

smile in return. She was won, and shall we say lost? The future comes rapidly now to answer for itself.

"Here is the message," Alvarado continued. "which I could not read; but if it meant to tell me of love, what better can I than give it back to tell the same story for me?"

He kissed the flowers, and laid them before her. Picking them up, she said, with a laugh, "*Tonatih* is a poet, — a god and a poet."

He heard the interpretation, and spoke again, without relaxing his ardent gaze.

"*Jesu Christo!* That one so beautiful should be an infidel! She shall not be, — by the holy sepulchre, she shall not! Here, lad, take off the chain which is about my neck. It hath an iron crucifix, the very same my mother — rested be her soul! — gave me, with her blessing and prayer, what time I last bade her farewell."

Orteguilla took off the chain and crucifix, and put them in the cavalier's hand.

"Will my beautiful princess deign to receive these gifts from me, her slave forever? And in my presence will she put them on? And for my sake, will she always wear them? They have God's blessing, which cannot be better bestowed."

Instead of laying the presents down to be taken or not, this time he held them out to her directly; and she took them, and, childlike, hung them around her neck. In the act, the scarf fell, and left bare her head and face. He saw the glowing countenance, and was about to speak further, when Orteguilla stopped him.

"Moderate thyself, I pray thee, Don Pedro. Look at the hounds; they are closing us in. The way to the turret is already cut off. Have a care, I pray!"

The tone of alarm had instant effect.

"How! Cut off, say'st thou, lad?" And Alvarado

sprang up, his hand upon his sword. He swept the circle with a falcon's glance; then turning once more to the girl, he said, resuming the tenderness of voice and manner, "By what name may I know my love hereafter?"

"Nenetzin, — the princess Nenetzin."

"Then farewell, Nenetzin. Ill betide the man or fortune that keepeth thee from me hereafter! May I forfeit life, and the Holy Mother's love, if I see thee not again! Farewell."

He kissed his mailed hand to her, and, facing the array of scowling pabas, strode to them, and through their circle, with a laugh of knightly scorn.

At the door of the turret of Huitzil' he said to the page, "The love of yon girl, heathen no longer, but Christian, by the cross she weareth, — her love, and the brightness of her presence, for the foulness and sin of this devil's den, — what an exchange! *Valgame Dios!* Thou shalt have the ducat. She is the glory of the world!"

CHAPTER VI.

THE IRON CROSS.

"MY lord Maxtla, go see if there be none coming this way now."

And while the chief touched the ground with his palm, the king added, as to himself, and impatiently, "Surely it is time."

"Of whom speak you?" asked Cuitlahua, standing by. Only the brother would have so presumed.

The monarch looked into the branches of the cypress-tree above him; he seemed holding the words in ear, while he followed a thought.

They were in the grove of Chapultepec at the time. About them were the famous trees, apparently old as the hill itself, with trunks so massive that they had likeness to things of cunning labor, products of some divine art. The sun touched them here and there with slanting yellow rays, by contrast deepening the shadows that purpled the air. From the gnarled limbs the gray moss drooped, like listless drapery. Nesting birds sang from the topmost boughs, and parrots, flitting to and fro, lit the gloaming with transient gleams of scarlet and gold: yet the effect of the place was mysterious; the hush of the solitude softened reflection into dreaming; the silence was a solemn presence in which speech sunk to a whisper, and laughter would have been profanation. In such primeval temples men walk with Time, as in paradise Adam walked with God.

"I am waiting for the lord Hualpa," the king at last replied, turning his sad eyes to his brother's face.

"Hualpa!" said Cuitlahua, marvelling, as well he might, to find the great king waiting for the merchant's son, so lately a simple hunter.

"Yes. He serves me in an affair of importance. His appointment was for noon; he tarries, I fear, in the city. Next time I will choose an older messenger."

The manner of the explanation was that of one who has in mind something of which he desires to speak, yet doubts the wisdom of speaking. So the cacique seemed to understand, for he relapsed into silence, while the monarch again looked upwards. Was the object he studied in the sky or in his heart?

Maxtla returned; saluting, he said, "The lake is thronged with canoes, O king, but none come this way."

The sadness of the royal face deepened.

"Montezuma, my brother," said Cuitlahua.

"Well."

"Give me a moment's audience."

"Certainly. The laggard comes not; the rest of the day is yours." And to Maxtla he said, "In the palace are the queens, and the princesses Tula and Nenetzin. Inform them that I am coming."

When the chief was gone, the monarch turned to Cuitlahua, smiling: "Yes, the rest of the day is yours, and the night also; for I must wait for the merchant's son; and our mother, were she here, would say it was good of you to share my waiting."

The pleasantry and the tender allusion were hardly observed by the cacique. "I wished to call your attention to Iztzil', the Tezcucan," he said, gravely.

"Iztzil'? what of him now?"

"Trouble. What else can come of him? Last night at the house of Xoli, the Chalcan, he drank too much *pulque*, quarrelled with the good man's guests, and abused everybody loyal,—abused you, my brother. I sent a servant to watch him. You must know—if not, you should—that all Tenochtitlan believes the Tezcucan to be in alliance with Malinche and his robbers."

"Robbers!" said Montezuma, starting.

The cacique went on. "That he has corresponded with the Tlascalans is well understood. Only last night he spoke of a confederacy of tribes and cities to overturn the Empire."

"Goes he so far?" exclaimed the king, now very attentive.

"He is a traitor!" replied Cuitlahua, emphatically. "So I sent a servant to follow him. From the Chalcan's, he was seen go to the gates of the palace of Axaya'. Malinche received him. He is there now."

The two were silent awhile, the cacique observing the king, the king gazing upon the ground.

"Well," said the latter, at length, "is that all?"

"Is it not enough?"

"You are right. He must be arrested. Keep close watch on the gates of the palace, and upon his coming out, seize him, and put him safely away in the temple."

"But if he comes not out?"

"To-morrow, at noon, if he be yet within, go to Malinche and demand him. Here is your authority."

At that, the monarch took from a finger of his left hand a ring of gold, set with an oval green malachite, on which his likeness was exquisitely cut.

"But," said the other, while the royal hand was outstretched, "if Malinche refuses your demand?"

"Then — then —" And the speaker paused so long that his indecision was apparent.

"Behind the refusal, — see you what lies there?" asked Cuitlahua, bluntly.

The king reflected.

"Is it not war?" the cacique persisted.

The hand fell down, and closed upon the signet.

"The demand is just, and will not be refused. Take the ring, my brother; we will at least test Malinche's disposition. Say to him that the lord Iztzil' is a traitor; that he is conspiring against me; and that I require his person for punishment. So say to him; but go not yet. The messenger I await may bring me something to make your mission unnecessary."

The cacique smiled grimly. "If the Tezcucan is guilty, so is Malinche," he said. "Is it well to tell him what you know?"

"Yes. He will then be careful; at least, he will not be deceived."

"Be it so," said Cuitlahua, taking the ring. "I will bring you his answer; then —"

"Well?"

"Bear with me, O king. The subject I now wish to speak of is a tender one, though I know not why. To win the good-will of the Tezcucan, was not Guatamozin, our nephew, banished the city?"

"Well?"

"Now that the Tezcucan is lost, why should not the 'tzin return? He is a happy man, O my brother, who discovers an enemy; happier is he who, at the same time, discovers a friend."

Montezuma studied the cacique's face, then, with his eyes upon the ground, walked on. Cuitlahua went with him. Past the great trees, under the gray moss, up the hill to the summit, and along the summit to the verge of the rocky bluff, they went. At the king's side, when he stopped, was a porphyritic rock, bearing, in bas-relief, his own image, and that of his father. Below him, westwardly, spread the placid lake; above it, the setting sun; in its midst, a fair child on a fair mother's breast, Tenochtitlan.

"See! a canoe goes swiftly round yon *chinampa*; now it outstrips its neighbors, and turns this way. How the slaves bend to the paddles! My laggards at last!"

The king, while speaking, rubbed his hands gleefully. For the time, Cuitlahua and his question were forgotten.

"The lord Hualpa has company," observed the brother, quietly.

"Yes. Io'."

Another spell of silence, during which both watched the canoe.

"Come, let us to the palace. Linger here is useless." And with another look to the city and lake, and a last one at the speeding vessel, yet too far off to be identified, the king finally turned away. And Guatamozin was still an exile.

Tecalco and Acatlan, the queens, and Tula, and their attendants, sitting on the *azoteas* of the ancient house, taking the air of the declining day, arose to salute the monarch and his brother. The latter took the hand of each, saying, "The gods of our fathers be good to you." Tula's forehead he touched with his lips. His countenance, like his figure and nature, Indian in type, softened somewhat under her glance. He knew her sorrow, and in sympathy thought of the 'tzin, and of the petition in his behalf, as yet unanswered.

"All are not here, one is absent, — Nenetzin. Where is she? I may not sleep well without hearing her laugh once more."

Acatlan said, "You are very good, my lord, to remember my child. She chose to remain below."

"She is not sick, I hope."

"Not sick, yet not well."

"Ah! the trouble is of the mind, perhaps. How old is she now?"

"Old enough to be in love, if that is your meaning."

Cuitlahua smiled. "That is not a sickness, but a happiness; so, at least, the minstrels say."

"What ails Nenetzin?" asked the king.

Acatlan cast down her eyes, and hesitated.

"Speak! What ails her?"

"I hardly know. She hardly knows herself," the queen answered. "If I am to believe what she tells me, the lord Cuitlahua is right; she is in love."

"With Tula, I suppose," said the king, laughing.

"Would it were! She says her lover is called *Tonatiuh*. Much I fear, however, that what she thinks love is really a delusion, wrought by magic. She is not herself. When did Malinche go to the temple?"

"Four days ago," the king replied.

"Well, the *teule* met her there, and spoke to her, and gave

her a present. Since that, like a child, she has done little else than play with the trinket."

Montezuma became interested. He seated himself, and asked, "You said the spell proceeds from the present: why do you think so?"

"The giver said the gift was a symbol of his religion, and whoever wore it became of his faith, and belonged to his god."

"Mictlan!" muttered Cuitlahua.

"Strange! what is the thing?" the king persisted.

"Something of unknown metal, white, like silver, about a hand in length, and attached to a chain."

"Of unknown metal, — a symbol of religion! Where is the marvel now?"

"Around the child's neck, where I believe it has been since she came from the temple. Once she allowed me to see if I could tell what the metal was, but only for a moment, and then her eyes never quit me. She sits hours by herself, with the bauble clasped in both hands, and sighs, and mopes, and has no interest in what used to please her most."

The king mused awhile. The power of the strangers was very great; what if the gift was the secret of the power?

"Go, Acatlan," he said, "and call Nenetzin. See that she brings the charm with her."

Then he arose, and began moodily to walk. Cuitlahua talked with Tecalco and Tula. The hour was very pleasant. The sun, lingering above the horizon, poured a flood of brilliance upon the hill and palace, and over the flowers, trailing vines, and dwarfed palm and banana trees, with which the *azoteas* was provided.

Upon the return of the queen with Nenetzin, the king resumed his seat. The girl knelt before him, her face very pale, her eyes full of tears. So lately a child, scarce a woman, yet so weighted with womanly griefs, the father could not view her except with compassion; so he raised

her, and, holding her hand, said, "What is this I hear, Nenetzin? Yesterday I was thinking of sending you to school. Nowadays lovers are very exacting; they require of their sweethearts knowledge as well as beauty; but you outrun my plans, you have a lover already. Is it so?"

Nenetzin looked down, blushing.

"And no common lover either," continued the king. "Not a 'tzin, or a cacique, or a governor; not a lord or a prince, — a god! Brave child!"

Still Nenetzin was silent.

"You cannot call your lover by name, nor speak to him in his language; nor can he speak to you in yours. Talking by signs must be tedious for the uses of love, which I understand to be but another name for impatience; yet you are far advanced; you have seen your beloved, talked with him, and received — what?"

Nenetzin clasped the iron cross upon her breast firmly, — not as a good Catholic, seeking its protection; for she would have laid the same hands on Alvarado rather than Christ, — and for the first time she looked in the questioner's face straight and fearlessly. A moment he regarded her; in the moment his smile faded away; and for her it came never again — never.

"Give me what you have there," he said sternly, extending his hand.

"It is but a simple present," she said, holding back.

"No, it has to do with religion, and that not of our fathers."

"It is mine," she persisted, and the queen mother turned pale at sight of her firmness.

"The child is bewitched," interposed Cuitlahua.

"And for that I should have the symbol. Obey me, or —"

Awed by the look, now dark with anger, Nenetzin took the chain from her neck, and put the cross in his hand.

"There! I pray you, return them to me."

Now, the cross, as a religious symbol, was not new to the monarch; in Cozumel it was an object of worship; in Tabasco it had been revered for ages as emblematic of the God of Rain; in Palenque, the Palmyra of the New World, it is sculptured on the fadeless walls, and a child held up to adore it (in the same picture) proves its holy character; it was not new to the heathen king; but the cross of Christ was; and singularly enough, he received the latter for the first time with no thought of saving virtues, but as a problem in metallurgy.

"To-morrow I will send the trinkets to the jewellers," he said, after close examination. "They shall try them in the fire. Strange, indeed, if, in all my dominions, they do not find whereof they are made."

He was about to pass the symbol to Maxtla, when a messenger came up, and announced the lord Hualpa and the prince Io'. Instantly, the cross, and Nenetzin, and her tears and troubles, vanished out of his mind.

CHAPTER VII.

THE CHRISTIANS IN THE TOILS.

"LET the *azoteas* be cleared of all but my family. You, my brother, will remain."

So saying, the king arose, and began walking again. As he did so, the cross slipped from his fingers, and fell, ringing sharply upon the roof. Nenetzin sprang forward and picked the symbol up.

"Now, call the messengers."

When the chief was gone, the monarch stepped to Cuitlahua, and, laying a hand upon his arm, said, "At last, O

brother, at last! The time so long prayed for is come. The enemy is in the snare, and he is mine. So the god of our fathers has promised. The messengers bring me his permission to make war."

"At last! Praised be Huitzil!" exclaimed Cuitlahua, with upraised hands and eyes.

"Praised be Huitzil!" cried Tula, with equal fervor.

"Malinche began his march to Tenochtitlan against my order, which, for a purpose, I afterwards changed to invitation. Since that, my people, my army, the lords, the pabas, the Empire, have upbraided me for weakness. I only bided my time, and the assent of Huitzil. And the result? The palace of Axaya' shall be the tomb of the insolent strangers."

As he spoke, the monarch's bosom swelled with the old warrior spirit.

"You would have had me go meet Malinche, and in the open field array my people to be trodden down by his beasts of war. Now, ours is the advantage. We will shut him in with walls of men as well as of houses. Over them he may ride, but the first bridge will be the end of his journey; it will be raised. Mictlan take our legions, if they cannot conquer him at last!"

He laughed scornfully.

"In the temples are seventy thousand fighting men, gathered unknown to all but Tlalac. They are tired of their prison, and cry for freedom and battle. Two other measures taken, and the war begins, — only two. Malinche has no stores; he is dependent upon me for to-morrow's bread. What if I say, not a grain of corn, not a mouthful of meat shall pass his palace gate? As to the other step, — what if I bid you raise the bridges? What then? His beasts must starve; so must his people, unless they can fly. Let him use his engines of fire; the material he serves them with cannot last always, so that want will silence them also. The

measures depend on my word, which, by the blessing of Huitzil, I will speak, and" —

"When?" asked Cuitlahua, earnestly.

"To-morrow —"

"The day, — O my kingly brother! — the day will be memorable in Anahuac forever!"

The monarch's eyes flashed with evil fire. "It shall be so. Part of the invaders will not content me; none shall escape, — not one! In the world shall not one be left!"

All present listened eagerly. Nenetzin alone gave no sign of feeling, though she heard every word.

The couriers now appeared. Over their uniforms was the inevitable *nequen*. Instead of helms, they wore broad bands, ornamented with plumes and brilliants. At their backs hung their shields. The prince, proud and happy, kissed his mother's hand, and nodded to the sisters. Hualpa went to the king, and knelt in salute.

"I have been waiting since noon," said Montezuma, coldly.

"We pray your pardon, O king, good master. The fault was not ours. Since yesterday at noon we have not ate or drank or slept; neither have we been out of the great temple, except to embark and come here, which was with all possible speed."

"It is well. Arise! What says the god?"

Every ear was strained to hear.

"We followed your orders in all things, O king. In the temple we found the *teotuctli*, and the pabas of the city, with many from Tezcuco and Cholula."

"Saw you Mualox, of the old Cû of Quetzal?"

"Mualox was not there."

The king waved his hand.

"We presented ourselves to the *teotuctli*, and gave him your message; in proof of our authority, we showed him the signet, which we now return."

The seal was taken in silence.

"In presence, then, of all the *pabas*, the sacrifices were begun. I counted the victims, — nine hundred in all. The afternoon and night, and to-day, to the time of our departure, the service lasted. The sound of prayer from the holy men was unintermitted and loud. I looked once to the palace of *Axaya'*, and saw the *azoteas* crowded with the strangers and their *Tlascalans*."

The king and the lord *Cuitlahua* exchanged glances of satisfaction.

"At last the labors of the *teotuctli* were rewarded. I saw him tear a heart from a victim's breast, and study the signs; then, with a loud cry, he ran and flung the heart into the fire before the altar of *Huitzil'*; and all there joined in the cry, which was of rejoicing, and washed their hands in the blood. The holy man then came to me, and said, 'Say to *Montezuma*, the wise king, that *Huitzil'*, the Supreme God, has answered, and bids him begin the war. Say to him, also, to be of cheer; for the land shall be delivered from the strangers, and the strangers shall be delivered to him, in trust for the god. Then he stood in the door of the sanctuary, and made proclamation of the divine will. And that was all, O king."

"To *Huitzil'* be the praise!" exclaimed the king, piously.

"And to *Montezuma* the glory!" said *Cuitlahua*.

And the queens and *Tula* kissed the monarch's hand, and at his feet *Io'* knelt, and laid his shield, saying, —

"A favor, O king, a favor!"

"Well."

"Let not my years be counted, but give me a warrior's part in the sacred war."

And *Cuitlahua* went to the suppliant, and laid a hand upon his head, and said, his massive features glowing with honest pride, "It was well spoken, O my brother, well spoken. The blood and spirit of our race will survive us. I,

the oldest, rejoice, and, with the youngest, pray; give us each to do a warrior's part."

Brighter grew the monarch's eyes.

"Your will be done," he said to *Io'*. "Arise!" Then looking toward the sun, he added, with majestic fervor, "The inspiration is from you, O holy gods! strengthen it, I pray, and help him in the way he would go." A moment after, he turned to *Cuitlahua*, "My brother, have your wish also. I give you the command. You have my signet already. To-morrow the drum of *Huitzil'* will be beaten. At the sound, let the bridges next the palace of *Axaya'* on all the causeways be taken up. Close the market to-night. Supplies for one day more *Malinche* may have, and that is all. Around the *teocallis*, in hearing of a shell, are ten thousand warriors; take them, and, after the beating of the drum, see that the strangers come not out of the palace, and that nothing goes through its gates for them. But until the signal, let there be friendship and perfect peace. And" — he looked around slowly and solemnly — "what I have here spoken is between ourselves and the gods."

And *Cuitlahua* knelt and kissed his hand, in token of loyalty.

While the scene was passing, as the only one present not of the royal family, *Hualpa* stood by, with downcast eyes; and as he listened to the brave words of the king, involving so much of weal or woe to the realm, he wondered at the fortune which had brought him such rich confidence, not as the slow result of years of service, but, as it were, in a day. Suddenly, the monarch turned to him.

"Thanks are not enough, lord *Hualpa*, for the report you bring. As a messenger between me and the mighty *Huitzil'*, you shall have reason to rejoice with us. Lands and rank you have, and a palace; now," — a smile broke through his seriousness, — "now I will give you a wife. Here

he is." And to the amazement of all, he pointed to Nenetzin. "A wild bird, by the Sun! What say you, lord Hualpa? Is she not beautiful? Yet," he became grave in an instant, "I warn you that she is self-willed, and spoiled, and now suffers from a distemper which she fancies to be love. I warn you, lest one of the enemy, of whom we were but now talking, lure her from you, as he seems to have lured her from us and our gods. To save her, and place her in good keeping, as well as to bestow a proper reward, I will give her to you for wife."

Tecalco looked at Acatlan, who governed her feelings well; possibly she was satisfied, for the waywardness of the girl had, of late, caused her anxiety, while, if not a prince, like Cacama, Hualpa was young, brave, handsome, ennobled, and, as the proposal itself proved, on the high road to princely honors. Tula openly rejoiced; so did Io'. The lord Cuitlahua was indifferent; his new command, and the prospects of the morrow, so absorbed him that a betrothal or a wedding was a trifle. As for Hualpa, it was as if the flowery land of the Aztec heaven had opened around him. He was speechless; but in the step half taken, his flushed face, his quick breathing, Nenetzin read all he could have said, and more; and so he waited a sign from her, — a sign, though but a glance or a motion of the lip or hand. And she gave him a smile, — not like that the bold Spaniard received on the temple, nor warm, as if prompted by the loving soul, — a smile, witnessed by all present, and by all accepted as her expression of assent.

"I will give her to you for wife," the monarch repeated, slowly and distinctly. "This is the betrothal; the wedding shall be when the war is over, when not a white-faced stranger is left in all my domain."

While yet he spoke, Nenetzin ran to her mother, and hid her face in her bosom.

"Listen further, lord Hualpa," said the king. "In the great business of to-morrow I give you a part. At daylight return to the temple, and remain there in the turret where hangs the drum of Huitzil'. Io' will come to you about noon, with my command; then, if such be its effect, with your own hand give the signal for which the lord Cuitlahua will be waiting. Strike so as to be heard by the city, and by the cities on the shores of the lake. Afterwards, with Io', go to the lord Cuitlahua. Here is the signet again. The *teotucilli* may want proof of your authority."

Hualpa, kneeling to receive the seal, kissed the monarch's hand.

"And now," the latter said, addressing himself to Cuitlahua, "the interview is ended. You have much to do. Go. The gods keep you."

Hualpa, at last released, went and paid homage to his betrothed, and was made still more happy by her words, and the congratulations of the queens.

Tula alone lingered at the king's side, her large eyes fixed appealingly on his face.

"What now, Tula?" he asked, tenderly.

And she answered, "You have need, O king and good father, of faithful, loving warriors. I know of one. He should be here, but is not. Of to-morrow, its braveries and sacrifices, the minstrels will sing for ages to come; and the burden of their songs will be how nobly the people fought, and died, and conquered for you. Shall the opportunity be for all but him? Do not so wrong yourself, be not so cruel to — to me," she said, clasping her hands.

His look of tenderness vanished, and he walked away, and from the parapet of the *azoteas* gazed long and fixedly, apparently observing the day dying in the west, or the royal gardens that stretched out of sight from the base of the castled hill.

She waited expectantly, but no answer came, — none ever came.

And when, directly, she joined the group about Nenetzin and Hualpa, and leaned confidingly upon Io', she little thought that his was the shadow darkening her love; that the dreamy monarch, looking forward to the succession, saw, in the far future, a struggle for the crown between the prince and the 'tzin; that for the former hope there was not, except in what might now be done; and that yet there was not hope, if the opportunities of war were as open to the one as to the other. So the exile continued.

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CHAPTER VIII.

THE IRON CROSS COMES BACK TO ITS GIVER.

ADMITTING that the intent with which the Spaniards came to Tenochtitlan took from them the sanctity accorded by Christians to guests, and at the same time justified any measure in prevention, — a subject belonging to the casuist rather than the teller of a story, — their situation has now become so perilous, and possibly so interesting to my sympathetic reader, that he may be anxious to enter the old palace, and see what they are doing.

The dull report of the evening gun had long since spent itself over the lake, and along the gardened shores. So, too, mass had been said in the chapel, newly improvised, and very limited for such high ceremony; yet, as Father Bartolomé observed, roomy enough for prayer and penitence. Nor had the usual precautions against surprise been omitted; on the contrary, extra devices in that way had been resorted to; the guards had been doubled; the horses stood capari-

soned; by the guns at the gates low fires were burning, to light, in an instant, the matches of the gunners; and at intervals, under cover of the walls, lay or lounged detachments of both Christians and Tlascalans, apparently told off for battle. A yell without or a shot within, and the palace would bristle with defenders. A careful captain was Cortes.

In his room, once the audience-chamber of the kings, paced the stout *conquistador*. He was alone, and, as usual, in armor, except of the head and hands. On a table were his helm, iron gloves, and battle-axe, fair to view, as was the chamber, in the cheerful, ruddy light of a brazen lamp. As he walked, he used his sword for staff; and its clang, joined to the sharp concussion of the sollerets smiting the tessellated floor at each step, gave notice in the adjoining chamber, and out in the *patio*, that the general — or, as he was more familiarly called, the Señor Hernan — was awake and uncommonly restless. After a while the curtains of the doorway parted, and Father Bartolomé entered without challenge. The good man was clad in a cassock of black serge, much frayed, and girt to the waist by a leathern belt, to which hung an ivory cross, and a string of amber beads. At sight of him, Cortes halted, and, leaning on his sword, said, "Bring thy bones here, father; or, if such womanly habit suit thee better, rest them on the settle yonder. Anyhow, thou'rt welcome. I assure thee of the fact in advance of thy report."

"Thank thee, Señor," he replied. "The cross, as thou mayst have heard, is proverbially heavy; but its weight is to the spirit, not the body, like the iron with which thou keep'st thyself so constantly clothed. I will come and stand by thee, especially as my words must be few, and to our own ears."

He went near, and continued in a low voice, and rapidly, "A deputation, appointed to confer with thee, is now com-