

## BOOK THREE.

### CHAPTER I.

#### THE FIRST COMBAT.

THE 'tzin's companion the night of the banquet, as the reader has no doubt anticipated, was Hualpa, the Tihuacan. To an adventure of his, more luckless than his friend's, I now turn.

It will be remembered that the 'tzin left him at the door of the great hall. In a strange scene, without a guide, it was natural for him to be ill at ease; light-hearted and fearless, however, he strolled leisurely about, at one place stopping to hear a minstrel, at another to observe a dance, and all the time half confused by the maze and splendor of all he beheld. In such awe stood he of the monarch, that he gave the throne a wide margin, contented from a distance to view the accustomed interchanges of courtesy between the guests and their master. Finding, at last, that he could not break through the bashfulness acquired in his solitary life among the hills, and imitate the ease and nonchalance of those born, as it were, to the lordliness of the hour, he left the house, and once more sought the retiracy of the gardens. Out of doors, beneath the stars, with the fresh air in his nostrils, he felt at home again, the whilom hunter, ready for any emprise.

As to the walk he should follow he had no choice, for in every direction he heard laughter, music, and conversation; everywhere were flowers and the glow of lamps. Merest

chance put him in a path that led to the neighborhood of the museum.

Since the night shut in, — be it said in a whisper, — a memory of wonderful brightness had taken possession of his mind. Nenetzin's face, as he saw it laughing in the door of the kiosk when Yeteve called the 'tzin for a song, he thought outshone the lamplight, the flowers, and everything most beautiful about his path; her eyes were as stars, rivalling the insensate ones in the mead above him. He remembered them, too, as all the brighter for the tears through which they had looked down, — alas! not on him, but upon his reverend comrade. If Hualpa was not in love, he was, at least, borrowing wings for a flight of that kind.

Indulging the delicious revery, he came upon some nobles, conversing, and quite blocking up the way, though going in his direction. He hesitated; but, considering that, as a guest, the freedom of the garden belonged equally to him, he proceeded, and became a listener.

"People call him a warrior. They know nothing of what makes a warrior; they mistake good fortune, or what the traders in the *tianguex* call luck, for skill. Take his conduct at the combat of Quetzal' as an example; say he threw his arrows well: yet it was a cowardly war. How much braver to grasp the *maquahuil*, and rush to blows! That requires manhood, strength, skill. To stand back, and kill with a chance arrow, — a woman could do as much."

The 'tzin was the subject of discussion, and the voice that of Iztzil', the Tezcucan. Hualpa moved closer to the party.

"I thought his course in that combat good," said a stranger; "it gave him opportunities not otherwise to be had. That he did not join the assault cannot be urged against his courage. Had you, my lord Iztzil', fallen like the Otompan, he would have been left alone to fight the challengers. A



fool would have seen the risk; a coward would not have courted it."

"That argument," replied Iztlil', "is crediting him with too much shrewdness. By the gods, he never doubted the result, — not he! He knew the Tlascalans would never pass my shield; he knew the victory was mine, two against me as there were. A prince of Tezcuco was never conquered!"

The spirit of the hunter was fast rising; yet he followed, listening.

"And, my friends," the Tezcucan continued, "who better judged the conduct of the combatants that day than the king? See the result. To-night I take from the faint heart his bride, the woman he has loved from boyhood. Then this banquet. In whose honor is it? What does it celebrate? There is a prize to be awarded, — the prize of courage and skill; and who gets it? And further, of the nobles and chiefs of the valley, but one is absent, — he whose prudence exceeds his valor."

In such strain the Tezcucan proceeded. And Hualpa, fully aroused, pushed through the company to the speaker, but so quietly that those who observed him asked no questions. Assured that the 'tzin must have friends present, he waited for some one to take up his cause. His own impulse was restrained by his great dread of the king, whose gardens he knew were not fighting-grounds at any time or in any quarrel. But, as the boastful prince continued, the resolve to punish him took definite form with the Tihuacan, — to such degree had his admiration for the 'tzin already risen! Gradually the auditors dropped behind or disappeared; finally but one remained, — a middle-aged, portly noble, whose demeanor was not of the kind to shake the resolution taken.

Hualpa made his first advance close by the eastern gate of

the garden, to which point he held himself in check lest the want of arms should prove an apology for refusing the fight.

"Will the lord Iztlil' stop?" he said, laying his hand on the Tezcucan's arm.

"I do not know you," was the answer.

The sleek courtier also stopped, and stared broadly.

"You do not know me! I will mend my fortune in that respect," returned the hunter, mildly. "I have heard what you said so ungraciously of my friend and comrade," — the last word he emphasized strongly, — "Guatamozin." Then he repeated the offensive words as correctly as if he had been a practised herald, and concluded, "Now, you know the 'tzin cannot be here to-night; you also know the reason; but, for him and in his place, I say, prince though you are, you have basely slandered an absent enemy."

"Who are you?" asked the Tezcucan, surprised.

"The comrade of Guatamozin, here to take up his quarrel."

"You challenge me?" said Iztlil', in disdain.

"Does a prince of Tezcuco, son of 'Hualpilli, require a blow? Take it then."

The blow was given.

"See! Do I not bring you princely blood?" And, in his turn, Hualpa laughed scornfully.

The Tezcucan was almost choked with rage. "This to me, — to me, — a prince and warrior!" he cried.

A danger not considered by the rash hunter now offered itself. An outcry would bring down the guard; and, in the event of his arrest, the united representations of Iztlil' and his friend would be sufficient to have him sent forthwith to the tigers. The pride of the prince saved him.

"Have a care, — 't is an assassin! I will call the guard at the gate!" said the courtier, alarmed.



"Call them not, call them not! I am equal to my own revenge. O, for a spear or knife, — anything to kill!"

"Will you hear me, — a word?" the hunter said. "I am without arms also; but they can be had."

"The arms, the arms!" cried Iztzil', passionately.

"We can make the sentinels at the gate clever by a few quills of gold; and here are enough to satisfy them." Hualpa produced a handful of the money. "Let us try them. Outside the gate the street is clear."

The courtier protested, but the prince was determined.

"The arms! Pledge my province and palaces, — everything for a *maquahuil* now."

They went to the gate and obtained the use of two of the weapons and as many shields. Then the party passed into the street, which they found deserted. To avoid the great thoroughfare to Iztapalapan, they turned to the north, and kept on as far as the corner of the garden wall.

"Stay we here," said the courtier. "Short time is all you want, lord Iztzil'. The feathers on the hawk's wings are not full-fledged."

The man spoke confidently; and it must be confessed that the Tezcucan's reputation and experience justified the assurance. One advantage the hunter had which his enemies both overlooked, — a surpassing composure. From a temple near by a red light flared broadly over the place, redeeming it from what would otherwise have been vague starlight; by its aid they might have seen his countenance without a trace of excitement or passion. One wish, and but one, he had, — that Guatamozin could witness the trial.

The impatience of the Tezcucan permitted but few preliminaries.

"The gods of Mictlan require no prayers. Stand out!" he said.

"Strike!" answered Hualpa.

Up rose the glassy blades of the Tezcucan, flashing in the light; quick and strong the blow, yet it clove but the empty air. "For the 'tzin!" shouted the hunter, striking back before the other was half recovered. The shield was dashed aside; a groan acknowledged a wound in the breast, and Iztzil' staggered; another blow stretched him on the pavement. A stream of blood, black in the night, stole slowly out over the flags. The fight was over. The victor dropped the bladed end of his weapon, and surveyed his foe, with astonishment, then pity.

"Your friend is hurt; help him!" he said, turning to the courtier; but he was alone, — the craven had run. For one fresh from the hills, this was indeed a dilemma! A duel and a death in sight of the royal palace! A chill tingled through his veins. He thought rapidly of the alarm, the arrest, the king's wrath, and himself given to glut the monsters in the menagerie. Up rose, also, the many fastnesses amid the cedared glades of Tihuanco. Could he but reach them! The slaves of Montezuma, to please a whim, might pursue and capture a quail or an eagle; but there he could laugh at pursuit, while in Tenochtitlan he was nowhere safe.

Sight of the flowing blood brought him out of the panic. He raised the Tezcucan's arm, and tore the rich vestments from his breast. The wound was a glancing one; it might not be fatal after all; to save him were worth the trial. Taking off his own *maxtlatl*, he wound it tightly round the body and over the cut. Across the street there was a small, open house; lifting the wounded man gently as possible, he carried him thither, and laid him in a darkened passage. Where else to convey him he knew not; that was all he could do. Now for flight, — for Tihuanco. Tireless and swift of foot shall they be who catch him on the way!

He started for the lake, intending to cross in a canoe rather



than by the causeway ; already a square was put behind, when it occurred to him that the Tezucan might have slaves and a palanquin waiting before the palace door. He began, also, to reproach himself for the baseness of the desertion. How would the 'tzin have acted ? When the same Tezucan lay with the dead in the arena, who nursed him back to life ?

If Hualpa had wished his patron's presence at the beginning of the combat, now, flying from imaginary dangers, — flying, like a startled coward, from his very victory, — much did he thank the gods that he was alone and unseen. In a kind of alcove, or resting-place for weary walkers, with which, by the way, the thoroughfares of Tenochtitlan were well provided, he sat down, recalled his wonted courage, and determined on a course more manly, whatever the risk.

Then he retraced his steps, and went boldly to the portal of the palace, where he found the Tezucan's palanquin. The slaves in charge followed him without objection.

"Take your master to his own palace. Be quick !" he said to them, when the wounded man was transferred to the carriage.

"It is in Tecuba," said one of them.

"To Tecuba then."

He did more ; he accompanied the slaves. Along the street, across the causeway, which never seemed of such weary length, they proceeded. On the road the Tezucan revived. He said little, and was passive in his enemy's hands. From Tecuba the latter hastened back to Tenochtitlan, and reached the portico of Xoli, the Chalcan, just as day broke over the valley.

And such was the hunter's first emprise as a warrior.

## CHAPTER II.

## THE SECOND COMBAT.

IT is hardly worth while to detail the debate between Hualpa and Xoli ; enough to know that the latter, anticipating pursuit, hid the son of his friend in a closet attached to his restaurant.

That day, and many others, the police went up and down, ferreting for the assassin of the noble Iztzil'. Few premises escaped their search. The Chalcan's, amongst others, was examined, but without discovery. Thus safely concealed, the hunter thrived on the *cuisine*, and for the loss of liberty was consoled by the gossip and wordy wisdom of his accessory, and, by what was better, the gratitude of Guatamozin. In such manner two weeks passed away, the longest and most wearisome of his existence. How sick at heart he grew in his luxurious imprisonment ; how he pined for the old hills and woodlands ; how he longed once more to go down the shaded vales free-footed and fearless, stalking deer or following his ocelot. Ah, what is ambition gratified to freedom lost !

Unused to the confinement, it became irksome to him, and at length intolerable. "When," he asked himself, "is this to end ? Will the king ever withdraw his huntsmen ? Through whom am I to look or hope for pardon ?" He sighed, paced the narrow closet, and determined that night to walk out and see if his old friends the stars were still in their places, and take a draught of the fresh air, to his remembrance sweeter than the new beverage of the Chalcan. And when the night came he was true to his resolution.

Pass we his impatience while waiting an opportunity to



leave the house unobserved; his attempts unsuccessfully repeated; his vexation at the "noble patrons" who lounged in the apartments and talked so long over their goblets. At a late hour he made good his exit. In the *tianguex*, which was the first to receive him, booths and porticos were closed for the night; lights were everywhere extinguished, except on the towers of the temples. As morning would end his furlough and drive him back to the hated captivity, he resolved to make the most of the night; he would visit the lake, he would stroll through the streets. By the gods! he would play freeman to the full.

In his situation, all places were alike perilous, — houses, streets, temples, and palaces. As, for that reason, one direction was good as another, he started up the Iztapalapan street from the *tianguex*. Passengers met him now and then; otherwise the great thoroughfare was unusually quiet. Sauntering along in excellent imitation of careless enjoyment, he strove to feel cheerful; but, in spite of his efforts, he became lonesome, while his dread of the patrols kept him uneasy. Such freedom, he ascertained, was not all his fancy colored it; yet it was not so bad as his prison. On he went. Sometimes on a step, or in the shade of a portico, he would sit and gaze at the houses as if they were old friends basking in the moonlight; at the bridges he would also stop, and, leaning over the balustrades, watch the waveless water in the canal below, and envy the watermen asleep in their open canoes. The result was a feeling of recklessness, sharpened by a yearning for something to do, some place to visit, some person to see; in short, a thousand wishes, so vague, however, that they amounted to nothing.

In this mood he thought of Nenetzin, who, in the tedium of his imprisonment, had become to him a constant dream, — a vision by which his fancy was amused and his impatience soothed; a vision that faded not with the morning, but at

noon was sweet as at night. With the thought came another, — the idea of an adventure excusable only in a lover.

"The garden!" he said, stopping and thinking. "The garden! It is the king's; so is the street. It is guarded; so is the city. I will be in danger; but that is around me everywhere. By the gods! I will go to the garden, and look at the house in which she sleeps."

Invade the gardens of the great king at midnight! The project would have terrified the Chalcan; the 'tzin would have forbade it; at any other time, the adventurer himself would rather have gone unarmed into the den of a tiger. The gardens were chosen places sacred to royalty; otherwise they would have been without walls and without sentinels at the gates. In the event of detection and arrest, the intrusion at such a time would be without excuse; death was the penalty.

But the venture was agreeable to the mood he was in; he welcomed it as a relief from loneliness, as a rescue from his tormenting void of purpose; if he saw the dangers, they were viewed in the charm of his gentle passion, — griffins and goblins masked by Love, the enchanter. He started at once; and now that he had an object before him, there was no more loitering under porticos or on the bridges. As the squares were put behind him, he repeated over and over, as a magical exorcism, "I will look at the house in which she sleeps, — the house in which she sleeps."

Once in his progress, he turned aside from the great street, and went up a footway bordering a canal. At the next street, however, he crossed a bridge, and proceeded to the north again. Almost before he was aware of it, he reached the corner of the royal garden, always to be remembered by him as the place of his combat with the Tezcucan. But so intent was he upon his present project he scarcely gave it a second look.



The wall was but little higher than his head, and covered with snowy stucco; and where, over the coping, motionless in the moonshine, a palm-tree lifted its graceful head, he boldly climbed, and entered the sacred enclosure. Drawing his mantle close about him, he stole toward the palace, selecting the narrow walks most protected by overhanging shrubbery.

A man's instinct is a good counsellor in danger; often it is the only counsellor. Gliding through the shadows, cautiously as if hunting, he seemed to hear a recurrent whisper,—

"Have a care, O hunter! This is not one of thy familiar places. The gardens of the great king have other guardians than the stars. Death awaits thee at every gate."

But as often came the reply, "Nenetzin,—I will see the house in which she sleeps."

He held on toward the palace, never stopping until the top, here and there crowned with low turrets, rose above the highest trees. Then he listened intently, but heard not a sound of life from the princely pile. He sought next a retreat, where, secure from observation, he might sit in the pleasant air, and give wings to his lover's fancy. At last he found one, a little retired from the central walk, and not far from a tank, which had once been, if it were not now, the basin of a fountain. Upon a bench, well shaded by a clump of flowering bushes, he stretched himself at ease, and was soon absorbed.

The course of his thought, in keeping with his youth, was to the future. Most of the time, however, he had no distinct idea; revery, like an evening mist, settled upon him. Sometimes he lay with closed eyes, shutting himself in, as it were, from the world; then he stared vacantly at the stars, or into those blue places in the mighty vault too deep for stars; but most he loved to look at the white walls of the

palace. And for the time he was happy; his soul may be said to have been singing a silent song to the unconscious Nenetzin.

Once or twice he was disturbed by a noise, like the suppressed cry of a child; but he attributed it to some of the restless animals in the museum at the farther side of the garden. Half the night was gone; so the watchers on the temples proclaimed; and still he stayed,—still dreamed.

About that time, however, he was startled by footsteps coming apparently from the palace. He sat up, ready for action. The appearance of a man alone and unarmed allayed his apprehension for the moment. Up the walk, directly by the hiding-place, the stranger came. As he passed slowly on, the intruder thrilled at beholding, not a guard or an officer, but Montezuma in person! As far as the tank the monarch walked; there he stopped, put his hands behind him, and looked moodily down into the pool.

Garden, palace, Nenetzin,—everything but the motionless figure by the tank faded from Hualpa's mind. Fear came upon him; and no wonder: there, almost within reach, at midnight, unattended, stood what was to him the positive realization of power, ruler of the Empire, dispenser of richest gifts, keeper of life and death! Guilty, and tremulously apprehensive that he had been discovered, Hualpa looked each instant to be dragged from his hiding.

The space around the tank was clear, and strewn with shells perfectly white in the moonlight. While the adventurer sat fixed to his seat, watching the king, watching, also, a chance of escape, he saw something come from the shrubbery, move stealthily out into the walk, then crouch down. Now, as I have shown, he was brave; but this tested all his courage. Out further crept the object, moving with the stillness of a spirit. Scarcely could he persuade himself at



first that it was not an illusion begotten of his fears; but its form and movements, the very stillness of its advance, at last identified it. In all his hunter's experience, he had never seen an ocelot so large. The screams he had heard were now explained, — the monster had escaped from the menagerie!

I cannot say the recognition wrought a subsidence of Hualpa's fears. He felt instinctively for his arms, — he had nothing but a knife of brittle *itzi*. Then he thought of the stories he had heard of the ferocity of the royal tigers, and of unhappy wretches flung, by way of punishment, into their dens. He shuddered, and turned to the king, who still gazed thoughtfully over the wall of the tank.

Holy Huitzil! the ocelot was creeping upon the monarch! The flash of understanding that revealed the fact to Hualpa was like the lightning. Breathlessly he noticed the course the brute was taking; there could be no doubt. Another flash, and he understood the monarch's peril, — alone, unarmed, before the guards at the gates or in the palace could come, the struggle would be over; child of the Sun though he was, there remained for him but one hope of rescue.

As, in common with provincials generally, he cherished a reverence for the monarch hardly secondary to that he felt for the gods, the Tihuacan was inexpressibly shocked to see him subject to such a danger. An impulse aside from native chivalry urged him to confront the ocelot; but under the circumstances, — and he recounted them rapidly, — he feared the king more than the brute. Brief time was there for consideration; each moment the peril increased. He thought of the 'tzin, then of Nenetzin.

"Now or never!" he said. "If the gods do but help me, I will prove myself!"

And he unlooped the mantle, and wound it about his left

arm; the knife, poor as it was, he took from his *maxtlal*; then he was ready. Ah, if he only had a javelin!

To place himself between the king and his enemy was what he next set about. Experience had taught him how much such animals are governed by curiosity, and upon that he proceeded to act. On his hands and knees he crept out into the walk. The moment he became exposed, the ocelot stopped, raised its round head, and watched him with a gaze as intent as his own. The advance was slow and stealthy; when the point was almost gained, the king turned about.

"Speak not, stir not, O king!" he cried, without stopping. "I will save you, — no other can."

From creeping man the monarch looked to crouching beast, and comprehended the situation.

Forward went Hualpa, now the chief object of attraction to the monster. At last he was directly in front of it.

"Call the guard and fly! It is coming now!"

And through the garden rang the call. Verily, the hunter had become the king!

A moment after the ocelot lowered its head, and leaped. The Tihuacan had barely time to put himself in posture to receive the attack, his left arm serving as shield; upon his knee, he struck with the knife. The blood flew, and there was a howl so loud that the shouts of the monarch were drowned. The mantle was rent to ribbons; and through the feathers, cloth, and flesh, the long fangs crunched to the bone, — but not without return. This time the knife, better directed, was driven to the heart, where it snapped short off, and remained. The clenched jaws relaxed. Rushing suddenly in, Hualpa contrived to push the fainting brute into the tank. He saw it sink, saw the pool subside to its calm, then turned to Montezuma, who, though calling lustily for the guard, had stayed to



the end. Kneeling upon the stained shells, he laid the broken knife at the monarch's feet, and waited for him to speak.

"Arise!" the king said, kindly.

The hunter stood up, splashed with blood, the fragments of his *tilmatti* clinging in shreds to his arm, his tunic torn, the hair fallen over his face, — a most uncourtierlike figure.

"You are hurt," said the king, directly. "I was once thought skilful with medicines. Let me see."

He found the wounds, and untying his own sash, rich with embroidery, wrapped it in many folds around the bleeding arm.

Meantime there was commotion in many quarters.

"Evil take the careless watchers!" he said, sternly, noticing the rising clamor. "Had I trusted them, — but are you not of the guard?"

"I am the great king's slave, — his poorest slave, but not of his guard."

Montezuma regarded him attentively.

"It cannot be; an assassin would not have interfered with the ocelot. Take up the knife, and follow me."

Hualpa obeyed. On the way they met a number of the guard running in great perplexity; but without a word to them, the monarch walked on, and into the palace. In a room where there were tables and seats, books and writing materials, maps on the walls and piles of them on the floor, he stopped, and seated himself.

"You know what truth is, and how the gods punish falsehood," he began; then, abruptly, "How came you in the garden?"

Hualpa fell on his knees, laid his palm on the floor, and answered without looking up, for such he knew to be a courtly custom.

"Who may deceive the wise king Montezuma? I will answer as to the gods: the gardens are famous in song and story, and I was tempted to see them, and climbed the wall. When you came to the fountain, I was close by; and while waiting a chance to escape, I saw the ocelot creeping upon you; and — and — the great king is too generous to deny his slave the pardon he risked his life for."

"Who are you?"

"I am from the province of Tihuano. My name is Hualpa."

"Hualpa, Hualpa," repeated the king, slowly. "You serve Guatamozin."

"He is my friend and master, O king."

Montezuma started. "Holy gods, what madness! My people have sought you far and wide to feed you to the tiger in the tank."

Hualpa faltered not.

"O king, I know I am charged with the murder of Itz'ilil, the Tezcucan. Will it please you to hear my story?"

And taking the assent, he gave the particulars of the combat, not omitting the cause. "I did not murder him," he concluded. "If he is dead, I slew him in fair fight, shield to shield, as a warrior may, with honor, slay a foe-man."

"And you carried him to Tecuba?"

"Before the judges, if you choose, I will make the account good."

"Be it so!" the monarch said, emphatically. "Two days hence, in the court, I will accuse you. Have there your witnesses: it is a matter of life and death. Now, what of your master, the 'tzin?"

The question was dangerous, and Hualpa trembled, but resolved to be bold.



"If it be not too presumptuous, most mighty king, — if a slave may seem to judge his master's judgment by the offer of a word —"

"Speak! I give you liberty."

"I wish to say," continued Hualpa, "that in the court there are many noble courtiers who would die for you, O king; but, of them all, there is not one who so loves you, or whose love could be made so profitable, being backed by skill, courage, and wisdom, as the generous prince whom you call my master. In his banishment he has chosen to serve you; for the night the strangers landed in Cempoalla, he left his palace in Iztapalapan, and entered their camp in the train of the governor of Cotastlan. Yesterday a courier, whom you rewarded richly for his speed in coming, brought you portraits of the strangers, and pictures of their arms and camp; that courier was Guatamozin, and his was the hand that wrought the artist's work. O, much as your faculties become a king, you have been deceived: he is not a traitor."

"Who told you such a fine minstrel's tale?"

"The gods judge me, O king, if, without your leave, I had so much as dared kiss the dust at your feet. What you have graciously permitted me to tell I heard from the 'tzin himself."

Montezuma sat a long time silent, then asked, "Did your master speak of the strangers, or of the things he saw?"

"The noble 'tzin regards me kindly, and therefore spoke with freedom. He said, mourning much that he could not be at your last council to declare his opinion, that you were mistaken."

The speaker's face was cast down, so that he could not see the frown with which the plain words were received, and he continued, —

"They are not *teules*,"\* so the 'tzin said, 'but men, as you and I are; they eat, sleep, drink, like us; nor is that all,—they die like us; for in the night,' he said, 'I was in their camp, and saw them, by torchlight, bury the body of one that day dead.' And then he asked, 'Is that a practice among the gods?' Your slave, O king, is not learned as a paba, and therefore believed him."

Montezuma stood up.

"Not *teules*! How thinks he they should be dealt with?"

"He says that, as they are men, they are also invaders, with whom an Aztec cannot treat. Nothing for them but war!"

To and fro the monarch walked. After which he returned to Hualpa and said, —

"Go home now. To-morrow I will send you a *tilmatli* for the one you wear. Look to your wounds, and recollect the trial. As you love life, have there your proof. I will be your accuser."

"As the great king is merciful to his children, the gods will be merciful to him. I will give myself to the guards," said the hunter, to whom anything was preferable to the closet in the restaurant.

"No, you are free."

Hualpa kissed the floor, and arose, and hurried from the palace to the house of Xoli on the *tianguetz*. The effect of his appearance upon that worthy, and the effect of the story afterwards, may be imagined. Attention to the wounds, a bath, and sound slumber put the adventurer in a better condition by the next noon.

And from that night he thought more than ever of glory and Nenetzin.

\* Gods.



## CHAPTER III.

## THE PORTRAIT.

NEXT day, after the removal of the noon comfitures, and when the princess Tula had gone to the hammock for the usual *siesta*, Nenetzin rushed into her apartment unusually excited.

"O, I have something so strange to tell you,— something so strange!" she cried, throwing herself upon the hammock.

Her face was bright and very beautiful. Tula looked at her a moment, then put her lips lovingly to the smooth forehead.

"By the Sun! as our royal father sometimes swears, my sister seems in earnest."

"Indeed I am; and you will go with me, will you not?"

"Ah! you want to take me to the garden to see the dead tiger, or, perhaps, the warrior who slew it, or— now I have it— you have seen another minstrel."

Tula expected the girl to laugh, but was surprised to see her eyes fill with tears. She changed her manner instantly, and bade the slave who had been sitting by the hammock fanning her, to retire. Then she said,—

"You jest so much, Nenetzin, that I do not know when you are serious. I love you: now tell me what has happened."

The answer was given in a low voice.

"You will think me foolish, and so I am, but I cannot help it. Do you recollect the dream I told you the night on the *chinampa*?"

"The night Yeteve came to us? I recollect."

"You know I saw a man come and sit down in our father's

palace,— a stranger with blue eyes and fair face, and hair and beard like the silk of the ripening maize. I told you I loved him, and would have none but him; and you laughed at me, and said he was the god Quetzal'. O Tula, the dream has come back to me many times since; so often that it seems, when I am awake, to have been a reality. I am childish, you think, and very weak; you may even pity me; but I have grown to look upon the blue-eyed as something lovable and great, and thought of him is a part of my mind; so much so that it is useless for me to say he is not, or that I am loving a shadow. And now, O dear Tula, now comes the strange part of my story. Yesterday, you know, a courier from Cempoalla brought our father some pictures of the strangers lately landed from the sea. This morning I heard there were portraits among them, and could not resist a curiosity to see them; so I went, and almost the first one I came to,— do not laugh,— almost the first one I came to was the picture of him who comes to me so often in my dreams. I looked and trembled. There indeed he was; there were the blue eyes, the yellow hair, the white face, even the dress, shining as silver, and the plumed crest. I did not stay to look at anything else, but hurried here, scarcely knowing whether to be glad or afraid. I thought if you went with me I would not be afraid. Go you must; we will look at the portrait together." And she hid her face, sobbing like a child.

"It is too wonderful for belief. I will go," said Tula.

She arose, and the slave brought and threw over her shoulders the long white scarf so invariably a part of an Aztec woman's costume. Then the sisters took their way to the chamber where the pictures were kept,— the same into which Hualpa had been led the night before. The king was elsewhere giving audience, and his clerks and attendants were with him. So the two were allowed to indulge their curiosity undisturbed.



Nenetzin went to a pile of manuscripts lying on the floor. The elder sister was startled by the first picture exposed; for she recognized the handiwork, long since familiar to her, of the 'tzin. Nor was she less surprised by the subject, which was a horse, apparently a nobler instrument for a god's revenge than man himself.

Next she saw pictured a horse, its rider mounted, and in Christian armor, and bearing shield, lance, and sword. Then came a cannon, the gunner by the carriage, his match lighted, while a volume of flame and smoke was bursting from the throat of the piece. A portrait followed; she lifted it up, and trembled to see the hero of Nenetzin's dream!

"Did I not tell you so, O Tula?" said the girl, in a whisper.

"The face is pleasant and noble," the other answered, thoughtfully; "but I am afraid. There is evil in the smile, evil in the blue eyes."

The rest of the manuscripts they left untouched. The one absorbed them; but with what different feelings! Nenetzin was a-flutter with pleasure, restrained by awe. Impressed by the singularity of the vision, as thus realized, a passionate wish to see the man or god, whichever he was, and hear his voice, may be called her nearest semblance to reflection. Like a lover in the presence of the beloved, she was glad and contented, and asked nothing of the future. But with Tula, older and wiser, it was different. She was conscious of the novelty of the incident; at the same time a presentiment, a gloomy foreboding, filled her soul. In slumber we sometimes see spectres, and they sit by us and smile; yet we shrink, and cannot keep down anticipations of ill. So Tula was affected by what she beheld.

She laid the portrait softly down, and turned to Nenetzin, who had now no need to deprecate her laugh.

"The ways of the gods are most strange. Something tells me this is their work. I am afraid; let us go."

And they retired, and the rest of the day, swinging in the hammock, they talked of the dream and the portrait, and wondered what would come of them.

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CHAPTER IV.

THE TRIAL.

HUALPA'S adventure in the garden made a great stir in the palace and the city. Profound was the astonishment, therefore, when it became known that the savior of the king and the murderer of the Tezcucan were one and the same person, and that, in the latter character, he was to be taken into court and tried for his life, Montezuma himself acting as accuser. Though universally discredited, the story had the effect of drawing an immense attendance at the trial.

"Ho, Chalcan! Fly not your friends in that way!"

So the broker was saluted by some men nobly dressed, whom he was about passing on the great street. He stopped, and bowed very low.

"A pleasant day, my lords! Your invitation honors me; the will of his patrons should always be law to the poor keeper of a portico. I am hurrying to the trial."

"Then stay with us. We also have a curiosity to see the assassin."

"My good lord speaks harshly. The boy, whom I love as a son, cannot be what you call him."

The noble laughed. "Take it not ill, Chalcan. So much do I honor the hand that slew the base Tezcucan that I care