

amid the ruins of the city. In the face of example so dreadful, none would dare oppose him, not even Montezuma, whose pride broken was next to his faith gained. And around the new-born hope, as cherubs around the Madonna, rustled the wings of fancies most exalted. He saw the supremacy of Quetzal' acknowledged above all others, the Cû restored to its first glory, and the silent cells re peopled. O happy day! Already he heard the court-yard resounding with solemn chants as of old; and before the altar, in the presence-chamber, from morn till night he stood, receiving offerings, and dispensing blessings to the worshippers who, with a faith equal to his own, believed the ancient image the ONE SUPREME GOD.

At the head of the eastern steps of the temple, as the king began the descent, the holy man knelt, and said, —

“For peace to his people let the wise Montezuma look to Quetzal'. Mualox gives him his blessing. Farewell.”

CHAPTER VI.

THE CONQUEROR WILL COME.

A FEW weeks more, — weeks of pain, vacillation, embassies, and distracted councils to Montezuma; of doubt and anxiety to the nobles; of sacrifice and ceremonies by the priests; of fear and wonder to the people. In that time, if never before, the Spaniards became the one subject of discourse throughout Anahuac. In the *tianguetz*, merchants bargaining paused to interchange opinions about them; craftsmen in the shops entertained and frightened each other with stories of their marvellous strength and ferocity; porters, bending under burdens, speculated on

their character and mission; and never a waterman passed an acquaintance on the lake, without lingering awhile to ask or give the latest news from the Holy City, which, with the best grace it could, still entertained its scourgers.

What Malinche — for by that name Cortes was now universally known — would do was the first conjecture; what the great king intended was the next.

As a matter of policy, the dismal massacre in Cholula accomplished all Cortes proposed; it made him a national terror; it smoothed the causeway for his march, and held the gates of Xoloc open for peaceful entry into Tenochtitlan. Yet the question on the many tongues was, Would he come?

And he himself answered. One day a courier ran up the great street of Tenochtitlan to the king's palace; immediately the portal was thronged by anxious citizens. That morning Malinche began his march to the capital, — he was coming, was actually on the way. The thousands trembled as they heard the news.

After that the city was not an hour without messengers reporting the progress of the Spaniards, whose every step and halt and camping-place was watched with the distrust of fear and the sleeplessness of jealousy. The horsemen and footmen were all numbered; the personal appearance of each leader was painted over and over again with brush and tongue; the devices on the shields and pennons were described with heraldic accuracy. And though, from long service and constant exposure and repeated battles, the equipments of the adventurers had lost the freshness that belonged to them the day of the departure from Cuba; though plumes and scarfs were stained, and casques and breastplates tarnished, and good steeds tamed by strange fare and wearisome marches, nevertheless the accounts that went abroad concerning them were sufficiently splendid

and terrible to confirm the prophecies by which they were preceded.

And the people, made swift by alarm and curiosity, outmarched Cortes many days. Before he reached Iztapalapan, the capital was full of them; in multitudes, lords and slaves, men, women, and children, like Jews to the Passover, scaled the mountains, and hurried through the valley and across the lakes. Better opportunity to study the characteristics of the tribes was never afforded.

All day and night the public resorts — streets, houses, temples — were burdened with the multitude, whose fear, as the hour of entry drew nigh, yielded to their curiosity. And when, at last, the road the visitors would come by was settled, the whole city seemed to breathe easier. From the village of Iscalpan, so ran the word, they had boldly plunged into the passes of the Sierra, and thence taken the directest route by way of Tlalmanalco. And now they were at Ayotzinco, a town on the eastern shore of lake Tezcuco; to-morrow they would reach Iztapalapan, and then Tenochtitlan. Not a long time to wait, if they brought the vengeance of Quetzal'; yet thousands took canoes, and crossed to the village, and, catching the first view, hurried back, each with a fancy more than ever inflamed.

A soldier, sauntering down the street, is beset with citizens.

"A pleasant day, O son of Huitzil'!"

"A pleasant day; may all that shine on Tenochtitlan be like it!" he answers.

"What news?"

"I have been to the temple."

"And what says the *teotuctli* now?"

"Nothing. There are no signs. Like the stars, the hearts of the victims will not answer."

"What! Did not Huitzil' speak last night?"

"O yes!" And the warrior smiles with satisfaction. "Last night he bade the priests tell the king not to oppose the entry of Malinche."

"Then what?"

"Why, here in the city he would cut the strangers off to the last one."

And all the citizens cry in chorus, "Praised be Huitzil'!" Farther on the warrior overtakes a comrade in arms.

"Are we to take our shields to the field, O my brother?" he asks.

"All is peaceful yet, — nothing but embassies."

"Is it true that the lord Cacama is to go in state, and invite Malinche to Tenochtitlan?"

"He sets out to-day."

"Ha, ha! Of all voices for war, his was the loudest. Where caught he the merchant's cry for peace?"

"In the temples; it may be from Huitzil'."

The answer is given in a low voice, and with an ironic laugh.

"Well, well, comrade, there are but two lords fit, in time like this, for the love of warriors, — Cuitlahua and Guatamozin. They still talk of war."

"Cuitlahua, Cuitlahua!" And the laugh rises to boisterous contempt. "Why, he has consented to receive Malinche in Iztapalapan, and entertain him with a banquet in his palace. He has gone for that purpose now. The lord of Cojohuaca is with him."

"Then we have only the 'tzin!"

The fellow sighs like one sincerely grieved.

"Only the 'tzin, brother, only the 'tzin! and he is banished!"

They shake their heads, and look what they dare not speak, and go their ways. The gloom they take with them is a sample of that which rests over the whole valley.

When the Spaniards reached Iztapalapan, the excitement in the capital became irrepressible. The cities were but an easy march apart, most of it along the causeway. The going and coming may be imagined. The miles of dike were covered by a continuous procession, while the lake, in a broad line from town to town, was darkened by canoes. Cortes' progress through the streets of Iztapalapan was antitypical of the grander reception awaiting him in Tenochtitlan.

In the latter city there was no sleep that night. The *tianquez* in particular was densely filled, not by traders, but by a mass of newsmongers, who hardly knew whether they were most pleased or alarmed. The general neglect of business had exceptions; at least one portico shone with unusual brilliancy till morning. Every great merchant is a philosopher; in the midst of calamities, he is serene, because it is profit's time; before the famine, he buys up all the corn; in forethought of pestilence, he secures all the medicine; and the world, counting his gains, says delightedly, What a wise man! I will not say the Chalcan was of that honored class; he thought himself a benefactor, and was happy to accommodate the lords, and help them divide their time between his palace and that of the king. It is hardly necessary to add, that his apartments were well patronized, though, in truth, his *pulque* was in greater demand than his *chocolatl*.

The drinking-chamber, about the close of the third quarter of the night, presented a lively picture. For the convenience of the many patrons, tables from other rooms had been brought in. Some of the older lords were far gone in intoxication; slaves darted to and fro, removing goblets, or bringing them back replenished. A few minstrels found listeners among those who happened to be too stupid to talk, though not too sleepy to drink. Every little while a new-

comer would enter, when, if he were from Iztapalapan, a crowd would surround him, allowing neither rest nor refreshment until he had told the things he had seen or heard. Amongst others, Hualpa and Io' chanced to find their way thither. Maxtla, seated at a table with some friends, including the Chalcan, called them to him; and, as they had attended the banquet of the lord Cuitlahua, they were quickly provided with seats, goblets, and an audience of eager listeners.

"Certainly, my good chief, I have seen Malinche, and passed the afternoon looking at him and his people," said Hualpa to Maxtla. "It may be that I am too much influenced by the 'tzin to judge them; but, if they are *teules*, so are we. I longed to try my javelin on them."

"Was their behavior unseemly?"

"Call it as you please. I was in the train when, after the banquet, the lord Cuitlahua took them to see his gardens. As they strode the walks, and snuffed the flowers, and plucked the fruit; as they moved along the canal with its lining of stone, and stopped to drink at the fountains,— I was made feel that they thought everything, not merely my lord's property, but my lord himself, belonged to them; they said as much by their looks and actions, by their insolent swagger."

"Was the 'tzin there?"

"From the *azoteas* of a temple he saw them enter the city; but he was not at the banquet. I heard a story showing how he would treat the strangers, if he had the power. One of their priests, out with a party, came to the temple where he happened to be, and went up to the tower. In the sanctuary one of them raised his spear and struck the image of the god. The *pabas* threw up their hands and shrieked; he rushed upon the impious wretch, and carried him to the sacrificial stone, stretched him out, and called to the *pabas*,

"Come, the victim is ready!" When the other *teules* would have attacked him, he offered to fight them all. The strange priest interfered, and they departed."

The applause of the bystanders was loud and protracted; when it had somewhat abated, Xoli, whose thoughts, from habit, ran chiefly upon the edibles, said, —

"My lord Cuitlahua is a giver of good suppers. Pray, tell us about the courses —"

"Peace! be still, Chalcan!" cried Maxtla, angrily. "What care we whether Malinche ate wolf-meat or quail?"

Xoli bowed; the lords laughed.

Then a gray-haired cacique behind Io' asked, "Tell us rather what Malinche said."

Hualpa shook his head. "The conversation was tedious. Everything was said through an interpreter, — a woman born in the province Painalla; so I paid little attention. I recollect, however, he asked many questions about the great king, and about the Empire, and Tenochtitlan. He said his master, the governor of the universe, had sent him here. He gave much time, also, to explaining his religion. I might have understood him, uncle, but my ears were too full of the rattle of arms."

"What! Sat they at the table armed?" asked Maxtla.

"All of them; even Malinche."

"That was not the worst," said Io', earnestly. "At the same table my lord Cuitlahua entertained a band of beggarly Tlascalan chiefs. Sooner should my tongue have been torn out!"

The bystanders made haste to approve the sentiment, and for a time it diverted the conversation. Meanwhile, at Hualpa's order, the goblets were refilled.

"Dares the noble Maxtla," he then asked, "tell what the king will do?"

"The question is very broad." And the chief smiled. "What special information does my comrade seek?"

"Can you tell us when Malinche will enter Tenochtitlan?"

"Certainly. Xoli published that in the *tianguex* before the sun was up."

"To be sure," answered the Chalcan. "The lord Maxtla knows the news cost me a bowl of *pulque*."

There was much laughter, in which the chief joined. Then he said, gravely, —

"The king has arranged everything. As advised by the gods, Malinche enters Tenochtitlan day after to-morrow. He will leave Iztapalapan at sunrise, and march to the causeway by the lake shore. Cuitlahua, with Cacama, the lord of Tecuba, and others of like importance, will meet him at Xoloc. The king will follow them in state. As to the procession, I will only say it were ill to lose the sight. Such splendor was never seen on the causeway."

Ordinarily the mention of such a prospect would have kindled the liveliest enthusiasm; for the Aztecs were lovers of spectacles, and never so glad as when the great green banner of the Empire was brought forth to shed its solemn beauty over the legions, and along the storied street of Tenochtitlan. Much, therefore, was Maxtla surprised at the coldness that fell upon the company.

"Ho, friends! One would think the reception not much to your liking," he said.

"We are the king's, — dust under his feet, — and it is not for us to murmur," said a sturdy cacique, first to break the disagreeable silence. "Yet our fathers gave their enemies bolts instead of banquets."

"Who may disobey the gods?" asked Maxtla.

The argument was not more sententious than unanswerable.

"Well, well!" said Hualpa. "I will get ready. Advise me, good chief: had I better take a canoe?"

"The procession will doubtless be better seen from the lake; but to hear what passes between the king and Malinche, you should be in the train. By the way, will the 'tzin be present?"

"As the king may order," replied Hualpa.

Maxtla threw back his look, and said with enthusiasm, real or affected, "Much would I like to see and hear him when the Tlascalans come flying their banners into the city! How he will flame with wrath!"

Then Hualpa considerably changed the direction of the discourse.

"Malinche will be a troublesome guest, if only from the number of his following. Will he be lodged in one of the temples?"

"A temple, indeed!" And Maxtla laughed scornfully. "A temple wou'd be fitter lodging for the gods of Mictlan! At Cempoalla, you recollect, the *teules* threw down the sacred gods, and butchered the pabas at the altars. Lest they should desecrate a holy house here, they are assigned to the old palace of Axaya'. To-morrow the *tamanes* will put it in order."

Io' then asked, "Is it known how long they will stay?"

Maxtla shrugged his shoulders, and drank his *pulque*.

"Hist!" whistled a cacique. "That is what the king would give half his kingdom to know!"

"And why?" asked the boy, reddening. "Is he not master? Does it not depend upon him?"

"It depends upon no other!" cried Maxtla, dashing his palm upon the table until the goblets danced. "By the holy gods, he has but to speak the word, and these guests will turn to victims!"

And Hualpa, surprised at the display of spirit, seconded

the chief: "Brave words, O my lord Maxtla! They give us hope."

"He will treat them graciously," Maxtla continued, "because they come by his request; but when he tells them to depart, if they obey not,—if they obey not,—when was his vengeance other than a king's? Who dares say he cannot, by a word, end this visit?"

"No one!" cried Io'.

"Ay, no one! But the goblets are empty. See! Io', good prince,"—and Maxtla's voice changed at once,— "would another draught be too much for us? We drink slowly; one more, only one. And while we drink, we will forget Malinche."

"Would that were possible!" sighed the boy.

They sent up the goblets, and continued the session until daylight.

CHAPTER VII.

MONTEZUMA GOES TO MEET CORTES.

CAME the eighth of November, which no Spaniard, himself a Conquistador, can ever forget; that day Cortes entered Tenochtitlan.

The morning dawned over Anahuac as sometimes it dawns over the Bay of Naples, bringing an azure haze in which the world seemed set afloat.

"Look you, uncles," said Montezuma, yet at breakfast, and speaking to his councillors: "they are to go before me, my heralds; and as Malinche is the servant of a king, and used to courtly styles, I would not have them shame me. Admit them with the *nequen* off. As they will appear before him, let them come to me."

And thereupon four nobles were ushered in, full-armed, even to the shield. Their helmets were of glittering silver; their *escaupiles*, or tunics of quilted mail, were stained vivid green, and at the neck and borders sparkled with pearls; over their shoulders hung graceful mantles of *plumaje*, softer than crimson velvet; upon their breasts blazed decorations and military insignia; from wrist to elbow, and from knee to sandal-strap, their arms and legs were sheathed in scales of gold. And so, ready for peaceful show or mortal combat, — his heroes and ambassadors, — they bided the monarch's careful review.

"Health to you, my brothers! and to you, my children!" he said, with satisfaction. "What of the morning? How looks the sun?"

"Like the beginning of a great day, O king, which we pray may end happily for you," replied Cuitlahua.

"It is the work of Huitzil'; doubt not! I have called you, O my children, to see how well my fame will be maintained. I wish to show Malinche a power and beauty such as he has never seen, unless he come from the Sun itself. Earth has but one valley of Anahuac, one city of Tenochtitlan: so he shall acknowledge. Have you directed his march as I ordered?"

And Cacama replied, "Through the towns and gardens, he is to follow the shore of the lake to the great causeway. By this time he is on the road."

Then Montezuma's face flushed; and, lifting his head as it were to look at objects afar off, he said aloud, yet like one talking to himself, —

"He is a lover of gold, and has been heard speak of cities and temples and armies; of his people numberless as the sands. O, if he be a man, with human weaknesses, — if he has hope, or folly of thought, to make him less than a god, — ere the night fall he shall give me reverence. Sign of my

power shall he find at every step: cities built upon the waves; temples solid and high as the hills; the lake covered with canoes and gardens; people at his feet, like stalks in the meadow; my warriors; and Tenochtitlan, city of empire! And then, if he greet me with hope or thought of conquest, — then —" He shuddered.

"And then what?" said Cuitlahua, upon whom not a word had been lost.

The thinker, startled, looked at him coldly, saying, —

"I will take council of the gods."

And for a while he returned to his *chochlatl*. When next he looked up, and spoke, his face was bright and smiling.

"With a train, my children, you are to go in advance of me, and meet Malinche at Xoloc. Embrace him, speak to him honorably, return with him, and I will be at the first bridge outside the city. Cuitlahua and Cacama, be near when he steps forward to salute me. I will lean upon your shoulders. Get you gone now. Remember Anahuac!"

Shortly afterward a train of nobles, magnificently arrayed, issued from the palace, and marched down the great street leading to the Iztapalapan causeway. The house-tops, the porticos, even the roofs and towers of temples, and the pavements and cross-streets, were already occupied by spectators. At the head of the procession strode the four heralds. Silently they marched, in silence the populace received them. The spectacle reminded very old men of the day the great Axaya' was borne in mournful pomp to Chapultepec. Once only there was a cheer, or, rather, a war-cry from the warriors looking down from the terraces of a temple. So the cortege passed from the city; so, through a continuous lane of men, they moved along the causeway; so they reached the gates of Xoloc, at which the two dikes, one from Iztapalapan, the other from Cojohuaca, intersected each other. There they halted, waiting for Cortes.

And while the train was on the road, out of one of the gates of the royal garden passed a palanquin, borne by four slaves in the king's livery. The occupants were the princesses Tula and Nenetzin, with Yeteve in attendance. In any of the towns of old Spain there would have been much remark upon the style of carriage, but no denial of their beauty, or that they were Spanish born. The elder sister was thoughtful and anxious; the younger kept constant lookout; the priestess, at their feet, wove the flowers with which they were profusely supplied into *ramilletes*, and threw them to the passers-by. The slaves, when in the great street, turned to the north.

"Blessed Lady!" cried Yeteve. "Was the like ever seen?"

"What is it?" asked Nenetzin.

"Such a crowd of people!"

Nenetzin looked out again, saying, "I wish I could see a noble or a warrior."

"That may not be," said Tula. "The nobles are gone to receive Malinche, the warriors are shut up in the temples."

"Why so?"

"They may be needed."

"Ah! was it thought there is such danger? But look, see!" And Nenetzin drew back alarmed, yet laughing.

There was a crash outside, and a loud shout, and the palanquin stopped. Tula drew the curtain quickly, not knowing but that the peril requiring the soldiery was at hand. A vendor of little stone images, — *teotls*, or household gods, — unable to get out of the way, had been run upon by the slaves, and the pavement sprinkled with the broken heads and legs of the luckless *lares*. Aside, surveying the wreck, stood the pedler, clad as usual with his class. In his girdle he carried a mallet, significant of his trade. He

was uncommonly tall, and of a complexion darker than the lowest slaves. While the commiserate princess observed him, he raised his eyes; a moment he stood uncertain what to do; then he stepped to the palanquin, and from the folds of his tunic drew an image elaborately carved upon the face of an agate.

"The good princess," he said, bending so low as to hide his face, "did not laugh at the misfortune of her poor slave. She has a friendly heart, and is loved by every artisan in Tenochtitlan. This carving is of a sacred god, who will watch over and bless her, as I now do. If she will take it, I shall be glad."

"It is very valuable, and maybe you are not rich," she replied.

"Rich! When it is told that the princess Tula was pleased with a *teotl* of my carving, I shall have patrons without end. And if it were not so, the recollection will make me rich enough. Will she please me so much?"

She took from her finger a ring set with a jewel that, in any city of Europe, would have bought fifty such cameos, and handed it to him.

"Certainly; but take this from me. I warrant you are a gentle artist."

The pedler took the gift, and kissed the pavement, and, after the palanquin was gone, picked up such of his wares as were uninjured, and went his way well pleased.

At the gate of the temple of Huitzil' the three alighted, and made their way to the *azoteas*. The lofty place was occupied by pabas and citizens, yet a sun-shade of gaudy feather-work was pitched for them close by the eastern verge, overlooking the palace of Axaya', and commanding the street up which the array was to come. In the area below, encompassed by the *Coatapanthli*, or Wall of Serpents, ten thousand warriors were closely ranked, ready to march at

beat of the great drum hanging in the tower. Thus, comfortably situated, the daughters of the king awaited the strangers.

When Montezuma started to meet his guests, the morning was far advanced. A vast audience, in front of his palace, waited to catch a view of his person. Of his policy the mass knew but the little gleaned from a thousand rumors, — enough to fill them with forebodings of evil. Was he going out as king or slave? At last he came, looking their ideal of a child of the Sun, and ready for the scrutiny. Standing in the portal, he received their homage; not one but kissed the ground before him.

He stepped out, and the sun, as if acknowledging his presence, seemed to pour a double glory about him. In the time of despair and overthrow that came, alas! too soon, those who saw him, in that moment of pride, spread his arms in general benediction, remembered his princeliness, and spoke of him ever after in the language of poetry. The *tilmatti*, looped at the throat, and falling gracefully from his shoulders, was beaded with jewels and precious stones; the long, dark-green plumes in his *panache* drooped with pearls; his sash was in keeping with the mantle; the thongs of his sandals were edged with gold, and the soles were entirely of gold. Upon his breast, relieved against the rich embroidery of his tunic, symbols of the military orders of the realm literally blazed with gems.

About the royal palanquin, in front of the portal, bare-headed and barefooted, stood its complement of bearers, lords of the first rank, proud of the service. Between the carriage and the doorway a carpet of white cloth was stretched: common dust might not soil his feet. As he stepped out, he was saluted by a roar of attabals and conch-shells. The music warmed his blood; the homage was agreeable to him, — was to his soul what incense is to the gods. He gazed proud-

ly around, and it was easy to see how much he was in love with his own royalty.

Taking his place in the palanquin, the cortege moved slowly down the street. In advance walked stately caciques with wands, clearing the way. The carriers of the canopy, which was separate from the carriage, followed next; and behind them, reverently, and with downcast faces, marched an escort of armed lords indescribably splendid.

The street traversed was the same Malinche was to traverse. Often and again did the subtle monarch look to paves and house-tops, and to the canals and temples. Well he knew the cunning guest would sweep them all, searching for evidences of his power; that nothing would escape examination; that the myriads of spectators, the extent of the city, its position in the lake, and thousands of things not to be written would find places in the calculation inevitable if the visit were with other than peaceful intent.

At a palace near the edge of the city the escort halted to abide the coming.

Soon, from the lake, a sound of music was heard, more plaintive than that of the conchs.

"They are coming, they are coming! The *teules* are coming!" shouted the people; and every heart, even the king's, beat quicker. Up the street the cry passed, like a hurly gust of wind.