



The people thronged outside the principal gateway as Gilbert was carried... He held his rifle securely and loosened his revolver in its holster, not knowing the outcome of events, but resolved to see the thing through in the interests of ethnology.

Bowing low before him, the priests, who had regained in some measure their composure, offered him sheets of the crisp, gauzy waiwari, a kind of bread made of meal finely ground and baked upon hot stones...

When he had finished he drew out his meerschaum, filled and lighted it. This proceeding was watched by the priests and as many of the chiefs as could see into the chamber with undisturbed fear and trembling.

The situation began to grow perplexing to the visitor after awhile. He wondered what was expected of him, and questioned his ability to perform his duties as a god. The role might be an exacting one and he felt the need of instruction.

"I wonder," he mused, "if they expect me to fly away suddenly, or if this sort of thing is going to last. If it does, it will grow intolerable to a man of modest tastes."

Turning his eyes he encountered the gaze of Chalpa, whose forbidding face showed the utmost terror, the muscles of his lips working with spasmodic twitches as he met Gilbert's piercing, questioning glance.

There was a decided facial resemblance among them all, as in the Mongolian race, but it was a far more pleasing one—the features of the people were markedly regular.

Perplexing as was the situation in which he found himself, he felt that he was fortunate in the opportunity it afforded him for a delightful study of an unknown race. "I can at least do the doctoring for the whole city if all else fails me," he thought.

CHAPTER V. A MIRACLE AND A MEETING. He walked around the court to a scrutiny of the gaudy and hideous idols until he came to that of Chalco, the serpent god, and then a strange thing happened.

The shepherd and his flock. Gilbert had made the rounds of the great court and the afternoon was passing...

ly spent when he again repaired to the temple. He felt that to be the only place where he could consistently claim a habitation, yet he climbed the causeway with something of the feelings of an impostor.

There were several priests there with Klupal and Kulcan, and they were vigilantly waiting for Gilbert's return, ushering him into the small chamber with proferring him obedience.

He entered and found it prepared for occupation by the addition of the usual Atzlan furniture, consisting of a few gaudy striped blankets hanging over a beam suspended from the rafters, and a large bench, evidently an ancient and greatly cherished object, spread upon the floor over a bed of clean rushes.

There was no fireplace in this room, as was usually the case, and the walls were of a pure and refreshing whiteness. It had a window on each side, and was an exceedingly pleasant apartment indeed aside from the luxury of its gold and silver exterior.

Gilbert felt that his lines had fallen in pleasant places as the priests retired and left him alone. The developments of the day had changed the course of the festival, and the great feast had been forgotten.

He awoke on the following morning with that confused feeling that comes on awakening in a strange place strong upon him, and as he lay on his back, he thought of his thoughts run over the events of the preceding day.

In the future before him he saw the opportunity not only of study, but for the exercise of his varied talents. The first duty, he knew, would be to master the language, and as he was a finished and remarkable linguist he apprehended little difficulty in that direction.

Although he was thirty, and he thought had been so madly in love again and again that he was familiar with the passion, yet that wild thrill was a new and weird sensation. He felt it tingling through him as he mused, and he wondered at it in a dreamy way.

He rose and looked out the window. The canyon's depths were still black as night, but he heard the voices of the shepherds as they drove out their flocks, and some pale columns of bluish smoke were winding sinuously upward in the still air, showing that life was stirring in the strange city.

He went out and wandered along the bank of the winding river, where the pison orchards grew down to the water's edge, and he saw the trout leap and ripple its calm surface. Farther on were alight rapids, and he complacently selected a site for his mill with a feeling of enthusiasm.

He found he had wandered for quite a distance from the city by the time the sun rose, and he returned more hurriedly, with an appetite for breakfast that he hoped would be rewarded.

Kulcan was at the temple when Gilbert arrived, and had prepared a meal for the guest. It was his desire that he desired a closer acquaintance, for he endeavored to converse with the stranger, bringing all his knowledge to bear on the task, but in vain.

Beginning by pointing to various objects, with inquiring words and looks, the simple, aboriginal process of learning their names was begun at once, and in a few moments the two were increasing their knowledge of each other's language, which was afterward followed up day by day until Gilbert had mastered the Atzlan tongue, and Kulcan had acquired a fair knowledge of English.

This was the beginning of their friendship, afterward to be tested by a terrible trial. After Gilbert had disposed of his breakfast of fruit and several delicious cakes of waiwari, and lighted his pipe, his mind reverted to the instruments, camera and other articles which he had left at the top of the cliff.

Kulcan followed him, with a fear in his heart that the stranger was leading him away to some remote clime or heavenly dwelling, he knew not what, but he feared equally to disobey. It was a long, hard climb.

Gilbert was rejoiced when they arrived at the temple without an accident to their precious freight and deposited it upon the floor in safety. He noticed Kulcan's curious gaze wander over the glittering objects with awe and speculation, and taking the fieldglasses he held them up and motioned to him to look through them.

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