

The Watchman and Southron.

THE SUMTER WATCHMAN, Established April, 1850.

"Be Just and Fear not—Let all the Ends thou Aims't at, be thy Country's, thy God's and Truth's."

THE TRUE SOUTHRON, Established June, 1866

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CHAPTER X.

THE LAND OF MONTEZUMA.

As it chanced, a large Spanish carak named Las Cinco Lagas, or The Five Wounds, was about to sail for Hispaniola, and having obtained a license to trade I took passage in her under my assumed name of D'Alta, passing myself off as a merchant.

To further this deception I purchased goods to the value of 105 pesos, and of such nature as I was informed were most readily salable in the Indies, which merchandise I shipped with me.

The vessel was full of Spanish adventurers, mostly ruffians of varied career and strange history, but none the less good companions enough when not in drink.

By this time I could speak Castilian so perfectly and was so Spanish in appearance, that it was not difficult for me to pass myself off as one of their nation, and this I did, inventing a feigned tale of my parentage and of the reasons that led me to tempt the seas.

For the rest, now, as ever, I kept my own counsel, and notwithstanding my reserve, for I would not mingle in their orgies, I soon became well liked by my comrades, chiefly because of my skill in ministering to their sicknesses.

Of our voyage to the Indies much could be written after the manner of sea tales, most of all of De Garcia, whom I encountered on a Spanish vessel, where I found refuge after the loss of the carak, near the port of Santo Domingo.

But I hasten now to write of my fortunes, both evil and good, and of my trials on account of De Garcia in the land of Montezuma, and of her whose story I have long delayed, Montezuma's daughter.

From the power of De Garcia, for he was an officer in that abominable slaviship, I escaped by leaping into the sea.

In a drifting barrel I floated away when the murderous slaves thought the sharks were making food of me, and from death by starving I was spared through a fish that I snatched from the talons of a gull and devoured raw.

The hard wood and iron bands of my tub shielded me from the teeth of a ravenous shark, and in it I floated through the breakers to the shores of a low lying land and into the mouth of a great river.

At length, when the barrel drifted in not more than four feet of water, I slid down from it, and wading to the bank cast myself at length there to rest and thank God, who thus far had preserved me miraculously. Then I staggered to my feet and walked along the bank of the river till I came to a pool of rainwater, which on the tasting proved to be sweet and good.

I drank, weeping for joy at the taste of the water, drank till I could drink no more, and let those who have stood in such a plight remember what water was to them, for no words of mine can tell it.

After I had drunk and washed the brine from my face and body and been thus refreshed I cast myself down to sleep in the shade of a bush bearing white flowers, for I was utterly outworn.

When I opened my eyes again, it was night, and doubtless I should have slept on through many hours had it not been for a dreadful itch and pain that took me in every part till at length I sprang up and cursed in my agony.

At first I was at a loss to know what occasioned this torment till I perceived that the air was alive with gnatslike insects which made a singing noise, and then settling on my flesh sucked blood and spat poison into the wound at one and the same time.

These dreadful insects the Spaniards name mosquitoes. Nor were they the only flies, for hundreds of other creatures no bigger than a pin's head had fastened onto me like bulldogs to a baited bear, boring their heads into the flesh, where in the end they cause festers.

They are named garrapatas by the Spanish, and I take them to be the young of the tick. Others there were also, too numerous to mention, and of every shape and size, though they had this in common—all bit and all were venomous.

Before the morning these plagues had driven me almost to madness, for in no way could I obtain relief from them. Toward dawn I went and lay in the water, thinking to lessen my sufferings, but before I had been there 10 minutes I saw a huge crocodile rise up from the mud beside me.

I sprang away to the bank horribly afraid, for never before had I beheld so monstrous and evil looking a brute, to fall again into the clutches of the creatures, winged and crawling, that were waiting for me there by myriads.

But enough of these damnable insects! At length the morning broke and found me in a sorry plight, for my face was swollen to the size of a pumpkin by the venom of the mosquitoes, and the rest of my body was in little better case.

Moreover, I could not keep myself still because of the itching, but must run and jump like a madman. And where was I to run to through this huge swamp, in which I could see no shelter or sign of man? I could not guess, so since I must keep moving I followed the bank of the river, as I walked disturbing many crocodiles and loathsome snakes.

Now, I knew that I could not live long in such suffering and determined to struggle forward till I fell down insensible and death put an end to my torments.

For an hour or more I went on thus till I came to a place that was clear of bush and reeds. Across this I skipped and danced, striking with my swollen hands at the gnats which buzzed about my head. Now the end was not far off, for I was exhausted and near to falling, when suddenly I came upon a party of men, brown in color and clothed with white garments, who had been fishing in the river.

By them on the water were several canoes in which were loads of merchandise, and they were now engaged in eating. So soon as these men caught sight of me they uttered exclamations in an unknown tongue, and seizing weapons that lay by them, bows and arrows and wooden clubs set on their side with spikes of flinty glass, they made toward me as though to kill me.

Now I lifted up my hands praying for mercy, and seeing that I was unarmed and helpless the men laid down their arms and addressed me. I shook my head to show that I could not understand and pointed first to the sea and then to my swollen features. They nodded, and going to one of the canoes a man brought from it a paste of a brown color and aromatic smell.

Then by signs he directed me to remove such garments as remained on me, the fashion of which seemed to puzzle them greatly. This being done, they proceeded to anoint my body with the paste, the touch of which gave me a most blessed relief from my intolerable itching and burning, and moreover, rendered my flesh distasteful to the insects, for after that they plagued me little.

When I was anointed, they offered me food—fried fish and cakes of meal, together with a most delicious hot drink covered with a brown and foaming froth that I learned to know afterward as chocolate.

When I had finished eating, having talked awhile together in low tones, they motioned me to enter one of the canoes, giving me mats to lie on. I obeyed, and three other men came with me, for the canoe was large. One of these, a very grave man with a gentle face and manner, whom I took to be the chief of the party, sat down opposite to me, the other two placing themselves in the bow and stern of the boat, which they drove along by means of paddles. Then we started, followed by three other canoes, and before we had gone a mile utter weariness overpowered me, and I fell asleep.

I awoke much refreshed, having slept many hours, for now the sun was setting, and was astonished to find the grave looking man, my companion in the canoe, keeping watch over my sleep and warding the gnats from me with a leafy branch.

His kindness seemed to show that I was in no danger of ill treatment, and my fears on that point being set at rest I began to wonder as to what strange land I had come and who its people might be. Soon, however, I gave over, having nothing to build on, and observed the scenery instead. Now we were paddling up a smaller river than the one on the banks of which I had been cast away and were no longer in the midst of marshes.

On either side of us was open land, or rather land that would have been open had it not been for the great trees, larger than the largest oak, which grew upon it, some of them of surpassing beauty. Up these trees climbed creepers that hung like ropes even from the topmost boughs, and among them were many strange and gorgeous flowering plants that seemed to cling to the bark as moss clings to a wall. In their branches also sat harsh voiced birds of brilliant colors and apes that barked and chattered at us as we went.

Just as the sun set over all this strange new scene the canoes came to a landing place built of timber, and we disembarked. Now it grew dark suddenly, and all I could discover was that I was being led along a good road. Presently we reached a gate, which, from the barking of dogs and the numbers of people who thronged about it, I judged to be the entrance to a town, and passing it we advanced down a long street with houses on either side.

At the doorway of the last house my companion halted, and taking me by the hand led me into a long, low room lit with lamps of earthenware. Here some women came forward and kissed him, while others, whom I took to be servants, saluted him by touching the floor with one hand. Soon, however, all eyes were turned on me, and many eager questions were asked of the chief, of which I could only guess the purport.

When all had gazed their fill, supper was served, a rich meal of many strange meats, and of this I was invited to partake, which I did, seated on a mat and eating of the dishes that were placed upon the ground by the women. Among these I noticed one girl who far surpassed all the others in grace, though none were unpleasing to the eye. She was dark indeed, but her features were regular and her eyes fine.

Her figure was tall and straight, and the sweetness of her face added to the charm of her beauty. I mention this girl here for two reasons—first, because she saved me once from sacrifice and once from torture, and, secondly, because she was none other than that woman who afterward became known as Marina, the mistress of Cortes, without whose aid he had never conquered Mexico. But at this time she did not guess that it was her destiny to bring her country of Anahuac beneath the cruel yoke of the Spaniard.

From the moment of my entry I saw that Marina, as I will call her, for her Indian name is too long to be written, took pity on my forlorn state and did what lay in her power to protect me from vulgar curiosity and to minister to my wants. It was she who brought me water to wash in, and a clean robe of linen to replace my foul and tattered garments, and a cloak fashioned of bright feathers for my shoulders.

When supper was done, a mat was given me to sleep on in a little room apart, and here I lay down, thinking that, though I might be lost forever to my own world, at least I had fallen among a people who were gentle and kindly, and moreover, as I saw from many tokens, no savages. One thing, however, disturbed me—I discovered that, though I was well treated, also I was a prisoner, for a man armed with a copper spear slept across the doorway of my little room. Before I lay down I looked through the wooden bars which served as a protection to the window place and saw that the house stood upon the border of a large open space, in the midst of which a great pyramid towered a hundred feet or more into the air. On the top of this pyramid was a building of stone which I took to be a temple, and rightly, in front of which a fire burned. Marvelling what the purpose of this great work might be, and in honor of what faith it was erected, I went to sleep.

On the morning I was to learn. Here it may be convenient for me to state, what I did not discover till afterward, that I was in the city of Tabasco, the capital of one of the southern provinces of Anahuac, which is situated at a distance of some hundreds of miles from the central city of Tenocitlan, or Mexico.

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On the morning I was to learn. Here it may be convenient for me to state, what I did not discover till afterward, that I was in the city of Tabasco, the capital of one of the southern provinces of Anahuac, which is situated at a distance of some hundreds of miles from the central city of Tenocitlan, or Mexico.

The river where I had been cast away was the Rio de Tabasco, where Cortes landed in the following year, and my host, or rather my captor, was the cazique, or chief, of Tabasco, the same man who subsequently presented Marina to Cortes.

Thus it came about that, with the exception of a certain Aguilar, who, with some companions, was wrecked on the coast of Yucatan six years before, I was the first white man who ever dwelt among the Indians. This Aguilar was rescued by Cortes, though his companions were all sacrificed to Huiztel, the horrible war god of the country. But the name of the Spaniards was already known to the Indians, who looked on them with superstitious fear, for in the year previous to my being cast away the hidalgo Hernandez de Cordova had visited the coast of Yucatan and fought several battles with the natives, and earlier in the same year of my arrival Juan de Grigalva had come to this very river of Tabasco. Thus it came about that I was set down as one of this strange new nation of Teules, as the Indians named the Spaniards, and therefore as an enemy for whose blood the gods were thirsting.

I awoke at dawn, much refreshed with sleep, and having washed and clothed myself in the linen robes that were provided for me I came into the large room, where food was given me. Scarcely had I finished my meal when my captor, the cazique, entered, accompanied by two men whose appearance struck terror to my heart. In countenance they were fierce and horrible. They wore black robes embroidered with mystic characters in red, and their long, tangled hair was matted together with some strange substance. These men, whom all present, including the chief, or cazique, seemed to look on with the utmost reverence, glared at me with a fierce gleam that made my blood run cold. One of them indeed tore open my white robe and placed his filthy hand upon my heart, which beat quickly enough, counting its throbs aloud while the other nodded at his words. Afterward I learned that he was saying that I was very strong.

Glancing round to find the interpretation of this act upon the faces of those about me, my eyes caught those of the girl Marina, and there was that in them which left me in little doubt. Horror and pity were written there, and I knew that some dreadful death overshadowed me. Before I could do anything, before I could even think, I was seized by the priests, or pabas, as the Indians name them, and dragged from the room, all the household following us except Marina and the cazique. Now I found myself in a great square or market place bordered by many fine houses of stone and lime, and some of mud, which was filling rapidly with a vast number of people, men, women and children, who all stared at me as I went toward the pyramid on the top of which were the pyramids of the gods.

At the foot of this pyramid I was led into a little chamber hollowed out in its thickness, and here my dress was torn from me by more priests, leaving me naked except for a cloth about my loins and a chaplet of bright flowers which was set upon my head. In this chamber were three other men—Indians—who, from the horror on their faces, I judged to be also doomed to death.

Presently a drum began to beat high above us, and we were taken from the chamber and placed in a procession of many priests, I being the first among the victims. Then the priests set up a chant, and we began the ascent of a pyramid, following a road that wound round and round its bulk till it ended on a platform at its summit, which may have measured 40 paces in the square. Hence the view of the surrounding country was very fine, but in that hour I scarcely noticed it, having no care for prospects, however pleasing. On the farther side of the platform were two wooden towers 50 feet or so in height. These were the temples of the gods—Huiztel, god of war, and Quetzal, god of the air—whose hideous effigies, carved in stone, grinned at us through the open doorways. In the chambers of these temples stood small altars, and on the altars were large dishes of gold, containing the hearts of those who had been sacrificed on the yesterday. These chambers, moreover, were incrustated with every sort of filth. In front of the temples stood the altar whereon the fire burned eternally, and before it was a hog backed block of black marble of the size of an inn drinking table, and a great carven stone shaped like a wheel, measuring some 10 feet across, with a copper ring in its center.

All these things I remembered afterward, though at the time I scarcely seemed to see them, for hardly were we arrived at the platform when I was seized and dragged to the wheel shaped stone. Here a hide girdle was put round my waist and secured to the ring by a rope long enough to enable me to run to the edge of a stone and no farther. Then a flint pointed spear was given to me and spears were given also to the two captives who accompanied me, and it was made clear to me by signs that I must fight with them, it being their part to leap upon the stone and mine to defend it. Now I thought that if I could kill these two poor creatures perhaps I myself should be allowed to go free, and so to save my life I prepared to take their part. Presently the head priest gave a signal commanding the two men to attack me, but they were so lost in fear that they did not even stir. Then the priests began to flog them with leather girdles till at length, crying out with pain, they ran at me. One reached the stone and leaped upon it a little before the other, and I stuck the spear through his arm. Instantly he dropped his weapon and fled, and the other man fled also, for there was no fight in them, nor would any flogging bring them to face me again.

Seeing that they could not make them brave, the priests determined to have done with them. Amid a great noise of music and chanting, he whom I had smitten was seized and dragged to the hog backed block of marble, which in truth was a stone of sacrifice. On this he was cast down, breast upward, and held so by five priests, two gripping his hands, two his legs and one his head. Then, having donned a scarlet cloak, the head priest, the same who had felt my heart, uttered some kind of prayer, and raising a curved knife of the flintlike glass or itztl struck open the poor wretch's breast at a single blow and made the ancient offering to the sun.

As he did this all the multitude in the place below, in full view of whom this bloody game was played, prostrated themselves, remaining on their knees till the offering had been thrown into the golden censer before the statue of the god Huiztel. Thereon the horrible priests, casting themselves on the body, carried it with shouts to the edge of the pyramid, or teocalli, and rolled it down the steep sides.

CHAPTER XI.

THE SAVING OF GUATEMOC.

Now, after 'his 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 Tenocitlan 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, 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 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-

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 to 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 Tenocitlan."

Guatemoc laughed aloud. "You put things plainly, maiden," he said, "but know that in the city of Tenocitlan 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 at 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