. Let us now to



the ceremony which was to crown the night. Come forward, son of 'Hualpilli! Room for the lord Iztli!', my friends!"

Tula looked down, and the queen Tecalco bowed her face upon the shoulder of the queen Acatlan; and immediately, all differences lost in loving loyalty, the caciques and chiefs gathered before him, — a nobility as true and chivalric as ever fought beneath an infidel banner.

And they waited, but the Tezcucan came not.

"Go, Maxtla. Seek the lord Iztli', and bring him to my presence."

Through the palace and through the gardens they sought the recreant lover. And the silence of the waiting in the great hall was painful. Guest looked in the face of guest, mute, yet asking much. The prince Cacama whispered to the prince Cuitlahua, "It is a happy interference of the gods!"

Tecalco wept on, but not from sorrow, and the eyes of the devoted princess were lustrous for the first time; hope had come back to the darkened soul.

And the monarch said little, and erelong retired. A great portion of the company, despite his injunction, speedily followed his example, leaving the younger guests, with what humor they could command, to continue the revel till morning.

Next day at noon couriers from Cempoalla confirmed the announcement of Mualox. Cortes had indeed landed; and that Good Friday was the last of the perfect glory of Anahuac.

Poor king! Not long now until I may sing for thee the lamentation of the Gothic Roderick, whose story is but little less melancholy than thine.

He look'd for the brave captains that led the hosts of Spain,  
But all were fled, except the dead, — and who could count the slain?  
Where'er his eye could wander all bloody was the plain;  
And while thus he said the tears he shed ran down his cheeks like rain.

Last night I was the king of Spain : to-day no king am I.  
Last night fair castles held my train : to-night where shall I lie?  
Last night a hundred pages did serve me on the knee,  
To-night not one I call my own, — not one pertains to me.\*

\* The fifth and sixth verses of the famous Spanish ballad, "The Lamentation of Don Roderic." The translation I have borrowed from Lockhart's Spanish Ballads. — TR.