CHAPTER XI.

THE SAVING OF GUATEMOC.

Now, after this dreadful day I was kindly dealt with by the people of Tabasco, who gave me the name of Teule, or Spaniard, and no longer sought to put me to sacrifice. Far from it indeed, I was well clothed and fed and suffered to wander where I would, though always under care of guards who, had I escaped, would have paid for it with their lives.

I learned that on the morrow of my rescue from the priests messengers were dispatched to Montezuma, the great king, acquainting him with the history of my capture and seeking to know his pleasure concerning me. But the way to Tenoctitlan was far, and many weeks passed before the messengers returned again. Meanwhile I filled the days learning the Maya language and also something of that of the Aztecs, which I practiced with Marina and others, for Marina was not a Tabascan, having been born at Painalla, on the southeastern borders of the empire. But her mother sold her to merchants in order that Marina's inheritance might come to another child of hers by a second marriage, and thus in the end the girl fell into the hands of the cazique of Tabasco.

Also I learned something of the history and customs and of the picture writing of the land and how to read it, and, moreover, I obtained great repute among the Tabascans by my skill in medicine, so that in time they grew to believe that I was indeed a child of Quetzal, the good god. And the more I studied this people the less I could understand of them. In most ways they were equal to any nation of our own world of which I had knowledge. None are more skilled in the arts; few are better architects or boast of purer laws. Moreover, they were brave and had patience. But their faith was the canker at the root of the tree. In precept it was noble and had much in common with our own, such as the rite of baptism, but I have told what it was in practice.

When I had lived a month in Tabasco, I had learned enough of the language to talk with Marina, with whom I grew friendly, though no more, and it was from her that I gathered the most of my knowledge, and also many hints as to the conduct necessary to my safety. In return I taught her something of my own faith and of the customs of the Europeans, and it was the knowledge which she gained from me which afterward made her so useful to the Spaniards and prepared her to accept their religion, giving her insight into the ways of white people.

So I abode for four months and more in the house of the cazique of Tabasco, who carried his kindness toward me to the length of offering me his sister in marriage. To this proposal I said no as gently as I might, and he marveled at it, for the girl was fair. Indeed so well was I treated that had it not been that my heart was far away, and because of the horrible rites of their religion, which I was forced to witness almost daily, I could have learned to love this gentle, skilled and industrious people.

At length, when full four months had passed away, the messengers returned from the court of Montezuma, having been much delayed by swollen rivers and other accidents of travel. So great was the impor-

I had learned enough of the language to talk with Marina.

tance that the emperor attached to the fact of my capture, and so desirous was he to see me at his capital, that he had sent his own nephew, the Prince Guatemoc, to fetch me and a great escort of warriors with him.

Never shall I forget my first meeting with this prince, who afterward became my dear companion and brother in arms. When the escort arrived, I was away from the town shooting deer with the bow and arrow, a weapon in the use of which I had such skill that all the Indians wondered at me, not knowing that twice I had won the prize at the butts on Bungay common. Our party being summoned by a messenger, we returned bearing our deer with us. On reaching the courtyard of the cazique's house, I found it filled with warriors most gorgeously attired, and among them one more splendid than the rest. He was young, very tall and broad, most handsome in face and having eyes like those of an eagle, while his whole aspect breathed majesty and command. His body was incased in a cuirass of gold, over which hung a mantle made of the most gorgeous feathers, exquisitely set in bands of different colors. On his head he wore a helmet of gold surmounted by the royal crest, an eagle, standing on a snake fashioned in gold and gems. On his arms, and beneath his knees, he wore circlets of gold and gems, and in his hand was a copper bladed spear. Round this man were many nobles, dressed in a somewhat similar fashion, except that the most of them wore a vest of quilted cotton in place of the gold cuirass and a jeweled panache of the plumes of birds instead of the royal symbol.

This was Guatemoc, Montezuma's nephew and afterward the last emperor of Anahuac. So soon as I saw him I saluted him in the Indian fashion by touching the earth with my right hand, which I then raised to my head. But Guatemoc, having scanned me with his eye as I stood, bow in hand, attired in my simple hunter's dress, smiled frankly and said:

"Surely, Teule, if I know anything of the looks of men, we are too equal in our birth, as in our age, for you to salute me as a slave greets his master." And he held his hand to me.

And I took it, answering with the help of Marina, who was watching this great lord with eager eyes:

"It may be so, prince, but though in my own country I am a man of repute and wealth, here I am nothing but a slave snatched from the sacrifice."

"I know it," he said, frowning. "It is well for all here that you were so snatched before the breath of life had left you, else Montezuma's wrath had fallen on this city." And he looked at the cazique, who trembled, such in those days was the terror of Montezuma's name.

Then he asked me if I was a Teule, or Spaniard. I told him that I was no Spaniard, but one of another white race who had Spanish blood in his veins. This saying seemed to puzzle him, for he had never so much as heard of any other white race, so I told him something of my story, at least so much of it as had to do with my being cast away.

When I had finished, he said: "If I have understood aright, Teule, you say you are no Spaniard, yet that you have Spanish blood in you and came hither in a Spanish ship, and I find this story strange. Well, it is for Montezuma to judge of these matters, so let us talk of them no more. Come and show me how you handle that great bow of yours. Did you bring it with you, or did you fashion it here? They tell me, Teule, that there is no such archer in the land."

So I came up and showed him the bow, which was of my own make and would shoot an arrow some 60 paces farther than any that I saw in Anahuac, and we fell into talk on matters of sport and war, Marina helping out my want of language, and before that day was done we had grown friendly.

For a week the Prince Guatemoc and his company rested in the town of Tabasco, and all the time we three talked much together. Soon I saw that Marina looked with eyes of longing on the great lord, partly because of his beauty, rank and might, and partly because she wearied of her captivity in the house of the cazique and would share Guatemoc's power, for Marina was ambitious. She tried to win his heart in many ways, but he seemed not to notice her, so that at last she spoke more plainly and in my hearing.

"You go hence tomorrow, prince," she said softly, "and I have a favor to ask of you, if you will listen to your handmaid."

"Speak on, maiden," he answered.

"I would ask this, that if it pleases you you will buy me of the cazique, my master, or command him to give me up to you, and take me with you to Tenoctitlan."

Guatemoc laughed aloud. "You put things plainly, maiden," he said, "but know that in the city of Tenoctitlan my royal wife and cousin, Tecuichpo, awaits me, with her three other ladies, who, as it chances, are somewhat jealous."

Now Marina flushed beneath her brown skin, and for the first and last time I saw her gentle eyes grow hard with anger as she answered:

"I asked you to take me with you, prince. I did not ask to be your wife or love."

"But perchance you meant it," he said dryly.

"Whatever I may have meant, prince, it is now forgotten. I wished to see the great city and the great king, because I weary of my life here and would myself grow great. You have refused me, but perhaps a time will come when I shall grow great in spite of you, and then I may remember the shame that has been put upon me against you, prince, and all your royal house."

Again Guatemoc laughed and of a sudden grew stern.

"You are overbold, girl," he said, "for less words than these many a one might find herself stretched upon the stone of sacrifice. But I will forget them, for your woman's pride is stung, and you know not what you say. Do you forget them also, Teule, if you have understood."

Then Marina turned and went, her bosom heaving with anger and outraged love or pride, and as she passed me I heard her mutter, "Yes, prince, you may forget, but I shall not."

Often since that day I have wondered if some vision of the future entered into the girl's breast in that hour, or if in her wrath she spoke at random. I have wondered also whether this scene between her and Guatemoc had anything to do with the history of her after life, or did Marina, as she avowed to me in the days to come, bring shame and ruin on her country for the love of Cortes alone? It is hard to say, and perhaps these things had nothing to do with what followed, for when great events have happened we are apt to search out causes for them in the past that were no cause. This may have been but a passing mood of hers and one soon put out of mind, for it is certain that few build up the temples of their lives upon some firm foundation of hope or hate, of desire or despair, though it has happened to me to do so, but rather take Chance for their architect, and indeed whether they take him or no he is still the master builder. Still that Marina did not forget this talk I know, for in after time I heard her remind this very prince of the words that had passed between them—aye, and heard his noble answer to her.

For a whole month we traveled, for the way was far and the road rough, and sometimes we must cut our path through forests and sometimes we must wait upon the banks of rivers. Many were the strange sights I saw upon that journey, and many the cities in which we sojourned in much state and honor, but I cannot stop to tell of all these.

One thing I will relate, however, though briefly, because it changed the regard that the prince Guatemoc and I felt one to the other into a friendship which lasted till his death and indeed endures in my heart to this hour.

One day we were delayed by the banks of a swollen river, and in pastime went out to hunt for deer. When we had hunted awhile and killed three deer, it chanced that Guatemoc perceived a buck standing on a hillock, and we set about to stalk it, five of us in all. But the buck was in the open, and the trees and bush ceased a full 100 yards away from where he stood, so that there was no way by which we might draw near to him. Then Guatemoc began to mock me, saying: "Now, Teule, they tell tales of your archery, and this deer is thrice as far as we Aztecs can make sure of killing. Let us see your skill."

"I will try," I answered, "though the shot is long."

So we drew beneath the cover of a ceiba tree, of which the lowest branches drooped to within 15 feet of the ground, and having set an arrow on the string of the great bow that I had fashioned after the shape of those we use in England I aimed and drew it. Straight sped the arrow and struck the buck fair, passing through its heart, and a low murmur of wonderment went up from those who saw the feat.

Then, just as we prepared to go to the fallen deer, a male puma, which is nothing but a cat, though 50 times as big, that had been watching the buck from above, dropped down from the boughs of the ceiba tree full on to the shoulders of the Prince Guatemoc, felling him to the ground, where he lay face downward, while the fierce brute bit and clawed at his back. Indeed had it not been for his golden cuirass and helm Guatemoc would never have lived to be emperor of Anahuac, and perhaps it might have been better so.

Now, when they saw the puma snarling and tearing at the person of their prince, though brave men enough, the three nobles who were with us were seized with sudden panic and ran, thinking him dead. But I did not run, though I should have been glad enough to do so. At my side hung one of the Indian weapons that serve them instead of swords, a club of wood set on both sides with spikes of obsidian, like the teeth in the bill of a sword-fish. Snatching it from its loop, I gave the puma battle, striking a blow upon his head that rolled him over and caused the blood to pour. In a moment he was up and at me roaring with rage. Whirling the wooden sword with both hands, I smote him in midair, the blow passing between his opened paws and catching him full on the snout and head. So hard was this stroke that my weapon was shattered. Still it did not stop the puma. In a second I was cast to the earth with a great shock, and the brute was on me, tearing and biting at my chest and neck. It was well for me at that moment that I wore a garment of quilted cotton; otherwise I must have been ripped open, and even with this covering I was sadly torn, and to this day I bear the marks of the beast's claws upon my body. But now when I seemed to be lost the great blow that I had struck took effect on him, for one of the points of glass had pierced to his brain. He lifted his head; his claws contracted themselves in my flesh; then he howled like a dog in pain and fell dead upon my body. So I lay upon the ground unable to stir, for I was much hurt, until my companions, having taken heart, came back and pulled the puma off me. By this time Guatemoc, who saw it all, but till now was unable to move from lack of breath, had found his feet again.

"Teule," he gasped, "you are a brave man indeed, and if you live I swear that I will always stand your friend to the death, as you have stood mine."

Thus he spoke to me, but to the others he said nothing, casting no reproaches at them.

Then I fainted away.

CHAPTER XII.

THE COURT OF MONTEZUMA.

Now, for a week I was so ill from my wounds that I was unable to be moved, and then I must be carried in a litter till we came to within three days' journey of the city of Tenoctitlan, or Mexico.

One night we camped in a rest house, of which there were many built along the roads for the use of travelers, that was placed almost on the top of the sierra or mountain range which surrounds the valley of Tenoctitlan. Next morning we took the road again before dawn, for the cold was so sharp at this great height that we, who had traveled from the hot land, could sleep very little, and also Guatemoc desired if it were possible to reach the city that night.

When we had gone a few hundred paces, the path came to the crest of the mountain range, and I halted suddenly in wonder and admiration. Below me lay a vast bowl of land and water, of which, however, I could see nothing, for the shadows of the night still filled it. But before me, piercing the very clouds, towered the crests of two snow clad mountains, and on these the light of the unrisen sun played, already changing their whiteness to the stain of blood. Popo, or the Hill that Smokes, is the name of the one, and Ixtac, or the Sleeping Woman, that of the other, and no grander sight was ever offered to the eyes of man than they furnished in that hour before the dawn. From the lofty summit of Popo went up great columns of smoke, which, what with the fire in their heart and the crimson of the sunrise, looked like rolling pillars of flame. And for the glory of the glittering slopes below, that changed continually from the mystery of white to dull red, from red to crimson and from crimson to every dazzling hue that the rainbow holds, who can tell it, who can even imagine it? None indeed except those that have seen the sun rise over the volcano of Tenoctitlan.

When I had feasted my eyes on Popo, I turned to Ixtac. She is not so lofty as her "husband," for so the Aztecs name the volcano Popo, and when first I looked I could see nothing but the gigantic shape of a woman fashioned in snow and lying like a corpse upon her lofty bier, whose hair streamed down the mountain side. But now the sunbeams caught her also, and she seemed to start out in majesty from a veil of rosy mist, a wonderful and thrilling sight. But, beautiful as she was then, still I love the Sleeping Woman best at eve. Then she lies a shape of glory on the blackness beneath and is slowly swallowed up into the solemn night as the dark draws its veil across her.

Now, as I gazed the light began to creep down the sides of the volcanos, revealing the forests on their flanks. But still the vast valley was filled with mist that lay in dense billows resembling those of the sea, through which hills and temples tops started up like islands. By slow degrees as we passed upon our downward road the vapors cleared away and the lakes of Tezcuco, Chalco and Xochicalco shone in the sunlight like giant mirrors. On their banks stood many cities. Indeed the greatest of these, Mexico, seemed to float upon the waters. Beyond them and about them were green fields of corn and aloe and groves of forest trees, while far away towered the black wall of rock that hedges in the valley.

All day we journeyed swiftly through this fairyland. We passed through the cities of Amaquem and Ajotzinco, which I will not stay to describe, and many a lovely village that nestled upon the borders of Lake Chalco. Then we entered on the great causeway of stone built like a road resting on the waters, and with the afternoon we came to the town of Cuitlahuac. Thence we passed on to Iztapalapan, and here Guatemoc would have rested for the night in the royal house of his uncle Cuitlahua. But when we reached the town we found that Montezuma, who had been advised of our approach by runners, had sent orders that we were to push on to Tenoctitlan, and that palanquins had been made ready to bear us.

So we entered the palanquins, and leaving that lovely city of gardens were borne swiftly along the southern causeway. On we went past towns built upon piles fixed in the bottom of the lake, past gardens that were laid out on reeds and floated over the waters like a boat, past teocallis and glistening temples without number, through fleets of light canoes and thousands of Indians going to and fro about their business, till at length toward sunset we reached the battlemented fort that is called Xoloc, which stands upon the dike. I say stands, but, alas, it stands no more! Cortes has destroyed it, and with it all those glorious cities which my eyes beheld that day.

At Xoloc we began to enter the city of Tenoctitlan, or Mexico, the mightiest city that ever I had seen. The houses on the outskirts indeed were built of mud or adobe, but those in the richer parts were constructed of redstone. Each house surrounded a courtyard and was, in turn, surrounded by a garden, while between them ran canals, having footpaths on either side. Then there were squares, and in the squares pyramids, palaces and temples without end. I gazed on them till I was bewildered, but all seemed as nothing when at length I saw the great temple, with its stone gateways opening to the north and the south, the east and the west, its walls carven everywhere with serpents, its polished pavements, its teocallis decked with human skulls, thousands upon thousands of them, and its vast surrounding tianquez, or market place. I caught but a glimpse of it then, for the darkness was falling, and afterward we were borne on through the darkness, I did not know whither.

Awhile went by, and I saw that we had left the city and were passing up a steep hill beneath the shadow of mighty cedar trees. Presently we halted in a courtyard, and here I was bidden to alight. Then the Prince Guatemoc led me into a wondrous house, of which all the rooms were roofed with cedar wood and its walls hung with richly colored cloths, and in that house gold seemed as plentiful as bricks and oak are with us in England. Led by domestics who bore cedar wands in their hands, we went through many passages and rooms till at length we came to a chamber where other domestics were awaiting us, who washed us with scented waters and clothed us in gorgeous apparel. Thence they conducted us to a door, where we were bidden to remove our shoes, and a coarse colored robe was given to each of us to hide our splendid dress. The robes having been put on, we were suffered to pass the door and found ourselves in a vast chamber in which were many noble men and some women, all standing and clad in coarse robes. At the far end of this chamber was a gilded screen, and from behind it floated sounds of sweet music.

Now, as we stood in the great chamber, that was lighted with sweet smelling torches, many men advanced and greeted Guatemoc, the prince, and I noticed that all of them looked upon me curiously. Presently a woman came, and I saw that her beauty was great. She was tall and stately, and beneath her rough outer robe splendidly attired in worked and jeweled garments. Weary and bewildered as I was, her loveliness seized me, as it were, in a vise—never before had I seen such loveliness, for her eye was proud and full like the eye of a buck, her curling hair fell upon her shoulders, and her features were very noble, yet tender almost to sadness, though at times she could seem fierce enough. This lady was yet in her first youth; perchance she may have seen some 18 years, but her shape was that of a full grown woman and most royal.

"Greeting, Guatemoc, my cousin," she said in a sweet voice. "So you are come at last. My royal father has awaited you for long and will ask questions as to your delay. My sister, your wife, has wondered also why you tarried."

Now, as she spoke, I felt rather than saw that this lady was searching me with her eyes.

"Greeting, Otomie, my cousin," answered the prince. "I have been delayed by the accidents of travel. Tabasco is far away; also my charge and companion, Teule," and he nodded toward me, "met with an accident on the road."

"What was the accident?" she asked.

"Only this—that he saved me from the jaws of a puma at the risk of his life when all the others fled from me and was somewhat hurt in the deed. He saved me thus," —and in a few words he told the story.

She listened, and I saw that her eyes sparkled at the tale. When it was done, she spoke again, and this time to me.

"Welcome, Teule," she said, smiling. "You are not of our people, yet my heart goes out to such a man." And, still smiling, she left us.

"Who is that great lady?" I asked of Guatemoc.

"That is my cousin Otomie, the princess of the Otomie, my uncle Montezuma's favorite daughter," he answered. "She likes you, Teule, and that is well for you for many reasons. Hush!"

As he spoke the screen at the far end of the chamber was drawn aside. Beyond it a man sat upon a broidered cushion, who was inhaling the fumes of the tobacco weed from a gilded pipe of wood, after the Indian fashion. This man, who was no other than the monarch Montezuma, was of a tall build and melancholy countenance, having a very pale face for one of his nation, and thin, black hair. He was dressed in a white robe of the purest cotton and wore a golden belt and sandals set with pearls, and on his head a plume of feathers of the royal green. Behind him were a band of beautiful girls somewhat slightly clothed, some of whom played on lutes and other instruments of music, and on either side stood four ancient counselors, all of them barefooted and clad in the coarsest garments.

So soon as the screen was drawn all the company in the chamber prostrated themselves upon their knees, an example that I hastened to follow, and thus they remain-

A man sat upon a broidered cushion inhaling the fumes of the tobacco.

ed till the emperor made a sign with the gilded bowl of his pipe, when they rose to their feet again and stood with folded hands and eyes fixed abjectly upon the floor. Presently Montezuma made another signal, and three aged men, whom I understood to be embassadors, advanced and asked some prayer of him. He answered them with a nod of the head, and they retreated from his presence, making obeisance and stepping backward till they mingled with the crowd. Then the emperor spoke a word to one of the counselors, who bowed and came slowly down the hall, looking to the right and to the left. Presently his eye fell upon Guatemoc, and indeed he was easy to see, for he stood a head taller than any there.

"Hail, prince," he said. "The royal Montezuma desires to speak with you, and with the Teule, your companion."

"Do as I do, Teule," said Guatemoc, and led the way up the chamber till we reached the place where the wooden screen had been, which, as we passed it, was drawn behind us, shutting us off from the hall.

Here we stood awhile, with folded hands and downcast eyes, till a signal was made to us to advance.

"Your report, nephew," said Montezuma in a low voice of command.

"I went to the city of Tabasco, O glorious Montezuma. I found the Teule and brought him thither; also I caused the high priest to be sacrificed according to the royal command, and now I hand back the imperial signet," and he gave the ring to a counselor.

"Why did you delay so long upon the road, nephew?"

"Because of the chances of the journey. While saving my life, royal Montezuma, the Teule, my prisoner, was bitten by a puma. Its skin is brought to you as an offering."

Now Montezuma looked at me for the first time, then opened a picture-scroll that one of the counselors handed to him and read in it, glancing at me from time to time.

"The description is good," he said at length, "in all save one thing—it does not say that this prisoner is the handsomest man in Anahuac. Say, Teule, why have your countrymen landed on my dominions and slain my people?"

"I know nothing of it, O king," I answered as well as I might, with the help of Guatemoc, "and they are not my countrymen."

"The report says that you confess to having the blood of these Teules in your veins, and that you came to these shores, or near them, in one of their great canoes."

"That is so, O king, yet I am not of their people, and I came to the shore floating on a barrel."

"I hold that you lie," answered Montezuma, frowning, "for the sharks and crocodiles would devour one who swam thus." Then he added anxiously, "Say, are you of the descendants of Quetzal?"

"I do not know, O king. I am of a white race, and our forefather was named Adam."

"Perchance that is another name for Quetzal," he said. "It has long been prophesied that his children would return, and now it seems that the hour of their coming is at hand." And he sighed heavily, then added: "Go now. Tomorrow you shall tell me of these Teules, and the council of the priests shall decide your fate."

Now, when I heard the names of the priests, I trembled in all my bones and cried, clasping my hands in supplication:

"Slay me if you will, O king, but I beseech you deliver me not again into the hands of the priests."

"We are all in the hands of the priests, who are the mouth of God," he answered coldly. "Besides I hold that you have lied to me."

Then I went, foreboding evil, and Guatemoc also looked downcast. Bitterly did I curse the hour when I had said that I was of the Spanish blood and yet no Spaniard. Had I known even what I knew that day, torture would not have wrung those words from me. But now it was too late.

Now Guatemoc led me to certain apartments of this palace of Chapoltepec, where his wife, the royal Princess Tecuichpo, was awaiting him, a very lovely lady, and with her other ladies, among them the Princess Otomie, Montezuma's daughter, and some nobles. Here a rich repast was served to us, and I was seated next to the Princess Otomie, who spoke to me most graciously, asking me many things concerning my land and the people of the Teules. It was from her that I learned first that the emperor was much disturbed at heart because of these Teules, or Spaniards, for he was superstitious and held them to be the children of the god Quetzal, who, according to ancient prophecy, would come to take the land. Indeed so gracious was she, and so royally lovely, that for the first time I felt my heart stirred by any other woman than my betrothed whom I had left far away in England, and whom, as I thought, I should never see again. And, as I learned in after days, mine was not the only heart that was stirred that night.

Near to us sat another royal lady, Papantzin, the sister of Montezuma, but she was neither young nor lovely, and yet most sweet faced and sad, as though with the presage of death. Indeed she died not many weeks after, but could not rest quiet in her grave, as shall be told.

When the feast was done and we had drunk of the cocoa or chocolate and smoked tobacco in pipes, a strange but most soothing custom that I learned in Tabasco, and of which I have never been able to break myself, though the weed is still hard to come by here in England, I was led to my sleeping place, a small chamber, paneled with cedar boards. For awhile I could not sleep, for I was overcome by the memory of all the strange sights that I had seen in this wonderful new land, which was so civilized and yet so barbarous.

Then my thoughts flew to the vision of that most lovely maid, the Princess Otomie, who, as I believed, had looked on me so kindly, and I found that vision sweet, for I was young, and the English Lily, my own love, was far away and lost to me forever. Was it then wonderful that I should find this Indian poppy fair? Indeed where is the man who would not have been overcome by her sweetness, her beauty and that stamp of royal grace which comes with kingly blood and the daily exercise of power? Like the rich wonders of the robe she wore, her very barbarism, of which now I saw but the better side, drew and dazzled my mind's eye, giving her woman's tenderness some new quality, somber and strange, an eastern richness which is lacking in our well schooled English women, that at one and the same stroke touched both the imagination and the senses and through them enthralled the heart.

For Otomie seemed such a woman as men dream of, but very rarely win, seeing that the world has few such natures and fewer nurseries where they can be reared. At once pure and passionate, of royal blood and heart, rich natured and most womanly, yet brave as a man and beautiful as the night, with a mind athirst for knowledge and a spirit that no sorrows could avail to quell, ever changing in her outer moods, and yet most faithful and with the honor of a man, such was Otomie, Montezuma's daughter, princess of the Otomie. Was it wonderful then that I found her fair, or, when fate gave me her love, that at last I loved her in turn? And yet there was that in her nature which should have held me back had I but known of it, for, with all her charm, her beauty and her virtues, at heart she was still a savage, and, strive as she would to hide it, at times her blood would master her.

But as I lay in the chamber of the palace of Chapoltepec the tramp of the guards without my door reminded me that I had little now to do with love and other delights, I whose life hung from day to day upon a hair. Tomorrow the priests would decide my fate, and when the priests were judges the prisoner might know the sentence before it was spoken. I was a stranger and a white man, surely such a one would prove an offering more acceptable to the gods than that furnished by a thousand Indian hearts. I had been snatched from the altars of Tabasco that I might grace the higher altars of Tenoctitlan, and that was all. My fate would be to perish miserably far from my home, and in this world never to be heard of more.

Musing thus sadly, at last I slept. When I woke, the sun was up. Rising from my mat, I went to the wood barred window place and looked through. The palace whence I gazed was placed on the crest of a rocky hill. On one side this hill was bathed by the blue waters of Tezcuco; on the other, a mile or more away, rose the temple towers of Mexico. Along the slopes of the hill and in some directions for a mile from its base grew huge cedar trees, from the boughs of which hung a gray and ghostly looking moss. These trees are so large that the smallest of them is bigger than the best oak in this parish of Ditchingham, while the greatest measures 29 paces round the base. Beyond and between these marvelous and ancient trees were the gardens of Montezuma, that with their strange and gorgeous flowers, their marble baths, their aviaries and wild beast dens were, as I believe, the most wonderful in the whole world. [The gardens of Montezuma have been long destroyed, but some of the cedars still flourish at Chapoltepec, though the Spaniards cut down many. One of them, which tradition says was a favorite tree of the great emperor's, measures—according to a rough calculation the author of this book made upon the spot—about 60 feet round the bole. It is strange to think that a few ancient conifers should alone survive of all the glories of Montezuma's wealth and state.]

"At the least," thought I to myself, "even if I must die, it is something to have seen this country of Anahuac, its king, its customs and its people."

TO BE CONTINUED.

HUMPHREYS'

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