

Ryan Marah Ellis

The Flute of the Gods



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PREFACE

In romances of the aborigines of the so-called New World there is usually presented savage man or woman modified as may be by the influence of European mythologies in various authorized forms. But, certain people of this New World possessed at least a semi-civilization centuries before the coming of white conquerors.

When man ceases to be nomadic, builds houses of stone and mortar, terrace upon terrace,—walled and fortified against the enemy,—when he has fields of growing grain, textile fabrics, decorated pottery, a government that is a republic, a priesthood trained in complex ritual, a well stocked pantheon, a certain understanding of astronomy and psychic phenomena, he may withal be called barbarian, even as was Abraham on Moriah barbaric when the altar of his god called for sacrifice of his only son. But a people of such culture could not with truth be called savage.

The tale told here has to do with these same historic barbarians. That there is more of depth to the background of American Indian life than is usually suggested by historians has been made clear of two tribes by Dr. Le Plongeon in his *Sacred Mysteries of the Mayas and Quiches 11500 Years Ago*. Similar mysteries and secret orders exist to-day in the tribes of the Mexicos and Arizona. In certain instances the names and meanings of offices identical with those of Yucatan survive, to prove an ancient intercourse between the Mayan tribes and those who now dwell in the valley of the Rio Grande. The Abbe Clavigero left account of a thousand years of the history of one tribe as transcribed by him from their own hieroglyphic records. Lord Kingsborough may have been far astray with his theory that the people of America were the Lost Tribes of Israel, but the researches embodied in his remarkable *Antiquities of Mexico*, demonstrated the fact that they were not a people of yesterday.

As to historic notes used in this tale of the more northern Sun worshipers: Cabeza de Vaca, the first European to cross the land from the Mississippi to Mexico (1528-1536), left record in Spanish archives of Don Teo the Greek. Casteñada, historian for the Coronado expedition (1540-1542), left reluctant testimony of the worse than weird night in one Indian town of the Rio Grande, when impress was left on the native mind that the strong god of the white conquerors demanded much of human sacrifice. In that journal is record also of the devoted Fray Luis, of whose end only the Indians know. In *Soldiers of the Cross* by Archbishop Salpointe, there is an account of a god-offering made in 1680 (after almost a century of European influences), warranting the chapter describing a similar sacrifice on the same shrine when the pagan mind was yet supreme and the call of the primitive gods a vital thing.

It is yet so vital that neither imported government nor imported creeds have quite stamped it out. Only the death of the elders and the breaking up of the clans can eradicate it. When that is done, the Latin and the Anglo-Saxon will have swept from the heart of the land, primitive, conservative cults ancient as the Druids.

With thanks to the Indian friends who have helped me, I desire especially to express my obligation to Edward S. Curtis, whose wonderful volumes of *The North American Indian* have been an inspiration, and whose Indian pictures for this book of mine possess a solid value in art and ethnology far beyond the mere illustration of text.

M. E. R.

CHAPTER I

THE WOMAN FROM THE SOUTH

Aliksai! In Tusayan the people were living! It was the year after the year when the great star with the belt of fire reached across the sky. (1528.)

The desert land of the Hopi people stretched yellow and brown and dead from mesa to mesa. The sage was the color of the dust, and the brazen sky was as a shield made hard and dry by the will of the angry gods. The Spirit People of the elements could not find their way past that shield, and could not bear blessings to Earth children.

The rain did not walk on the earth in those days, and the corn stood still, and old men of the mesa towns knew that the starving time was close. In the kivas fasted the Hopi priests, the youth planted prayer plumes by the shrines of the dying wells, and the woman danced dances at sunrise, and all sang the prayers to the gods:—and each day the store of corn was lower, and the seed in the ground could not grow.

In the one town of Wálpi there were those who regretted the seed wasted in the planting,—it were better to have given it to the children, and even yet they might find some of it if the sand was searched carefully.

“Peace!” said old Ho-tiwa, the Ancient of the village, and the chief of Things of the Spirit. “It is not yet so bad as when I was a boy. In that starving time, the robes of rabbit skins were eaten when the corn was gone. Yet you see we did live and have grown old! The good seed is in the ground, and when the rain comes—”

“When it comes!” sighed one skeptic—“We wait one year now,—how many more until we die?”

“If it is that you die—the rain or the no rain makes no change—you die!” reminded the old man. “The reader of the stars and of the moon says a change is to come. Tell the herald to call it from the housetops. This night the moon is at the big circle—it may bring with it the smile of the glad god again. Tell the people!”

And as the herald proclaimed at the sunset the hopeful words of the priests who prayed in the kivas, old Ho-tiwa walked away from the spirit of discontent, and down the trail to the ruins of Sik-yat-ki. All the wells but that one of the ancient city were useless, green, stagnant water now. And each day it was watched lest it also go back into the sands, and at the shrine beside it many prayers were planted.

So that was the place where he went for prayer when his heart was heavy with the woe of his people. And that was how he found that which was waiting there to be found.

It was a girl, and she looked dead as she lay by the stones of the old well. As he bent over to see if she lived, the round moon came like a second sun into the soft glow of the twilight, and as it touched the face of the girl, the old man felt the wind of the south pass over them. Always to the day he died did he tell of how that south wind came as if from swift wings!

He called to some men who were going home from rabbit hunting in the dusk, and they came and looked at the girl and at each other, and drew away.

“We have our own women who may die soon,” they said: “Why take in a stranger? Whence comes she?”

No one had seen her come, but her trail was from the south. She wore the dress of a pueblo girl, but she was not of their people. Her hair was not cut, yet on her forehead she carried the mark of a soon-to-be maternity—the sacred sign of the piñon gum seen by Ho-tiwa when he went as a boy for the seed corn to the distant Te-hua people by the river of the east.

“I come here with prayer thoughts to the water,” said the old man noting their reluctance,—“and I find a work put by my feet. The reader of the skies tells that a change is to come with the moon.

It is as the moon comes that I find her. The gods may not be glad with us if our hearts are not good at this time.”

“But the corn—”

“The corn I would eat can go to this girl for four days. I am old, but for so long I will fast,—and maybe then the gods will send the change.”

So the girl was carried to his house, and the women shrank away, and were afraid—for the clouds followed the wind swiftly from the south, and the face of the moon was covered, and at the turn of the night was heard the voice of a man child—new born of the strange girl found by the well in the moonlight. Ho-tiwa in the outer room of the dwelling heard the voice—and more than the child voice, for on the breath of the wind across the desert the good rain came walking in beauty to the fields, and the glad laughter of the people went up from the mesa, and there was much patter of bare feet on the wet stone floor of the heights—and glad calls of joy that the desert was to live again!

And within the room of the new birth the women stared in affright at the child and at each other, for it was most wonderfully fair—not like any child ever seen. This child had hair like the night, eyes like the blue of the sky, and face like the dawn.

One man among them was very old, and in his youth had known the Te-hua words. When the girl spoke he listened, and told the thing she said, and the women shrank from her when it was told.

“She must be a medicine-woman, for she knows these things,” she said, “and these things are sacred to her people. She says that the blade of a sacrifice must mark her child, for the boy will not be a child as other children.” And at the mention of the knife the people stared at each other.

“There is such a knife,” said Ho-tiwa. “It belongs to the Ancient Days, and only the gods, and two men know it. It shall be as she says. The god of the sky has brought the woman and has brought the child, and on the face of the child is set the light of the moon that the Hopi people will never again doubt that the gods can do these things.”

And there was a council at which all the old men talked through the night and the day. And while they talked, the rain poured in a flood from the gray sky, until men said this might be magic, for the woman might have brought witchcraft.

But the old chief said no evil craft could have brought the good rain:—The wind and the rain had come from the south as the girl had come from the south, and the light on the face of the child was a symbol that it was sacred.

Then one man, who had been an Apache prisoner, and found his way back, told of a strange thing;—that forty days to the south where the birds of the green feathers were, a new people had come out of the Eastern sea, and were white. The great kings made sacrifices for them, and planted prayer plumes before them—for they were called the new gods of the water and the sunrise.

And the girl had come from the south!

Yet another reminded the council that the words of the girl were Te-hua words, and the Te-hua people lived East of Ci-bo-la and Ah-ko—the farthest east of the stone house building people.

“Since these are her only words, the child shall be named in the way of that people,” said Ho-tiwa. “The sacred fire was lit at the birth, and on the fourth morning my woman will give the name in the Te-hua way, and throw the fire to burn all evil from his path, and the sacred corn will guard his sleep. Some of you younger men never have heard of the great Te-hua god. Tell it to them, Atoki, then they will know why a Te-hua never sends away a poor stranger who comes to them.”

The man who knew Te-hua words, and had seen the wonderful Te-hua valley in his youth, sent smoke from his ceremonial pipe to the four ways of the gods, and then to the upper and nether worlds, and spoke:

“*Aliksai!* I will tell of the Te-hua god as it was told to me by the old man of Kah-po in the time of starving when I went with the men for the sacred corn of the seed planting:

“The thing I tell is the true thing!

“It was time for a god to walk on the earth, and one was born of the piñon tree and a virgin who rested under the shadow of its arms. The girl was very poor, and her people were very poor; when the piñon nut fell in her bosom, and the winds told her a son was sent to her to rest beneath her heart, she was very sad, for there was no food.

“But wonderful things happened. The Spirits of the Mountain brought to her home new and strange food, and seeds to plant for harvest:—new seeds of the melon, and big seed of the corn:—before that time the seeds of the corn were little seeds. When the child was born, strange things happened, and the eagles fly high above till the sky was alive with wings. The boy was very poor, and so much a boy of dreams that he was the one to be laughed at for the visions. But great wise thoughts grew out of his mountain dreams, and he was so great a wizard that the old men chose him for Po-Ahtun-ho, which means Ruler of Things from the Beginning. And the dreamer who had been born of the maid and the piñon tree was the Ruler. He governed even the boiling water from the heart of the hills, and taught the people that the sickness was washed away by it. His wisdom was beyond earth wisdom, and his visions were true. The land of that people became a great land, and they had many blue stones and shells. Then it was that they became proud. One day the god came as a stranger to their village:—a poor stranger, and they were not kind to him! The proud hearts had grown to be hard hearts, and only fine strangers would they talk with. He went away from that people then. He said hard words to them and went away. He went to the South to live in a great home in the sea. When he comes back they do not know, but some day he comes back,—or some night! He said he would come back to the land when the stars mark the time when they repent, and one night in seven the fire is lit on the hills by the villages, that the earth-born god, Po-se-yemo, may see it if he should come, and may see that his people are faithful and are waiting for him to come.

“Because of the day when the god came, and they turned him away for that his robe was poor, and his feet were bare;—because of that day, no poor person is turned hungry from the door of that people. And the old men say this is because the god may come any day from the South, and may come again as a poor man.

“And this was told to us by the Te-hua men when we went for seed corn in that starving time, and were not sent away empty. *Aliksai!*”

The men drew long breaths of awe and approval when the story was ended. The old man who had found the girl knew that the girl had found friends.

But the mysterious coincidence of her coming as the rain came—and from the south—and the fair child!

Again the man who had been a prisoner with the Apaches was asked to tell of the coming of the white gods in the south where the Mexic people lived. He knew but little. No Apache had seen them, but Indian traders of feathers had said it was so.

The men smoked in silence and then one said:—“Even if it be so, could the girl come alone so far through the country of the hostile people?”

“There is High Magic to help sometimes,” reminded the old chief. “When magic has been used only for sacred things it can do all things! We can ask if she has known a white god such as the trader told of to our enemies.”

And the two oldest men went to the house of Ho-tiwa’s wife, and stood by the couch of the girl, and they sprinkled sacred meal, and sat in prayer before they spoke.

And the girl said, “My name is Mo-wa-thé (Flash Of Light) and the name of my son is Tahn-té (Sunlight). We may stay while these seeds grow into grain, and into trees, and bear harvest. But not always may we be with you, for a God of the Sky may claim his son.”

And she took three seeds from the fold of the girdle she had worn. They were strange seeds of another land.

The old men looked at each other, and remembered that to the mother of the Te-hua god, strange seeds had been given, and they trembled, and the man of the Te-hua words spoke:

“You come from the south where strange things may happen. On the trail of that south, heard you or saw you—the white god?”

And she drew the child close, and looked in its face, and said, “Yes—a white god!—the God of the Great Star.”

And the old men sprinkled the sacred meal to the six points, and told the council, and no one was allowed to question Mo-wa-thé ever again.

The seeds were planted near the well of Sik-yat-ki, and grew there. One was the tree of the peach, another of the yellow pear, and the grain was a grain of the wheat. The pear tree and the wheat could not grow well in the sands of the desert, only enough to bring seed again, but the peach grew in the shadow of the mesa, and the people had great joy in it, and only the men of the council knew they came from the gods.

And so it was in the beginning.

CHAPTER II

THE DAY OF THE SIGN

Mo-wa-thé,—the mother of Tahn-té, drew with her brush of yucca fibre the hair-like lines of black on the ceremonial bowl she was decorating. Tahn-té, slender, and nude, watched closely the deft manipulations of the crude tools;—the medicine bowls for the sacred rites were things of special interest to him—for never in the domestic arrangement of the homes of the terraces did he see them used. He thought the serrated edges better to look at than the smooth lines of the home dishes.

“Why can I not know what is that put into them?” he demanded.

“Only the Ancient Ruler and the medicine-men know the sacred thing for ‘Those Above.’”

He wriggled like a beautiful bronze snake to the door and lay there, his chin propped on his hands, staring out across the plain—six hundred feet below their door—only a narrow ledge—scarcely the length of the boy’s body:—divided the wall of their home from the edge of the rock mesa.

Mo-wa-thé glanced at him from time to time.

“What thoughts do you think that you lie still like a kiva snake with your eyes open?” she said at last.

“Yes, I think,” he acknowledged with the gravity of a ceremonial statement, “These days I am thinking thoughts—and on a day I will tell them.”

“When a boy has but few summers his thoughts are not yet his own,” reminded Mo-wa-thé.

“They are here—and here!” his slender brown hand touched his head, and heart,—“How does any other take them out—with a knife? Are they not me?”

“Boy! The old men shall take you to the kiva where all the youth of the clan must be taught how to grow straight and think straight.”

“Will they teach me there whose son I am?” he demanded.

Her head bent lower over the sacred bowl, but she made no lines. He saw it, and crept closer.

“Am I an arrow to you?” he asked—“sometimes your face goes strange like that, and I feel like an arrow,—I would rather be a bird with only prayer feathers for you!”

She smiled wistfully and shook her head.

“You are a prayer;—one prayer all alone,” she said at last. “I cannot tell you that prayer, I only live for it.”

“Is it a white god prayer?” he asked softly.

She put down the bowl and stared at him as at a witch or a sorcerer;—one who made her afraid.

“I found at the shrine by the trail the head you made of the white god,” he whispered. “No one knows who made it but me. I saw you. I am telling not any one. I am thinking all days of that god.”

“That?”—

“Is it the great god Po-se-yemo, who went south?” he whispered. “Do you make the prayer likeness that he may come back?”

“Yes, that he may come back!”

“My mother;—you make him white!”

She nodded her head.

“I am whiter than the other boys;—than all the boys!”

She picked up the bowl again and tried to draw lines on it with her unsteady fingers.

“And you talk more than all the boys,” she observed.

“Did the moon give me to you?” he persisted. “Old Mowa says I am white because the moon brought me.”

“It is ill luck to talk with that woman—she has the witch charm.”

“When I am Ruler, the witches must live in the old dead cities if you do not like them.”

Mo-wa-thé smiled at that.

“Yes, when you are Ruler. How will you make that happen?”

“All these days I have been thinking the thoughts how. If the moon brought me to you, that means that my father was not like others;—not like mesa men.”

“No—not like mesa men!” she breathed softly.

Mo-wa-thé was very pretty and very slender. Tahn-té was always sure no other mother was so pretty,—and as she spoke now her dark eyes were beautified by some memory,—and the boy saw that he was momentarily forgotten in some dream of her own.

“No one but me shall gather the wood for the night fire to light Po-se-yemo back from the south lands,” he said as he rose to his feet and stood straight and decided before his mother. “The moon will help me, and your white god will help me, and when he sees the blaze and comes back, you will tell him it was his son who kept the fire!”

He took from his girdle the downy feather of an eagle, stepped outside to the edge of the mesa and with a breath sent it beyond him into space. A current of air caught it and whirled it upwards in token that the prayer was accepted by Those Above.

And inside the doorway, Mo-wa-thé, watching, let fall the medicine bowl at this added evidence that an enchanted day had come to the life of her son. Not anything he wanted to see could be hidden from him this day! Powerless, she knelt with bent head over the fragments of the sacred vessel—powerless against the gods who veil things—and who unveil things!

It was the next morning that Mo-wa-thé stood at the door of Ho-tiwa the Ancient one;—the spiritual head of the village.

“Come within,” he said, and she passed his daughters who were grinding corn between the stones, and singing the grinding song of the sunrise hour. They smiled at her as she passed, but with the smile was a deference they did not show the ordinary neighbor of the mesas in Hopi land.

The old man motioned her to a seat, and in silence they were in the prayer which belongs to Those Above when human things need counsel.

Through the prayer thoughts echoed the last thrilling notes of the grinding songs at the triumph of the sun over the clouds of the dusk and the night.

Mo-wa-thé smiled at the meaning of it. It was well that the prayer had the music of gladness.

“Yes, I come early,” she said. “I come to see you. The time is here.”

“The time?”

“The time when I go. Always we have known it would be some day. The day is near. I take my son and go to his people.”

“My daughter:—his people he does not know.”

“My father:—no one but the winds have told him—yet he knows much! He has said to me the things by which I feel that he knows unseen things. I told him long ago that the stars as they touch the far mesa in the night are like the fires our people build to light our god back from the south. Yesterday he tells me he wants to be the builder of that fire and serve that god. My father in this strange land:—my son belongs to the clan whose duty it is to guard that fire! I never told him. Those Above have told him. I have waited for a sign. The gods have sent it to me through my son—we are to go across the desert and find our people.”

“It is a thing for council,” decided her host. “The way is far to the big river,—it is not good that you go alone. Men of Ah-ko will come when they hear us stamp the foot for the time of the gathering of the snakes. When they come, we will make a talk. If it is good that you go, you will find brothers who will show the trail.”

“That is well;” and Mo-wa-thé arose, and stood before him. “You have been my brother, and you have been my father, and my son shall stay and see once more the rain ceremony of the Blue Flute people, and of the Snake people, and when he goes to his own land, he can tell them of the great rain magic of the Hopi Priests.”

“He can do more than that,” said the Ancient. “In council it has been spoken. Your son can be one of us, and the men of the Snake Order will be as brothers to him if ever he comes back to the mesa where the Sun Father and the Moon Mother first looked on his face. In the days of the Lost Others, all the people had Snake Power, as they had power of silent speech with all the birds, and the four-foot brothers of the forests. Only a few have not lost it, and the Trues send all their Spirit People to work with that few. Your son may take back to your people the faith they knew in the ancient days.”

So it was that the boy watched the drama of the Flute people from the mesa edge for the last time. The circle of praying priests at the sacred well; virgins in white garments facing the path of the cloud symbols that the rain might come;—weird notes of the flute as the chanters knelt facing the medicine bowl and the sacred corn; then the coming of the racers from the far fields with the great green stalks of corn on their shoulders, and the gold of the sunflowers in the twist of reeds circling their brows. He did not know what the new land of his mother’s tribe would bring him, but he thought not any prayer could be more beautiful than this glad prayer to the gods. Of that prayer he talked to Mo-wa-thé.

Then eight suns from that day, he went from his mother’s home to the kiva of the Snake Priests, and he heard other prayers, and different prayers, and when the sun was at the right height, for four days they left the kiva in silence, and went to the desert for the creeping brothers of the sands. To the four ways they went, with prayers, and with digging-sticks. He had wondered in the other days why the men never spoke as they left the kiva, and as they came back with their serpent messengers for the gods. After the first snake was caught, and held aloft for the blessing of the sun, he did not wonder.

He had shrunk, and thought it great magic when the brief public ceremony of the Snake Order was given before the awe-struck people:—It had been a matter of amaze when he saw the men he knew as gentle, kind men, holding the coiling snake of the rattles to their hearts and dance with the flat heads pressed against their painted cheeks.

But the eight days and nights in the kiva with these nude, fasting, praying men, had taught him much, and he learned that the most wonderful thing in the taming of the serpents was not the thing to which the people of the dance circle in the open were witness. He was only a boy, yet he comprehended enough to be awed by the strong magic of it.

And of that prayer of the serpents he talked not at all to Mo-wa-thé.

And the Ancient knew it, and said. “It is well! May he be a great man—and strong!”

From a sheath of painted serpent skin the Ruler drew a flute brown and smooth with age.

“Lé-lang-ûh, the God of the Flute sent me the vision of this when I was a youth in prayer,” he said gently. “I found it as you see it long after I had become a man. On an ancient shrine uncovered by the Four Winds in a wilderness I found it. I have no son and I am old. I give it to you. Strange white gods are coming to the earth in these days, and in the south they have grown strong to master the people. I will be with the Lost Others when you are a man, but my words here you will not forget;—the magic of the sacred flute has been for ages the music of the growing things in the Desert. The God of the Flute is a god old as the planting of fields, and a strong god of the desert places. It may be that he is strong to lead you here once more to your brothers on some day or some night—and we will be glad that you come again. For this I give the flute of the vision to you. I have spoken. Lo-lo-mi!”

CHAPTER III

OF THE JOURNEY OF TAHN-TÉ

The journey of Tahn-té to his mother's land of the East was the wonder journey of the world! There were medicine-men of Ah-ko for their guides, and the people were many who went along, so no one was afraid of the Navahu of the hill land.

And a new name was given to his mother. Ho-tiwa gave her the name, and put on her head the water of the pagan baptism to wash away that which had been. The new name was S[=aa] – hanh-que-ah and it meant the “Woman who has come out from the mists of a Shadow or Twilight Land.” And they all called her by that name, and the men of Ah-ko regarded her with awe and with respect, and listened in silence when she spoke.

For the first time the boy saw beyond the sands of the desert, and in the high lands touched the running water of living springs, and scattered meal on it with his prayers, and bathed in the stream where green stems of rushes grew, and braided for himself a wreath of the tasselled pine.

“*Ai-ai!*” said his mother softly, “to the people of my land the pine is known as the first tree to come from the Mother Earth at the edge of the ice robe on her bosom. So say the ancients, and for that reason is it sacred to the gods—and to the sacrifices of gods. Have you, my son, woven a crown of sacrifice?”

But Tahn-té laughed, and thrust in it the scarlet star blossom growing in the timber lands of the Navahu.

“If I am made sacrifice I will have a blood strong, living reason,” he said, with the gay insolence of a young god walking on the earth.

But the older men did not smile at the bright picture he made with the blood-red stars in the green of his crown. They knew that even untried youth may speak prophet words, and they made prayers that the wise woman of the twilight land might not see the day when her son became that which he had spoken.

He carried with him a strange burden:—an urn or jar of ancient days dug from one of the buried cities of the Hopi deserts. On it was the circle of the plumed serpent, and the cross of red and of white. It was borne on his back by a netted band of the yucca fibre around his brow, and in it were young peach trees, and pear trees—the growing things of the mystic seeds given to the medicine-men of the Hopi the day of the boy's birth.

Seeds also were being carried, but it was the wish of the mother that her son carry the growing things into the great valley of the river P[=o] – s[=o]n-gé.

Even into the great rift of the earth called Tzé-ye did he carry it, where the cliff homes of the Ancient Others lined the sides of the cañon and the medicine-men of Ah-ko spoke in hushed tones because of the echoing walls, and of the strong gods who had dwelt there in the days before men lived and died.

“The dead of the Ancient ones are hidden in many hollow places of the stone,” explained one of the men who spoke the language of Te-hua people. “And it is good medicine for the man who can walk between these walls where the Divine Ones of old made themselves strong. You do not fear?”

“I do not fear,” said S[=aa] – hanh-que-ah, the woman of the twilight, “and my son does not fear. Before he was born to the light of the Sun Father, I made the trail from the level land of the west where the snow is, to the deep heart of the world where the plants have blossoms in winter time, and the birds sing for summer. Beside it this deep step down from the world above is like the thickness of your finger against the height of a tall man.”

The men stared at her in wonder, and Tahn-té listened, but could not speak when the older men were silent.

“There is such a place,” said the oldest of the men. “It is to the sunset. The water comes strong there, and it is a place of the gods, as this place is. And you have seen it with your eyes?”

“I have seen it, and the water that is so strong looks from the top like this reed of this ancient dwelling place,” said S[=aa] – hanh-que-ah, and she pointed to the waving slender lattice grass of the cañon.

“I have heard of it, but our people do not cross it in these days,” said the old man. “Our friends the Te-huas cross it—and cross a desert beyond when they go to the Love Dance of the Chinig-Chinik who live by the sunset sea. In my youth I thought to go, but old age is here and I have not yet seen it.” Then after an interval of thoughtful silence he said:—“You have crossed that river in the heart of the world—I did not know that women went to the Love Dance.”

“I can not tell you. I also do not know,” said S[=aa] – hanh-que-ah quietly, and the boy saw that the eyes of all the men were directed strangely to his mother. “I do not belong to the Order from which the people are sent to the Dance of Love or the Dance of Death. My eyes have not seen the waters of the sunset sea.”

“Then you did not go beyond the river in the heart of the rocks?” asked the old man. “You did not cross over?”

“I did cross over. I have seen the sands of that far desert of which you speak. I have seen the trees of which one leaf will cover a man from the sun, and more leaves will make a cover for a dwelling. I have seen the water run there at the roots of those trees as this water runs in the shadow of this rock, and—ai!—ai-ah! I have seen it sink in the sands when it was needed most—and have heard it gurgle its ghost laugh beneath the hot trail where the desert lost one wandered.”

Her head bent forward and her hands covered her eyes. The boy wanted to ask where this place was of which he was hearing so much for the first time. What was there in the wonderful journey of the wise woman to make the tears come and her voice tremble? But the old Shaman of Ah-ko reached out his hand and touched her bent head.

“It is true, my daughter of the Te-hua, that the Snake priest of the Hópitû told in council that high medicine was yours. Yet all he could not tell me. You have lived much, oh woman! Yet your heart is not hard, and your thoughts run clear as the snow water of the high hills. It is well that you have come with us, and that you have talked with us. When the hidden water mocks with laughter so far beneath the desert sand that no man lives to reach it:—then it is that men die beside the place their bleeding hands dig deep. You have heard that laughter, and have lived, and have brought back your child out of the sands of death. It has given you the medicine for your son that is strong medicine. You have lived to walk with us and that is well.”

“Yes, thanks this day, it is well,” said the other men.

At Ah-ko, “the city of the white rock,” the silent, shy Medicine-Woman of the Twilight and her son were feasted like visiting rulers of a land.

To his wonder they sang songs of thanks that the gods had let her come to them once again, and they asked that she make prayers with them.

The woman with whom the rain and the sweet fruit had come to the far desert was a woman to be feasted and propitiated—all the more that she disclaimed aught of the divine for herself; but when they spoke of her son she was silent. His life was his own in which to prove what he might be.

Here he saw no girls with the head bands for their burden of water bottles as in Tusayan. He saw instead the beautifully poised vases on the heads of the women while they paced evenly over the rock of the mesa or the treacherous sand hills, and the great walled reservoir of shining green water was a constant source of delight to him. Eight times the height of a man was the depth of it, and at the very bottom in an unseen crevice was the living spring pulsing out its heart for the long line of women who brought their decorated jars to be filled.

The evening of their arrival he found his mother there in the shadow of the high rock walls.

“Are you sad, my mother, that you walk alone and sit in the shadow?” he asked, but she shook her head.

“I come because this place of the deep water is precious to me,” she said. “Make your prayer here, my son, make your prayer for the people who thirst in the desert of this earth life. There are many deserts to cross, and the enchanted hills and the enchanted wells of content are but few on the trail.”

He made the prayer, and scattered the sacred pollen of the corn to the four ways, and again took up his query.

“The enchanted mesa Kat-zi-mo I have seen and already the men have told me its story,” he said. “But of this well there is no story except that in the ages ago the water was brought high with the wall, and when the Apache enemies came, the people could not starve for water even while the fighters fought a long time. That is all the story—there is no magic in that.”

“There is always magic in the waters of the desert,” and the Woman of the Twilight. “One other time I drank of the water of this well. It was enchanted that time, for every moving light and shadow on its face have I remembered all the days and all the nights. Give me to drink of it now with your own hands, and it will be then precious for two reasons.”

He did as she said, and wanted to ask of that other time and could not.

“Thanks this day, thanks for my son,” she said and sprinkled water to the four ways and drank. “Not again shall I see you—oh joy place in the desert! Give your magic to my son that he may carry it to the free running water of his own land!”

In Tusayan his mother had been to him Mo-wa-thé, the pottery maker who made the finest of all vessels, but on the wonder trail in the new lands he found that she was strangely learned. And when she spoke of the place of the well on the high mesa and said it was precious for magic there, he walked silent and awed beside her, for the magic world held the Great Mystery, and only through prayer must it be spoken.

He knew that his lot was more fortunate than that of any other boy alive, on the long trail where each night around the camp fire the men told tales of the Ancient days when gods walked on the earth and taught wisdom to the people. Each tribe had its own sacred truths given by its own gods, and he was learning of many. In the great cañon of Tzé-ye—the abiding place of the Navahu Divine Ones, he had heard with awe of the warrior boy gods who were born of the Sun and of the Goddess Etsan-atlehi and set out to slay the terrific giants of evil in the world. But the medicine-men of Ah-ko were quite sure that the Ancient Ones of their own race had proof that the Supreme Power is a master mind in a woman’s form. It is the thing which thinks and creates, and her twin sister is the other mind which only remembers. Prayers must not be said to the goddess who only remembers—but many prayers belong to the goddess who creates. And the most beloved of all is the goddess E-yet-e-ko (Mother Earth) who nourishes them all their days. He learned that they planted their corn and their cotton by the stars and the plum blossoms, in the way his mother said they did by the river of her land, also that the great bear of the stars was called by them the great animal of cold weather, and that the Sun had eight children, or wandering stars in the sky.

He heard many more things, but the wisdom of it was too deep for a boy to know, and the words of the symbols were new, and not for his understanding. How big—how very big the world of the Tusayan desert had seemed to him as he stood on the mesa of Wálpi and looked to the south where old Awatabi (the high place of the Bow) stood in its pride, and rugged Mishongnavi with her younger sister Shupaulevi against the sky, so beautiful, that the sacred mountain Dok-os-lid of the far away, looks sometimes like a cloud back of those villages, and sometimes like the shell of the big water from which its name was taken.

But all those wonderful Hopi mesas with their fortresses on each, were within the running time of a morning, and not in any of them were there forests or living streams, or strange new things. Only the clouds and the shadow of the clouds on the sand,—or the sun and the glory of the sun on

the world, made the heart leap with the beauty of the land of the Hopi people. But here were new things each day.

When the boys of Ah-ko in friendly rivalry ran races and leaped great spaces, and shot arrows into a melon with him—and then ate the melon!—they asked how many years he had lived and he laughed and did not know.

“I had so many,” he said holding up the fingers of both hands and pointing to his eyes,—“When I followed your men down the trail from Wálpi in Hopi land. But I have seen so much, and lived so much that I must be very old now!”

This the boys thought a great jest, and said since he was old he could not run races, or see straight to shoot, and he must let himself be beaten. But the boys who tried to beat him were laughed at by the old men who watched, and he was given a very fine bow to take on his journey, and never any boy crossed those lands so joyously as he who carried all the way the growing sprouts of the new trees.

And at Ah-ko a little tree from the urn, and some of the seeds were given, but the winter to come was a hard winter, and the ice killed them, so the fruit from the strange far-off trails was not for Ah-ko.

They had rested, and were about to depart, when Tahn-té, watching with other boys the war between two eagles poised high above the enchanted mesa, saw on the plain far below the figure of an Indian runner, his body a dark moving line against the yellow bloom spread like a great blanket of flowers from Mount Spin-eh down and across the land.

He only watched because the man ran well—almost as well as a Hopi—and did not see in the glistening bronze body the herald of a new day in the land.

At the edge of the cliff they watched to see him appear and disappear in the length of the great stairway of the fortress. Some day each boy among them would also be a runner in his turn for ceremonial reasons, and it is well to note how the trusted men make the finish.

It is not easy to run up the two hundred foot wall of Ah-ko at the end of a long trail, but this man, conscious of watchers, leaped the last few steps and stood among them. Only an instant he halted, in surprise face to face with the boy Tahn-té who stood nude and fair beside dark companions.

Tahn-té was accustomed to the curious regard of strangers who visited the country of Tusayan. He had heard so often that he was a child of the sky that this explanation of his fairer skin seemed to him a very clear and logical explanation of the case.

But after the runner had been listened to by the governor and fed, and a herald from the terraced housetop had called aloud the startling message brought by him to the people of Ah-ko, the boy went away from the other boys, and wrinkled his brows in boyish thought, and stared across to the ancient crater of Se-po-chineh until his mother sought him, and found him.

“You are weary, my son, that you come alone from the others?”

“The others only talk yet tell nothing,” he said gloomily, “and of that which the runner tells I wish to hear much. You hear what he says of white men like gods who come from the south searching for the blue stones and the stone of the sun fire, and taming strange beasts to carry them on their way?”

“Yes, it is true, I hear,” she said.

“And you think it is magic? Is it that they are gods—or demons—or men like these men?”

“If they were gods would they not know where the stones of the sunlight are hidden in the earth?”

“Are they children of the moon or the sun, or the stars that they are white?” he demanded.

“It may be so,” she said very lowly, conscious that his gloomy eyes were trying to make her see what he felt, but she must not see, and she spoke with averted head.

Then he rose and stood erect and stretched out his arms their widest and surveyed himself with measuring gaze and a certain pride, but the other thought came back with its gloom and he laughed shortly with disdain of himself.

“I have felt stronger than all the boys—always! Do you know why that has been? I know now why—it was because I stood alone,—I was the only child of the light and I dreamed things of that. Now a man tells us there are many such people, and their magic is great, and my strength goes because of the many!”

His mother stroked his hand reassuringly. “Na-vin (my own),” she said steadily. “I have felt your dreams, and I also dream them. Fear no one born of the light or of the darkness, and when you are a man you will have all your strength—and more than your own strength.”

“You say that, my mother?”

She held her head erect now and looked straight and steadily into the eyes of her son.

“I say it!”

And he remembered that it was more than his mother who spoke, it was the Medicine Woman of the Twilight and of the strange places, and the far off thoughts.

He lifted her hand and breathed on it. “I am again Tahn-té,” he said, and smiled. “You make me find myself!”

CHAPTER IV

WHITE SEEKERS OF TREASURE

When Alvarado marched his band of adventurers into the pueblo Ua-lano to the sound of tom-toms and flutes of welcome, an Indian woman with a slender boy stood by the gate and watched the welcome of the strangers.

An exceedingly reckless, rakish lot they were—this flower of the Mexican forces who the Viceroy was only too willing should explore all lands, and seas, so they kept themselves away from the capitol.

The women and the children shrank back as the horses clattered in. Some laughed to cover their fear, others threw prayer meal, and their fright made the commander notice the blanketed figure of the woman whose eyes alone shone above the draperies held close, and who stared so keenly into each white face as they passed.

“Who is the dame in the mask of the blanket?” he asked of his host Chief Bigotes—the courteous barbarian who had crossed seventy leagues of the desert to ask that his village be honored by the god-like ones from the south.

Bigotes looked at her, did not know, but after inquiring came back and spoke.

“It is a strange thing but it is true,” said the interpreter, “she is called the One from the Twilight Land. She went as a girl from Te-hua to Ah-ko for study with the medicine people of one order there. One night it was as if she go into the earth, or up in the sky. No one ever see her any more. It was the year of the fire of the star across the sky. Now she comes from the west and so great a medicine woman is she that leading men are sent to guard her on the trail to the Te-hua people—and to guard her son.”

“Faith! Your strangers are a handsome pair. The boy would make a fine page in a civilized land. He is the fairest Indian I’ve seen.”

The boy knew that his mother and himself were objects of query, and stood stolid, erect and disdainful,—the stranger should see that all their clanking iron, their dominating swagger, and their trained animals could not make him move an eyelash of wonder.

But to his mother he said:

“They have much that we will need if we ever fight them; their clanking clothes and shields can break many arrows.”

“Why do you talk of fighting?”

“I do not know why. It is all I thought of as I looked at them.”

One thing interested him more than all else, and that was a man in a grey robe who carried a book, and turned the pages in absorbed meditation; sometimes his reading was half aloud, and Tahn-té slipped near each time he could, for to him it looked as if the man talked to the strange white paper.—He thought it must be some sort of high magic, and of all he saw in the new comers, he coveted most of the contents of those pages,—it was more wonderful than the clanging metal of their equipment.

A tiny elf-like girl followed Tahn-té as a lost puppy would, until he asked her name, and was told it was Yahn—that she lived in Povi-whah by the big river and that her mother was visiting some society of which she was a member,—that she was in the kiva and could not be seen for four days and nights, and in the coming of the beasts and the strangers, her caretaker had lost her, and the home where she had stayed last night she did not know.

She knew only she was lost, and some boys had told her that the new kind of beasts ate little girls. She did not weep or call, but she tried to keep her little nude body out of sight behind Tahn-té if a horse or a mule turned its head in the direction she was.

So glad she was to be protected that she told him all her woes in the strange town. The greatest was that a dog had taken from her hand the roasted ear of corn she had been eating, and she wished Ka-yemo was there, he would have maybe killed the dog.

Inquiry disclosed the fact that Ka-yemo was not her brother; he lived in Provi-whah. Her own name was Yahn. No:—it was not a Te-hua name. It was Apache, for her mother was Apache—and the Te-hua men had caught her when they were hunting, and always her mother had told Yahn to stay close to the houses, for hunting enemies might bear her away into slavery—and Yahn was not certain but these men on the beasts might be hunters.

She was very tiny, and she spoke imperfectly, but shyness was not a part of her small personality, and she insisted on making herself understood. To Tahn-té she seemed like a boy rather than a girl, and he called her Pa-ah-dé which is the Te-hna word for “brother”—and later he gave her to his mother to keep her out of the way of the horses and the strange men.

And thus it was that Tahn-té, and Apache Yahn saw together the strange visitors from the south, and Yahn, though but a baby, thought they might be hunters whom it would be as well to hide from, and Tahn-té thought much of the coats of mail, and how lances could be made to pierce the joints.

He heard the name of the man with the black robe and the magic thing of white leaves from which he talked—or which talked to him!—it was “Padre”—there was also another name and it was “Luis.” It meant the same as “Father Ho-tiwa” or “Brother Tahn-té.”

To the man from whom the rakish Spanish soldiers bent the knee and removed the covering from the head, Tahn-té felt no antagonism as he did for the men who carried the arquebus and swords. The man who is called “Father” or the woman who is called “Mother” with the Indian people, is a person to whom respect is due, and through Bigote he had heard—by keeping quiet as a desert snake against a wall—that the man of the grey robe who was called “Father” was the great medicine-man of the white tribe. Through him the god of the white man spoke. In the leaves of the white book were recorded this god’s laws, and even these white men who were half gods, and had conquered worlds beyond the big water of the South, and of the East, bent their knees when the man of the robe spoke of the sacred things.

Of these things he spoke to his mother, and was amazed to learn that she knew of the white man’s gods, and the white men’s goddess. Never had she talked to him of this, and she did not talk to him much now. She only told him that all she knew would belong to him when the time came, and that the time seemed coming fast—but it was not yet. When he was older he could know.

When he talked to her of the many white pages in which the white god had written, she told him that much wisdom—and strong magic must be there. The white men had no doubt stolen for their earth-born god the birth story of Po-se-yemo, the god of her own people. But his magic had been great in that land across the seas and that people had written words of the earth-born god as had certain tribes of Mexico, and all that the god said and did had been written plainly as had been written the records of Quetzel-coatlé of the South, and it was not good that their own tribe had not the written records of their gods.

“It may be that the time has come to make such records,” said Tahn-té, “our people should not be behind the other people.”

“We have no written words,”—said his mother;—“our head men who govern have only the deerskin writings of Ki-pah the wise, who lived long ago and did much for the people of Kah-po and Oj-ke, and the people of the river.”

“Of him I have not heard,” said Tahn-té—“was he a god?”

“No—no god, but he lived and worked as a god. He came to this land before the day of my grandfathers. When the time is come, the men of my father’s people will tell you the work he did in our valley, and what he said. So will tell you the old men of Provi-whah and the old men of Kah-po. He came to a land, not to one people, and on the deerskin he painted things never seen but by the wise men who know how to read it.”

The boy stared moodily into the sun swept court of Ua-lano. There were so many things in the world of which no one had ever told him!

“If I am very good, and say very many prayers, and wait on the gods very carefully, will the wise men of the medicine orders tell me of the deerskin records some day?” he demanded.

“Some day—it may be so,” she conceded.

“Good! I will think of that each day as the sun comes up!” he stated. “And the magic of the white man’s writings I will learn for myself. It is a thing which is not kept for sacred places, and no prayers are needed for that!”

The woman of mystery regarded him strangely, yet spoke no word. The magic of the white conquerors was wonderful magic to her, yet she could not ask her son why he only spoke of them as ever beyond some wall which they must not cross,—and of their knowledge as strong knowledge, yet not sacred knowledge.

Between the woman and her son there was often a wall of silence. Even her love could not cross it. There were always spoken or unspoken questions which she left without answers. He was only learning this in the wonderful journey of the desert lands, and he asked fewer questions,—but looked at her more. And:—she knew that also!

The man of the talking white leaves, and the grey gown set in the center of the court a white cross, and all the soldiers knelt, and in front of the dwellings the brown people knelt also—which the Christians deemed a special dispensation that so many heathen had been brought so quickly to their knees at the mere sight of the holy symbol. And in the morning Father Luis decided he would baptize all of them, and have a high mass for the salvation of their souls. The boy who watched the book so closely, was, he felt sure, a convert at mere sight of the white leaves, and the heathen mother would no doubt clamor also for sanctification.

But in the early dusk of the morning the boy and his mother were on the trail for the home valley of the river P[=o] – s[=o]n-gé of which he had dreamed. With them were people of Kah-po, and people of Provi-whah and the Apache woman and her child Yahn. Yahn made some one carry her most of the hard trails, and talked much, and asked many things of the little growing trees in the old urn of ancient Tusayan.

And when they came in sight of the sacred mesa, Tuyo, a runner was sent ahead to tell the governor and the head men of the strange new people of the clanking iron at Ua-lano, and the wonderful and belated home-coming of the lost woman of many years’ mystery.

Because of this they were met at the edge of the mesa by many, and the Woman of the Twilight knelt and touched the feet of the governor and asked that the gate of the valley be open to her and to her son. And Tahn-té knelt also and offered the growing things.

“These are sacred things of which the Ruler must speak,” said the governor. “I am but for one short summer and winter, but the Ruler is for always. Of the new things to bear fruit we still speak in council,—also of the new people trading a new white god for blue stones, and painted robes.”

But Tahn-té knew that a welcome was theirs, for the governor would not have come outside the walls except it had been so, and the old man watched keenly the delight of the boy as the river of that land came clear before him spread at the foot of the wide table land, and the great plain below. Trees grew there, and between them the running water shone in the sun. The Black Mesa Tuyo, Mesa of the Hearts, arose from the water edge,—a great dark monument of mystic rites, and wondrous records of the time when it had been a breathing place for the Powers in the heart of the earth. The rocks were burned so red it always seemed that the fire was still under them. And south was the God-Maid mesa:—its outline as the face of a maid upturned to the sky.

Beyond the river stretched the yellow corn fields—the higher land like a rugged red skeleton from which the soil had been washed,—and beyond that was the great uplift of the pine-clad mountains where the springs never failed, and the deer were many.

Wild fowl fluttered and dove in the waters of the river, grey pigeons flew in little groups from the trail; as they walked, two men in canoes caught fish where a little stream joined the big water of P[=o] – s[=o]n-gé—in every direction the boy was conscious of a richer, fuller life than any he had yet seen. His mother was right—her people were a strong people! and their villages were many in the valleys of the river.

In Povi-whah the clan of the Arrow Stone people welcomed the Twilight Woman as their own, and the men and women who had journeyed with her from Ua-lano looked glad to have journeyed with her,—they had to answer many questions.

Tahn-té also had much practise in the Te-hua words when he tried to tell them what the peach was like, and what the pear was like, and the youth were skeptical as to peaches big as six plums.

A boy larger than he flipped with a willow wand at the urn with the little trees, and told him that in Provi-whah a boy was whipped if he lied too often!

“How many times may a boy lie and not be whipped?” asked Tahn-té, and the other boys laughed, and one stripling gave him a fillet of otter skin in approval, and said his name was Po-tzah, and that their clan was the same.

But the tiny Yahn who looked from face to face, and saw the anger in the face of the boy of the willow wand, caught the switch and brought it down with all the force of her two chubby arms on the nurslings brought from Hopi land.

Tahn-té caught her and lifted her beyond reach of the urn.

“I should have let the strange beasts of the iron men eat you,” he said. “You shall go hungry for peaches if you kill the trees!”

The others laughed as she wriggled clear—and lisped threats even while keeping out of range of his strong hands.

“Always she is a little cat of the hills to fight for Ka-yemo,” said Po-tzah. “Little Ka-yemo will some day grow enough to fight alone!”

Ka-yemo scowled at them, and muttered things, and sauntered away. He was the largest of all of them, but one boy does not fight six!

Yahn was in such a silent rage that she twitched and bent the willow until it was no longer any thing but a limp wreck:—she would break something!

“That is the Apache!” said Po-tzah. “I think that baby does not forget to fight even when she sleeps.”

The little animal flung an epithet at him and ran after the sulky Ka-yemo:—evidently her hero and idol.

The mother of Tahn-té was called in council for things of which Tahn-té was not to know. But he learned that she was of the society of the Rulers:—that from which the spiritual head was selected when the Po-Ahtun-ho or Ruler no longer walked on the earth.

After the council sacred meal was sprinkled on the trees in the urn, and the priests of the order of Po-Ahtun divided them between the Winter people, and the Summer people, that it be proven which the care of the new fruit would belong to for prayers, and each planted them by their several signs in the sky. His mother spoke to him when alone and told him he was now to do a boy’s work in the village, and his training must begin for the ceremonies of high orders into which the council wished him to enter.

“To serve our people?”

“Yes:—it will be so—to serve our people.”

“Since it is to be like that, may I also speak?”—he asked. “May I not speak to the men who decide? I have thought of this each day since Ua-lano. At some time I must speak:—is not this the time?”

“It may be the time,” she assented. “We will go to the old men of the orders. It may be they will listen.”

All night they listened, and all night they talked, and the old men looked at the mother strangely that the son should speak the words of a man in council.

“Thanks that you let me speak,” he said. “Thanks! It is true what you hear of the white gold-hunter’s magic. It is strong. It is good that we find out how it is strong. My mother tells you how the Snake priests of Tusayan make me of their order, so that I can know that magic for the rain ceremony. In my hands also was given the Flute of Prayer to the desert gods, and to know Hopi prayers does not hurt me for a Te-hua:—it is Te-hua prayers my mother teaches me always! So it will not hurt me to learn the magic of the men of iron. They are strong and they will be hard to fight. The grey robe man is the man who teaches of their gods. He teaches it from magic white leaves in his hand, on the leaves there are words—other iron men can talk from them, but only the grey robe is the priest and teaches. He would teach me if I would serve him—then I could have their magic with our own.”

“It may be evil magic,” said one.

“It tames the strange beasts as the Hopi prayers tame the snakes,” replied the boy—“and every day the beasts do work for these people.”

The old men nodded assent—it certainly must be strong magic to do that!

But a man of the Tain-tsain clan arose.

“This woman has been gone many moons on a strange trail,” he said. “The son she brings back to her clan speaks not as a youth speaks. It is as if he has been very old and grows young again. It may be magic—and again it may be that he is half lost in his mind and dreams the dreams of a man. It is a new thing that men listen to a child in council.”

Then K[=a] – ye-fah the aged Po-Ahtun-ho made a sign for silence, and sat with closed eyes, and it was very quiet in the council until he spoke.

“You have brought a big thought out of the world of the Spirit People, Phen-tza,” he said. “It has been given to you to say, and that is well! It has been given to me to see—and I see with prayer. When the God-thought is sent to earth people is it not true that the child of dreams, or the man of dreams, is the first to hear or to feel that thought? Was not the earth-born god, Po-se-yemo, called a youth that was foolish? Was he not laughed at by the clans until he wept? Was he not made ashamed until out of his pain there grew a wisdom greater than earth-wisdom? Let us think of these things, and let us hear the words of the child who dreams.”

“It is well,” said another, “even when half the mind is gone, it may be gone only a little while on the twilight trail to the Great Mystery.”

“The life music comes in many ways,” said K[=a] – ye-fah, the Ruler. “Many reeds grow under the summer sun, but not in all of them do we hear the call of the spirit people when the wild reed is fashioned for the flute. The gods themselves grow the flutes of High Mystery. This youth is only a reed by the river to-day—yet through such reed the gods may send speech for our ears.”

“We will listen,” said the others. “Let us hear more of the men whose blankets are made of the hard substance.” And at this Tahn-té again took courage and spoke.

“These iron men say they are only on a hunting trail—they say they will not trouble the people—that is what their men say who speak for them! But if one boy, or one man, could talk as they talk, you men of Povi-whah would know better if they speak straight. My mother has found the trail to her people on the right day, and has brought me here. I want to be the boy who learns that talk of the hunters of the blue stones and sacred sun metal of the earth, and then I can come back and tell it to the wise men of my mother’s people.”

“But you may not come back.”

“I will ask all the Powers that I will come back. My mother will pray also, and her prayers are strong.”

“I will pray also,” said S[=aa] – hanh-que-ah.

The men smoked, and the boy watched them and waited until K[=a] – ye-fah spoke.

“That which the son of this wise woman says is to be well thought of;—it may be precious to us in days not yet born of the sun. You who listen know that we are living now in a day that was told of by Ki-pah in the years of our Lost Others, and Ki-pah spoke as the god Po-se-yemo spoke:—he was given great magic to see the years ahead of the years he lived.”

“It is true,” assented the governor—“It was when the people yet lived in the caves, and the water went into the sands in that highland—that is when he came to our Lost Others—Ki-pah—the great wisdom. He came from the south, and taught them to come down from the caves and build houses by the great river, and to turn the water to the fields here. All things worked with him—and Kah-po—and Oj-ke and P[=o] – ho-gé were built and stand to this day where he said they must be built. He knew all speech, and could tell magic things from a bowl of clear water. It was in the water he saw men who were white, and who would cover the land if we were not strong. These men are the men he saw in the water. I think it is so, and that this is the time to be strong.”

CHAPTER V

TAHN-TÉ AMONG STRANGERS

The one thing to which the boy gave awed attention was that when the time came for the villages to fight—a leader would be born to them—if the people of the valley were true to their gods they would be strong always, Ki-pah the prophet told them to remember always the war star in the sky—the star Po-se-yemo had told them of, when it moved, the time to make war would be here.

And when the time came to fight, a leader would come to them, as he, Ki-pah had come! Because of this thought was the heart of the boy thrilled that he had been called a reed by the river—a reed through which music of the desert gods might speak.

He was filled with wild fancies of mystic things born of these prophecies. And the old men said that perhaps this was the time of which Po-se-yemo, the god, and Ki-pah, the prophet, had told!

The vote of a Te-hua council has to be the agreement of every man, and the star of the morning brought down to the valley before the last reluctant decided it was well to send a messenger to learn of the strange gods.

But as the sun rose Tahn-té bathed in the running water of the river, and his prayer was of joy:—for he was to go!

In joy, and with the light of exaltation in his face he said farewell to boy thoughts, and walked lightly over the highlands and the valleys to Ua-lano, and thence followed the adventurers to Ci-cu-yé and bent the knee to Father Luis, and kissed the cross, and let water be sprinkled over him, and did all the things shown him with so glad a heart that the devoted priest gave praise for such a convert from the pagan people. So pleased was he with the eagerness of Tahn-té to learn, that he made him his own assistant at the ceremonies of the Holy Faith.

And after each one, the boy washed his hands in running water, and scattered prayer meal to the gods of the elements, and to the Sun Father God, and knew that in Provi-whah his mother was praying also that he be not harmed by the god of the gold hunters—and that he come back strong with the white man's magic.

The boy Ka-yemo of the Tain-tsain clan was also sent—but neither boy was told of the quest of the other. The old men decided it was better so. Without pay they went with the Spanish adventurers, one serving the men of arms and learning the ways of the strange animals, and the other serving the priests and learning the symbols of the strangers' creed of the one goddess, and two gods, and many Go-h[=e] – yahs, called saints by the men of the iron clothes.

They both saw many strange things in Ci-cu-yé, and they saw the strange Indian slave, whom the old men of Ci-cu-yé instructed to lead the men of iron from their land with the romance of Quivera. And the slave did it, and told the strangers of the mythic land of gold and gems, and lost his life in the end by doing so, but the life of the romance was more enduring than any other thing, and the spirit of that treasure search still broods over the deserts and the mountains of that land.

But the stay of Ka-yemo was not even the length of the first winter with the strangers. For in Tiguex where the great captain (Coronado) wintered, and made his comfort by turning the natives out of their houses, there was a season of grievous strife ere the Spring came, and the two boys of Te-hua saw things unspeakable as two hundred Indians of the valley, captured under truce, were burned at the stake by the soldiers of the cross.

One of the reasons for the crusade to the north as written in the chronicles of Christian Mexico was to save the souls of the heathen for the one god,—and his advocates were sending the said souls for judgement as quickly as might be!

Tahn-té stood, pale and tense in the house where the chapel of Fray Juan Padilla had been established,—once it had been the house of the governor of the village who might even now be among the victims of the broken trust.

On the altar was a crucifix in gold on ebony, and the eyes of the boy were not kindly as he regarded it.

“They lie when they say you are a god of peace like our god Po-se-yemo,” he said. “They lie when they say you are the god of the red man—you are the white god of the white people—and you will let the red men hold not anything that your white children want!”

He heard himself speak the words aloud there alone where the new altar was—he seemed to hear himself saying it over and over as if by the sound of his own voice he could kill the sound of the tortured red men in the court.

A blanketed figure ran in at the open door, halted at the sound of Tahn-té’s voice—and then flung himself forward. It was Ka-yemo and his teeth were chattering at the thought of the inferno without.

“It may be they will not look for us here,” he said as he saw who it was in the chapel—“Perhaps—if one keeps near—to their strong god: and you are close also—and—”

“I stay close because it is my work,”—said Tahn-té. “Some of the men tied to the stakes out there bent before their strong god and said prayers there.—Did it save them?”

“They will kill us—we will never see our people—they will kill us!” muttered Ka-yemo shaken with fear.

“I do not think they want to kill us:—they still need us for many things. We are only boys, we have not wives that we refuse to give to the white men—if we had it might be different, who knows?”

“Is that the cause?”

“The white men will give a different one—but that is the cause! The men of this valley think it is enough if they give their houses, and their corn, and their woven blankets to their fine white brothers:—the red men are foolish men,—so they burn at the stake out there!”

Ka-yemo stared at him, and crouched in his blanket.

“You say strange things,” he muttered. “I think when they get crazy with the spirit to kill that they will kill us all. I do not stay to be killed—I go!”

Tahn-té staring at the emblems of holiness on the altar scarcely heard him.

“I go, Tahn-té,—I go if I have to swim the river with the ice.—Do you stay here to be killed?”

“I am here to learn many things—I learn but little yet, I cannot go.”

“But—if you die?”

“I think it is not yet that I die,” said Tahn-té—“There is much to do.”

“And—if I live to see—our people?”

“Tell my mother I am strong—and I feel her prayers when the sun comes up. Tell the governor I stay to learn what the white god does for the red men; when I have things to tell the people I will come back to Povi-whah.”

But the ice of that winter melted, and the summer bore its fruit, and the second spring time had come to the land before Tahn-té crossed the mesas and stood at his mother’s door.

“Thanks—that you have come,” she said, and wept, and he held her hand and did not know the things to say, only:—“Thanks that our gods have brought me back.”

“And the magic of the white man?”

“It is here,” and he opened a bag made of buffalo skin, and in it were books and papers covered with written words. She looked on them with awe. Her son was only a boy but he had won that which was precious, and earned honors from the men of her tribe and her clan.

“Not to me must you tell it first,” she said—“The Ruler will hear you, and the governor,—they will decide if it is to be known, or if it is to be secret.”

The old men sprinkled prayer meal—and smoked medicine smoke over the books to lift any lingering curses from the white men’s god, and then the boy opened the pages and made clear how

the marks stood for words, and the words put all together stood for the talk of the white god. It was a thing of wonder to the council.

“And it is a strong god?” asked the Ruler.

“It is strong for war:—not for peace,” said the boy.

“Ka-yemo brought back the words of the medicine-man of the grey blanket who talked of their god. All his talk was of peace and of love in the heart. Is that true?”

“It is true. He was a good man. It may be that some men are born so good that even the gods of the men of iron cannot make them evil. And Padre Luis was born into the world like that.”

“We listen to you to hear of the moons and the suns since you went away.”

The boy told of the fruitless search to the east for the wonderful land of the slave’s romance, where the natives used golden bowls instead of earthen vessels for food, where each soldier was so sure of gaining riches that the weight of provisions carried was small lest the animals be not strong enough to carry all the gold and the food also.

The old men laughed much at this search for the symbol of the Sun Father along the waters of the Mischipi, and commended the wise men of Ci-cu-yé who had the foresight to plan the romance, and to send the slave to lead the adventurers to the land of false dreams.

It was bad, however, that the strangers had not lost themselves in the prairies, or were not killed by the fierce tribes of the north:—it was bad that they came back to the villages of the P[=o] – s[=o]n-gé river.

Then the boy told of the final despair of the conquerors, and their disheartened retreat to the land of the south. For two years they had terrorized the people of the land—worse enemies than the Navahu or the Comanche or the Apache fighter, then when they had made ruins where towns and gardens had been, they said it was all of no use since the yellow metal was not found in the ground.

“Did the wise men of iron not know that where the yellow metal is in the earth, that there is ever the symbol of the Sun Father, and that it must be a thing sacred and a hidden place for prayer?”

“They did not know that:—no man told them.”

K[=a] – ye-fah, the ancient Ruler blew smoke from his pipe to the four ways, and spoke.

“Yet among the men they burned to ashes in the village square were many who could have told them that, and three who could have told them where such prayer places were hidden! It is well, my children, that they did die, and not tell that which the Sun Father has hidden for his own people:—it is well!”

“It is well!” echoed the others of the council.

“We all die when the day or the night comes,”—continued the old man. “It is well that we die in bravery for the sake of the others who have to live and walk the earth path. It is well that we have strong hearts to think about. One day I shall go in the ground with my fathers; I am old, and the trail has been long, and in my old days the sunlight has been covered for me.”

Tahn-té did not know what he meant, but the other men bent their heads in sympathy.

“It is twice four moons since my child K[=a] – ye-povi was carried away in the darkness when we fought the Navahu in the hunting grounds to the west,”—he continued. “No one has found her—no trader has brought her back. When a woman, she will not know her own people, or our own speech. I think of that, and grow weak. Our people have never been slaves—yet she will be a slave for our enemy the Navahu! So it is that I grow old more quick, and the time may come soon to sleep on our Mother—the Earth.”

“We wish that it comes not soon,” said the governor, and the others signified their assent.

“Thanks, thanks that you wish it. I do not speak of it to give sad hearts. I speak because of the days when I may be gone, and another than me will hold the knowledge of a sacred place where the Sun Father hides his symbol. It is good that I hear of the men who let themselves go into ashes, and when if they had said once:—‘I know where it is—the metal of the Sun!’ all might have gone free and lived long days. My children:—it may be that some day one of you will hold a secret of the sacred

place where strong magic lives! If it be so, let that man among you think in his heart of the twenty times ten men who let themselves be burned into ashes by the white men of iron! Guard you the sacred places—and let your ashes go into the sands, or be blown by the winds to the four ways. But from the sacred things of the gods, lift not the cover for the enemy!”

The old man trembled with the intensity of the thought and the dread of what the unborn years might bring.

After a moment of silence the governor spoke:

“It may be that you live the longest of all! No one knows who will guard the things not to be told. But no Te-hua can uncover that which belongs to the Sun Father, and the Earth Mother.”

“It is true:—thanks that it is true!”—said the other men, and Tahn-té knew he was listening to things not told to boys.

“Thanks that you speak so,” said the Ruler. “Now we have all spoken of this matter. It is done. But the magic of the white hunters of gold, we have not yet heard spoken. How is it, boy, that you have brought all these signs of it:—what made blind their eyes?”

“Not anything,” said Tahn-té. “It was a long time I was with them. Some men had one book, or two, other men had papers that came in great canoes from their land in Spain. Some had writings from their fathers or their friends. These I heard read and talked of around the camp fire. When they went away some things were thrown aside or given to the padres who were to stay and talk of their gods. All I found I hid in the earth. The people of Ci-bo-la killed Padre Juan, and I traded a broken sword for his books and his papers. The sword I also had buried. They were afraid of the books, I had learned to read them, and I was not afraid.”

“And you came from Ci-bo-la alone?” asked the governor,—“it is a long trail to carry a load.”

“All was not carried from there. I came back to Ci-cu-yé to learn more from Padre Luis who meant to live there. He did not live so long, but while he lived he taught me.”

“The men of Ci-cu-yé killed him too?”

“They made him die when they said I must not take beans or meal to him where he lived in a cave, and where he made prayers for their shadow spirits.”

“You wanted that he should have food?” asked the Ruler.

“I wanted that he should live to teach me all the books before the end came,” said the boy simply. “It is not all to be learned in two winters and one summer.”

“That is true,” said K[=a] – ya-fah the Ruler. “All of a man’s life is needed to learn certain things of magic. It is time now that you come back and begin the work of the Orders. You have earned the highest right a boy has yet earned, and no doors will be closed for you on the sacred things given to people.”

“We think that is so,” said the governor—“no doors will be closed for the son of S[=aa] – hanh-que-ah, the Woman of the Twilight.”

This was the hour he had dreamed of through the months which had seemed horrible as the white man’s hell. One needs only to read the several accounts of Coronado’s quest for the golden land of the Gran Quivera in 1540-42 to picture what the life of a little native page must have been with the dissatisfied adventurers, by whom all “Indians” were considered as slaves should their service be required.

Men had died beside him on the trail—and there had been times when he felt he too would die but for the thought of this hour when he could come back, and the council could say—“It is well!”

“I thank you, and my mother will thank you,” he said with his eyes on the stones of the kiva lest the men see that his eyes were wet. “My mother said prayers with me always, and that helped me to come back.”

“The prayers of the Shadow Woman are high medicine,” assented one of the men. “She brought back my son to live when the breath was gone away.”

“As a little child she had a wisdom not to be taught,” affirmed the Ruler—“and now it is her son who brings us the magic of the iron men. Tell us how you left the people of Ci-cu-yé.”

“They were having glad dances that the Christians were gone, and that the padres were dead as other men die. So long as they let me I carried food and water to Padre Luis. Then they guarded me in the kiva, and laughed at me, and when they let me go I knew it was because he was no longer alive. No—they did not harm me. They were too pleased that I could tell them of where their slave whom they called the ‘Turk’—led the gold hunters searching for the Quivera of yellow metal and blue stones. They had much delight to hear of the woeful time of the white men. I could stay all my days at Ci-cu-yé and be precious to them, if I would talk of the trouble trail to Quivera, but when I had seen that the Padre was indeed gone to the Lost Others, my work was no more at Ci-cu-yé. I took his books also for my own—and all these things I have brought back at Povi-whah to make good my promise when I went away. Some things in the books, I know, and that I can tell you. Of the rest I will work until I do know, and then I can tell you that.”

“That is good,” said K[=a] – ye-fah the Ruler. “You shall be as my son and in the long nights of the winter moons we will listen. The time told of in the prophecies of Ki-pah is coming to us. He said also that in each danger time would be born one to mark the way for the people to follow—in each danger time so long as the Te-hua people were true to the gods!”

Tahn-té breathed on the hand of the old men, and went up from the kiva into the cool night of the early summer.

It was too wonderful a night for aught but to reach up in thought to the height of the warm stars. They came so close he could feel their radiance in his heart.

Twice had his name in council been linked to the prophecies of the wise and mysterious prophet of the ancient days! Always he had known that the Woman of the Twilight and he were not to live the life of the others. He had not known why they were set apart for unusual experiences, but tonight he dared to think. With the words of the wise men still in his ears—the rulers who could make and unmake—he knew that no other boy had ever heard the praise and promise he had heard. He knew they thought they were giving words to one who would be a leader in the years to come—and this first night under the peace of the stars, he was filled with a triumph and an exaltation for which there were no words.

He would be a leader—not of war—not of government for the daily duties of village life, but of the Things of the Spirit which seemed calling within him to highest endeavor. He knew as yet nothing of Te-hua ceremonies—he had all to learn, yet he felt inspired to invent some expression for the joy which was his.

The new moon seemed to rest on the very edge of the mesa above him:—the uplifted horn looked like a white flame rising from purple shadows.

A white flame!—a *white* flame!

To the Indian mind all signs are symbolic,—and the flame was exactly above the point where the light was set ceremonially and regularly to light the Indian god back to his own people!

A point of white flame above that shrine of centuries!

No eyes but his saw it at exactly that angle—of course it was not meant for other eyes. It was meant that it should be seen by him alone on his first night with the people he meant to work for! With the memory of the prophecies in his ears had he seen it. It could mean only that the god himself set it there as a proof that the devotion of Tahn-té was acceptable—and that he had been born of his mother that the prophecies might be fulfilled at the right time—and that the light of the moon on his face had meant—

His thought came so quickly that all the air of the night appeared alive with the unseen—and the unseen murmured in his ears, and his memories—and in his heart!

Suddenly he stretched his open hands high to the stars, and then ran across the level to the foot of the bluff. It was high and very steep, but wings seemed his—his heart was on the summit, and his

body must follow—must get there before the white flame sank into the west—must send his greeting to answer the greeting of the god!

In the pouch at his girdle was the fire flint, and a wisp of the silky wild flax of tinder. Two sticks of dead scrub piñon was there; he broke them in equal lengths and laid them in the cross which is the symbol of the four ways, and of the four winds from which the sacred breath is drawn for all that lives—the symbol also of union by which all human life is perpetuated. All fires of sacrifices,—or of magic power, must commemorate these things which are sacred things, and Tahn-té placed them and breathed upon them, and touched them with the spark from the white flint, and then arose in joy and faced the moon yet visible, knowing that the god had seen his answering flame on the shrine—and that it meant a dedication to the Things of the Spirit.

And as he stood there on the mesa's edge, exalted at the wonder of the night, he did not speak, yet he heard the echo of words in his own voice:—*“No one but Tahn-té shall gather the woods for the fire to light Po-se-yemo back;—and when he sees the blaze, and comes back, you will tell him it was his son who kept the fire!”*

Like a flash came the memory of that other time at the edge of that other mesa in Hopi-land! He had said those words to his mother—and had forgotten them. He could never forget them again, for the god had sent them back to him to remember. And Tahn-té trembled at the wondrous signs given him this night, and sprinkled meal to the four ways, and held prayer thoughts of exaltation in his heart.

And this was the last day of the boy years of Tahn-té.

He began then the years of the work for which his Other Self told him he had been born on earth.

CHAPTER VI

TAHN-TÉ-THE RULER

Summers of the Sun, and winters when the stars danced for the snow, had passed over the valley of Povi-whah. New people had been born into the world, and old people had died, but the oldest man in the council, K[=a] – ye-fah–the Ruler of Things from the Beginning, had lived many years after the time when he thought the shadow life must come to him. And to the Woman of the Twilight he had said that it was her son who kept him living–her son to whom he taught the ancient things of his own youth. In the keen enthusiasms he had found such a son as he had longed for. The lost daughter, K[=a] – ye-povi, he had never found–and never forgotten. To Tahn-té he had talked of her until she almost lived in their lives. The face of the god-maid on the south mesa had for K[=a] – ye-fah the outline of chin and backward sweep of hair strangely akin to the face of the lost child. He liked to think the god-maid belonged more to his clan of Towa Toan–the High Mesa clan–than to another.

“If she had not gone into the shadow land, her face would have looked that way,” he said.

“And we could gather bright flowers for her hair,”–said the boy–“they would be sweeter than the cold, far brightness of the stars where the god-maid waits,” and he pointed to where Antares gleamed from the heart of the Scorpion above the dusk profile,–“I think of K[=a] – ye-povi as the dream maid. She will be my always young sweetheart–my only one.”

“That is good,” said K[=a] – ye-fah–“very good for the work of the unborn years.”

For the youth was to carry on the tribal prayers to the gods when K[=a] – ye-fah no longer walked on earth. And his teaching must be greater than all other teaching, for the Ruler was planning for the work of the days to come.

And in a day of the early spring the work was made ready, for to S[=aa] – hanh-que-ah he said:–“A week ago So-hoah-tza went under the waters of the river and never breathed again. To him was given the guard of the sacred place of the Sun Father. I have not yet made any other the guardian. You are the woman of the order of the Po-Ahtun–I give you the guard to keep. Call the governor–but call your son first. You shall be guard as So-hoah-tza was guard, but Tahn-té shall be guard as I have been! Lean lower, and let your ear listen and your heart keep sacred the word. I go to our Lost Others–but I leave you to guard.”

The governor came, and all were sad, but no one thought that the life was over. K[=a] – ye-fah talked and smiled as one who goes to a feast.

But Tahn-té, standing tall and still by the couch said:–“It will be over! This morning he wakened and said he would go with the sun to-day. He has no other thought, and he will go!”

And the women wept, and made ready the things of burial for the high priest of the highest order. If Tahn-té said he would go into the shadows at that time–the women knew that it would be so. Tahn-té, as they knew him, joyous in the dances of the seasons,–was never in their minds apart from Tahn-té the prophet whose dreams even as a boy, had been beyond the dreams of the others who sought visions.

And as the sun touched the black line of the pines on the western mountain, the aged Ruler asked for his wand of office, and the governor gave it to him, and with his own hand he gave it to Tahn-té, that even when his own form was covered with the soil, his vote would be on record in the minds of those who listened–and that vote gave to his pupil in magic, the wand of power–The youngest qualified member of the Order of Spiritual things was thus acclaimed as the Po-Ahtun-ho, a Ruler of Things from the Beginning.

Twenty-four years he had lived–but the time of life with the white men had counted more than double. In magic of many kinds he was more wise than the men of years, and the heart of his mother

was glad with the almost perfect gladness when Tahn-té stood in the place of the Ancient Wisdom and listened as the ear of the god listens to the recitation of many tribal prayers.

The Po-Ahtun-ho also listens at times to the individual appeals of the things of every day life—as a father listens to a child who seeks advice. To the more ancient Rulers the younger people were often afraid to go—various “uncles” of the village were appealed to instead. But the youth of Tahn-té made all things different—even the love of a man for a maid, was not so small a thing that the new Ruler made the suppliant feel how little it was.

And one of the first who came to him thus—who knelt and offered a prayer to him, the prayer of a love, was the little Apache tigress who had been first of his own village to greet him in Ua-lano—Yahn Tsyn-deh, who had grown so pretty that the men of the other villages talked of her, and her mother had asked great gifts for her. But the mother had died with the winter, and Yahn refused to be subject to the Tain-tsain clan of her father, and there had been much trouble until she threatened to go back to her mother’s tribe, and many thought it might come to that after all—for she was very strong of will.

But before Tahn-té the Po-Ahtun-ho she crouched, and sobs shook her, and her hair covered her face as a veil.

“If it is of the clan, Yahn, it is to the governor you should speak:—” said Tahn-té—“from him it may come to me if he thinks best. There are rules we must not break. Because I carried you, when little, on my shoulder, is no reason to walk past the door of the governor and bring his duties to me.”

He spoke kindly, for his heart was kind towards the little fighter of boyhood’s days. Her alien blood was ever prompting her to reckless daring beyond the customs of Te-hua maidens. In a different way, he himself was an alien and it helped him to understand her. But this day he saw another Yahn—one he had not known could hide under the reckless exterior.

She tossed back her hair and faced him.

“How should I speak with Phen-tza the governor—he is the uncle of Ka-yemo! It is he who has helped do this thing—he would make me a slave or have me whipped! How should I speak with him? Ka-yemo knows that the governor his uncle, will—”

“Ka-yemo! What has Ka-yemo done? What trouble does he make?”

“Oh—no trouble!” her words were bitter words,—“Only the governor his uncle, has talked with the family of Tsa-fah and the marriage is made with his daughter Koh-pé of the beads, and you—know, Tahn-té—you know!”

Tahn-té did know, he regarded her in silence.

“Speak!”—she pleaded. “You are more than governor—you are the Highest! Magic is yours to make and to unmake. Unmake this thing! With your magic send him back to me—to me!”

“Magic is not for that:—it is for Those Above!”

Again she flung herself at his feet and wept. The sobs hurt him, yet he must not lift her. She begged for a charm—for a spell—for black magic to strike dead the wearer of the red bears and the blue beads, for all wild things a wild passion could suggest.

“If you could see into the other years you would be content to have it as it is,” he said gently—“the years ahead may—”

“I care nothing for the years ahead! I want the *now*!—I want—”

“Listen!” he said, and she fell silent with covered face. “That which you feel for Ka-yemo is not the love of marriage. A man takes a wife for love of a wife and a home and children in the home. A man does not chain himself to a tigress whose bite and whose blows he has felt. A man would wish to be master:—what man has been born who could be master in your home?”

“You do not know. You have lived a different sort of life! I could be more than another wife—than any other wife! I shall kill some one!—” and she rose to her feet—“unless the magic comes I kill some one!”

“And then?”

“Then Phen-tza the governor will have me strangled, and they will take me to my grave with ropes of raw hide and there will not any where be a sad heart for Yahn Tsyn-deh.”

“You see how it is—he is precious to you—as he always has been. But your love is too great a love for happy days. Always it will bring you the ache in the heart. No thing of earth should be given the love like that:—it is a fire to burn a whole forest in the days of its summer, and in the winter snows there will be only ashes.”

“Good!—then I, Yahn, will rather burn to the ashes in such summer days, and be dead under the snows in the winter of the year!”

“And after that?”

“After that will not the Po-Ahtun-ho be Ruler always? Will he not remember his friends who are precious in the Beyond as he remembers this one to-day?” she asked mockingly. “K[=a] – ye-fah told the council that you have lived a life no other man lives, and that no woman is precious to you:—when you find the woman who is yet to come, may a viper poison her blood—may a cat of the hills tear her flesh! May you love until madness comes—and may the woman find only death in your arms—and find it quickly!”

When the Woman of the Twilight came in from the field with yellow corn pollen for the sacred ceremonies, the lattice of reeds at the outer door was yet shaking as from touch of a ruthless hand, or a strong wind.

“Who was it that cried here?” she asked. “Who has left you sad?”

“Perhaps a prophetess, my mother,” answered Tahn-té, and sat thoughtful where Yahn had left him. And after a long time he arose and sought the governor.

But it was fated that the governor and the new Ruler were not to talk of the love of a maid or the marriage of a man that day.

A runner had been sent to Povi-whah from Kat-yi-ti. He gave his message, and stayed to eat while other runners took the trail, and before the sun had moved the width of a hand across the sky, the villages of Kah-po and Tsa-mah and Oj-ke were starting other runners to Ui-la-ua and far Te-gat-ha and at Kah-po the head men gathered to talk in great council over the word brought from the south.

For the word was that the men of the iron and the beards and the white skins were again coming to the land of the People of the Sun. They came in peace, and searched for the lost padres. A man of the gown was with them for prayers, and a Te-hua man who had been caught by the Navahu long winters ago and traded to the land of green birds. The Te-hua man said the white people were good people, and he was guiding them to the villages by the big river, P[=o] – s[=o]n-gé.

CHAPTER VII

THE SILKEN SCARF

Of the many godly enterprises set afoot for exploration and conquest in New Spain of the sixteenth century, not all have chronicles important enough for the historian to make much of. But there were goings and comings of which no written record reached the archives. Things forbidden did happen even under the iron heel of Castilian rule, and one of the hidden enterprises grew to be a part of the life of the P[=o] – s[=o]n-gé valley for a time.

Not that it was unchronicled, but there was a good reason why the records were not published for the Spanish court.

It was a pretty romantic reason also—and the usual one, if we may trust the world's judgment of the foundation of all trouble. But a maid tossing a blossom from a Mexic balcony could not know that the stranger from Seville to whom it was thrown was the son of an Eminence, instead of the simple gentleman named Don Ruy Sandoval in a royal letter to the Viceroy. With him travelled his tutor whose tutelage was past, and the position a difficult one for even the Viceroy to comprehend.

Since the youth rebelled at the habit of a monk—he had been given a space for adventure under godly surveillance. The godly surveillance limped a trifle at times. And because of this did Don Ruy walk again in the moonlight under the balcony and this time more than a blossom came to him—about the stem of a scarlet lily was a flutter of white! The warm light of the Mexic moon helped him to decipher it—a page from Ariosto—the romance of Doña Bradamante—and the mark of a pen under words uttered by the warrior-maid herself—words to warm a cooler youth than this one from over seas:—“*Why seek I one who flies from me?—Why implore one who deigns not to send me reply?*”

Whereupon there was no further delay as to reply—there was found an open gate to a garden where only stars gave light, where little hands were held for a moment in his—soft whispers had answered his own—and he was held in thrall by a lace wrapped señorita whose face he had not even looked on in the light. All of Castile could give one no better start in a week than he had found for himself in three days in the new world of promise.

For there were promises—and they were sweet. They had to do with a tryst two nights away—then the lady, whom he called “Doña Bradamante” because of the page torn from that romance, would enlighten him as to her pressing need of the aid of a gentleman, and courage would be hers to tell him why a marked line and a scarlet lily had been let fall in his path—and why she had trusted his face at first sight—though he had not yet seen her own—and why—

It was the usual thing—the page of a poem and a silken scarf as a guerdon of her trust.

He found the place of the tryst with ease for a stranger in the Mexic streets, but a glimmer of white robe was all he saw of his unknown “Doña Bradamante.” Others were at the tryst, and their staves and arms lacked no strength. He heard a woman scream, then he heard her try again to scream and fail because of a hand on her throat, and beyond that he knew little for a night or two, and there was not much of day between.

Monkly robes were the next thing in his range of vision—one face in particular, sallow and still with eyes glancing sideways, seeing all things;—divining much! soft steps, and bandages, and out of silence the excited shrillness of Don Diego Maria Francisco Brancadori the tutor:—the shepherd who had lost track of his one rather ruffled lamb.

Pious ejaculation—thanks to all the saints he could think of—horror that the son of an Eminence should be thus abused—prophecies of the wrath to come when the duchess, his mother—At this Don Ruy groped for a sword, and found a boot, and flung it, with an unsanctified word or two, in the direction of the lamentation.

“You wail worse than a dog of a Lutheran under the yoke,” he said in as good a voice as he could muster with a cut in his lip. “What matter how much Eminence it took to make a father for me—or how many duchesses to make a mother? I am labelled as plain Ruy Sandoval and shipped till called for. If you are to instruct my youth in the path it should tread—why not start in with a lesson on discretion?”

At this hopeful sign of life from the bundle of bandages on the monk’s bed, Maestro Diego approached and looked over his illustrious charge with a careful eye.

“Discretion has limped far behind—enterprise, else your highness would cut a different figure by now—and—”

“Choke back your infernal highnesses!” growled the younger man. “I know well what your task is to be here in this new land:—it is to send back reports of duty each time I break a rule or get a broken head. Now by the Blood, and the Cross, if you smother not your titles, and let me range free, I tell you the thing I will do:—I will send back a complaint against you to Seville—and to make sure that it goes, no hand shall carry it but your own. Ere they can find another nurse maid for my morals, I’ll build me a ship and go sailing the South seas for adventure—and your court tricksters will have a weary time in the chase! I like you better than many another godly spy who might have been sent, and I promise myself much joy in the journal of strange travels it is in your mind to write. But once for all, remember, we never were born into the world until a week ago!”

“But your Excellency—

“By the Great Duke of Hell! Will you not bridle your tongue when the damned monks are three deep at the key hole?”

By which it will be seen that the travels of the pious Don Diego were not all on paths of roses.

A little later the still faced priest of the stealthy glances came in, and Don Ruy sat on the side of the bed, and looked him over.

“You are the one who picked me up—eh? And the gentlemen of the streets had tossed me into a corner after discreetly starting my soul on its travels! Warm trysts your dames give to a stranger in this land—when you next confess the darlings, whisper their ears to be less bloodthirsty towards youth innocence!”

The man in the robe smiled.

“That unwise maid will make no more trysts,” he said quietly,—“not if she be one important enough to cause an assault on your Highness.”

“Did they—?”

“No—no—harm would not be done to her, but her destiny is without doubt a convent. The men who spoiled your tryst earn no purses as guard for girls of the street,—sacred walls will save them that trouble for a time—whether maid or wife I dare promise you that! It is as well you know. Time is wasted seeking adventure placed beyond mortal reach.”

“Convent—eh? Do your holy retreats teach the little tricks the lady knew? And do they furnish their vestals with poems of romance and silks and spices of Kathay?”

He drew from an inner pocket a little scarf of apple green with knotted fringes, and butterflies, various colored in dainty broidery. As the folds fell apart an odor of sweetness stole into the shadowy room of the monastery, and the priest was surprised into an ejaculation at sight of such costly evidence, but he smothered it hastily in a muttered prayer.

After that he listened to few of the stranger’s gibes and quips, but with a book of prayers on his knee he looked the youth over carefully, recalled the outburst of Don Diego as to origin, and the adventurer’s own threat to build a ship and sail where chance pointed. Plainly, this seeker of trysts, or any other thing promising adventure, had more of resource than one might expect from a battered stranger lifted out of the gutter for the last rites.

The priest—who looked a good soldier and who was called Padre Vicente “de los Chichimecos” (of the wild tribes) read further in his book of hours, and then spoke the thing in his mind.

“For a matter of many years in this land of the Indies I have waited for a man of discreet determination for a certain work. The virgin herself led me to the gutter where you groaned in the dark, and I here vow to build her a chapel if this thought of mine bears fruit.”

“Hump! My thanks to our Lady,—and I myself will see to the building of the chapel. But tell me of the tree you would plant, and we’ll then have a guess at the fruit. It may prove sour to the taste! Monkly messes appealed to me little on the other side of the seas. I’ve yet to test their flavor on this shore of adventure.”

Padre Vicente ignored the none too respectful comment—and took from his pocket a bit of virgin gold strung on a thread of deer sinew.

“Your name is Don Ruy Sandoval,” he said. “You are in this land for adventure. You content yourself with the latticed window and the strife of the streets—why not look for the greater things? You have wealth and power at your call—why not search for an empire of—this?”

Then he showed the virgin gold worn smooth by much wearing.

Don Ruy blinked under the bandage and swore by Bradamante of the adventure that he would search for it gladly if but the way was shown.

“Where do we find this golden mistress of yours?” he demanded, “and why have you waited long for a comrade?”

“The gold is in the north where none dare openly seek treasure, or even souls, since Coronado came back broken and disgraced. I have waited for the man of wealth who dared risk it, and—at whose going the Viceroy could wink.”

“Why wink at me—rather than another?”

“That is a secret knotted in the fringes of the silken scarf there—” said Padre Vicente with a grim smile. “Cannot a way be found to clear either a convent or a palace of a trouble breeder, when the church itself lends a hand? You were plainly a breeder of trouble, else had you escaped the present need of bandages. For the first time I see a way where Church and the government of the Indies can go with clasped hands to this work. In gold and converts the work may prove mighty. How mighty depends whether you come to the Indies to kill time until the day you are recalled—or improve that time by success where Coronado failed.”

“And if we echo his failure?”

“None will be the wiser even then! You plan for a season of hunting in the hills. I plan for a mission visit by the Sea of Cortez. Mine will be the task to see how and where our helpers join each other and all the provisioning of man and beast. Mine also to make it clear to the Viceroy that you repent your—”

“Hollo!”—Don Ruy interrupted with a grimace. “You are about to say I repent of folly—or the enticing of a virgin—or that I fell victim to the blandishments of some tricky dame—I know all that cant by rote!—a man always repents until his broken head is mended, but all that is apart from the real thing—which is this:—In what way does my moment with a lady in the dark affect the Viceroy of the Indies? Why should his Excellency trouble himself that Ruy Sandoval has a broken head—and a silken scarf?”

Padre Vicente stared—then smiled. Ruy Sandoval had not his wits smothered by the cotton wool of exalted pamperings.

“I will be frank with you,” he said at last. “The Viceroy I have not yet addressed on this matter. But such silken scarfs are few—that one would not be a heavy task to trace to its owner.”

“Ah!—I suspected your eminence had been a gallant in your time,” remarked Don Ruy, amicably—“It is not easy to get out of the habit of noticing alluring things:—that is why I refused to do

penance for my birth by turning monk, and shrouding myself in the gown! Now come—tell me! You seem a good fellow—tell me of the ‘Doña Bradamante’ of the silks and the spices.”

“The destiny of that person is probably already decided,” stated the priest of the wild tribes, “she is, if I mistake not, too close to the charge of the Viceroy himself for that destiny to be questioned. The mother, it is said, died insane, and the time has come when the daughter also is watched with all care lest she harm herself—or her attendants. So I hear—the maid I do not know, but the scarf I can trace. Briefly—the evident place for such a wanton spitfire is the convent. You can easily see the turmoil a woman like that can make as each ship brings adventurers—and she seeks a lover out of every group.”

“Jesus!—and hell to come! Then I was only one of a sort—all is fish to the net of the love lorn lady! Maestro Diego would have had the romance and the lily if he had walked ahead instead of behind me!—and he could have had the broken head as well!” Then he sniffed again at the bit of silk, and regarded the monk quizzically.

“You have a good story, and you tell it well, holy father,” he said at last,—“and I am troubled in my mind to know how little of it may be truth, and how much a godly lie. But the gold at least is true gold, and whatever the trick of the lady may be, you say it will serve to win for me the privilege to seek the mines without blare of trumpets. Hum!—it is a great favor for an unknown adventurer.”

“Unknown you may be to the people of the streets, and to your ship mates,” agreed the Padre. “But be sure the Viceroy has more than a hint that you are not of the rabble. The broils you may draw to yourself may serve to disquiet him much—yet he would scarce send you to the stocks, or the service of the roads. Be sure he would rather than all else bid you god speed on a hunting journey.”

“But that you are so given to frankness I should look also for a knife in the back to be included in his excellency’s favors,” commented Don Ruy. “Name of the Devil!—what have I done since I entered the town, but hold hands with one woman in the dark—and be made to look as if I had been laid across a butcher block on a busy day! Hell take such a city to itself! I’ve no fancy for halting over long in a pit where a gentleman’s amusements are so little understood. If the Doña of the scarf were aught but an amiable maniac the thing would be different. I would stay—and I would find her and together we would weave a new romance for a new world poet! But as it is, gather your cut throats and name the day, and we’ll go scouring the land for heathen souls and yellow clinkers.”

Padre Vicente de Bernaldez was known by his wonderful mission-work to be an ecclesiastic of most adventurous disposition. Into wild lands and beyond the Sea of Cortez had he gone alone to the wild tribes—so far had he gone that silence closed over his trail like a grave at times—but out of the Unknown had he come in safety!

His fame had reached beyond his order—and Ruy Sandoval knew that it was no common man who spoke to him of the Indian gold.

“Francisco de Coronado,” stated this padre of the wilderness, “came back empty handed from the north land of the civilized Indians for the reason that he knew not where to search. The gold is there. This is witness. It came to me from a man who—is dead! It was given him by a woman of a certain tribe of sun worshippers. To her it was merely some symbol of their pagan faith—some priestly circle dedicated to the sun.”

“It sounds well,” agreed Don Ruy—“but the trail? Who makes the way? And what force is needed?”

For a guide the Padre Vicente had a slave of that land, a man of Te-hua baptized José, for five years the padre had studied the words and the plans. The man would gladly go to his own land,—he and his wife. All that was required was a general with wealth for the conquest. There were pagan souls to be saved, and there was wealth for the more worldly minds. The padre asked only a tenth for godly reasons.

Thus between church and state was the expedition of his Excellency Don Ruy Sandoval ignored except as a hunting journey to the North coast of the Cortez Sea—if he ranged farther afield, his own be the peril, for no troops of state were sent as companions. The good father had selected the men—

most of them he had confessed at odd times and knew their metal. All engaged as under special duty to the cross:—it was to be akin to a holy pilgrimage, and absolution for strange things was granted to the men who would bear arms and hold the quest as secret.

Most of them thought the patron was to be Mother Church, and regarded it as a certain entrance to Paradise. Don Ruy himself meekly accepted a role of the least significance:—a mere seeker of pleasure adventures in the provinces! It would not be well that word of risk or danger be sent across seas—and the Viceroy could of course only say “god speed you” to a gentleman going for a ride with his servants and his major domo.

And thus:—between a hair brained adventurer and a most extolled priest, began the third attempt to reach the people called by New Spain, the Pueblos:—the strangely learned barbarians who dwelt in walled towns—cultivating field by irrigation, and worshipping their gods of the sun, or the moon, or the stars through rituals strange as those of Pagan Egypt.

Word had reached Mexico of the martyrdom of Fray Juan Padilla at Ci-bo-la, but in the far valley of the Rio Grande del Norte—called by the tribes the river P[=o] – s[=o]n-gé,—Fray Luis de Escalona might be yet alive carrying on the work of salvation of souls.

The young Spanish adventurer listened with special interest as the devotion and sacrifices of Fray Luis were extolled in the recitals.

“If he lives we will find that man,” he determined. “He was nobly born, and of the province of my mother. I’ve heard the romance for which he cloaked himself in the gray robe. He should be a prince of the church instead of a wandering lay brother—we will have a human thing to search for in the world beyond the desert—ours will be a crusade to rescue him from the infidel lands.”

CHAPTER VIII

THE STORY BY THE DESERT WELL

Don Diego marvelled much at the briskness of the plans for a season of hunting ere his troublesome charge was well able to see out of both eyes. But on being told that the range might be wide, he laid in a goodly stock of quills and parchment, for every league of the land would bring new things to his knowledge.

These records were to be entitled “Relaciones of the New and Wondrous Land of the Indian’s Island” and in those Relaciones the accounts of Padre Vicente were to loom large. Among the pagan people his war against the false gods had been ruthless. Maestro Diego was destined to hear more of the padre’s method than he dared hope in the earlier days.

José, the Indian of the North whose Te-hua name was Khen-zah, went with them—also his wife—the only woman, for without her the man would not go in willingness. Two only were the members added by Don Ruy to the cavalcade—one a stalwart fellow of many scars named Juan Gonzalvo who had known service with Pizarro in the land of gold—had lost all his coin in an unlucky game, and challenged the young stranger from Seville for the loan of a stake to gamble with and win back his losses. He looked good for three men in a fight. Instead of helping him in a game, Don Ruy invited him on the hunting trip!

The other addition was as different as might be from the toughened, gambling conquistador—a mere lad, who brought a letter from the hand of the Viceroy as a testimonial that the lad was a good scribe if it so happened that his sanctity the padre—or his Excellency Don Ruy, should need such an addition in the new lands where their hunting camps were to be. The boy was poor but for the learning given him by the priests,—his knowledge was of little save the knowledge of books. But his willingness to learn was great, and he would prove of use as a clerk or page as might be.

Padre Vicente was not present, and the cavalcade was already two days on the trail, but Don Ruy read the letter, and looked the lad over.

“Your name is—”

“Manuel Lenares—and called ‘Chico’ because I am not yet so tall as I may be.”

“It should be Manuella because you look not yet so manlike as you may be,” declared Ruy Sandoval,—and laughed as the angry color swept the face of the lad. “By our Lady, I’ve known many a dame of high degree would trade several of her virtues for such eyes and lips! Tush—boy! Have no shame to possess them since they will wear out in their own time! I can think of no service you could be to me—yet—I have another gentleman of the court with me holding a like office—Name of the Devil:—it would be a fine jest to bestow upon him a helper for the ponderous ‘Relaciones!’” and Don Ruy chuckled at the thought, while the lad stood in sulky embarrassment—willing to work, but not to be laughed at.

He was dressed as might be in the discarded garments of magnificence, well worn and visibly made over to fit his young figure. His cloak of old scarlet, too large for him, covered a patched shirt and jacket, and reached to his sandal straps of russet leather:—scarce the garb of a page of the Viceregal court, yet above that of the native servant.

“You are—Spanish?”

Again the face of the youth flushed, and he shrugged his shoulders and replaced his velvet cap with its pert cock’s feather.

“I have more than enough Spanish blood to send me to the Christian rack or stake if they caught me worshipping the pagan gods of my grandmother,” he stated briefly, and plainly had so little hope of winning service that he was about to make his bow and depart in search of the Padre.

But the retort caught Don Ruy, and he held the lad by the shoulder and laughed.

“Of all good things the saints could send, you are the best,” he decided—“and by that swagger I’ll be safe to swear your grandsire was of the conquistadores—I thought so! Well Chico:—you are engaged for the service of secretary to Maestro Diego Maria Francisco Brancadori. You work is seven days in the week except when your protector marks a saint’s day in red ink. On that day you will have only prayers to record, on the other days you will assist at many duties concerning a wondrous account of the adventures Don Diego hopes for in the heathen land.”

“Hopes for:—your Excellency?”

“Hopes for so ardently that our comfort may rest in seeing that he meets with little of disappointment on the trail.”

For one instant the big black eyes of the lad flashed a shy appreciation of Don Ruy’s sober words and merry smile.

“For it is plain to be seen,” continued that gentleman—“that if Don Diego finds nothing to make record of, your own wage will be a sad trial and expense.”

“I understand, your Excellency.”

“You will receive the perquisites of a secretary if you have indeed understanding,” continued Don Ruy, “but if there are no records to chronicle you will get but the pay of a page and no gifts to look for. Does it please you?”

“It is more than a poor lad who owns not even a bedding blanket could have hoped for, señor, and I shall earn the wage of a secretary. That of a page I could earn without leaving the streets and comfort.”

“Oho!” And again the eyes of Don Ruy wandered over the ill garbed figure and tried to fit it to the bit of swagger and confidence.—“I guessed at your grandfather—now I’ll have a turn at you:—Is it a runaway whom I am venturing to enroll in this respectable company of sober citizens?”

“Your Excellency!” the lad hung his head yet watched the excellency out of the corner of his eye, and took heart at the smile he saw—“it is indeed true there are some people I did not call upon to say farewell ere offering my services to you, but it is plain to see I carried away not any one’s wealth in goods and chattals.”

“That is easily to be perceived,” said Don Ruy and this time he did not laugh, for with all his light heart he was too true a gentleman to make sport of poverty such as may come to the best of men. “By our Lady, I’ve a feeling of kinship for you in that you are a runaway indeed—this note mentions the teaching of the priests—I’ll warrant they meant to make a monk of you.”

“If such hopes are with them, they must wait until I am born again,” decided the lad, and again Don Ruy laughed:—the lad was plainly no putty for the moulding, and there was chance of sport ahead with such a helper to Maestro Diego.

“It will be my charge to see that you are not over much troubled with questions,” said his employer, and handed back the letter of commendation. “None need know when you were engaged for this very important work. José over there speaks Spanish as does Ysobel his wife. Tell them you are to have a bed of good quality if it be in the camp—and to take a blanket of my own outfit if other provisions fall short.”

A muttered word of thanks was the only reply, and Don Ruy surmised that the boy was made dumb by kindness when he had braced himself for quips and cuffs—knowing as he must—that he was light of build for the road of rough adventure.

“Ho!—Lad of mine!” he called when the youth had gone a few paces—“I trust you understand that you travel with a company of selected virtues?—and that you are a lucky dog to be attached to the most pious and godly tutor ever found for a boy in Spain.”

“It is to be called neighbor of these same virtues that I have come begging a bed on the sand when I might have slept at home on a quilt of feathers:”—the lad’s tongue had found its use again when there was chance for jest.

“And—”

“Yes:—your Excellency?”

“As to that pagan grandmother of whom you made mention:—her relationship need not be widely tooted through a horn on the journey—yet of all things vital to the honorable Maestro Diego and his ‘Relaciones,’ I stand surety that not any one thing will be given so much good room on paper as the things he learns of the heathen worship of the false gods.”

“A nod is as good as a wink to a mule that is blind!” called back the lad in high glee. “Happy am I to have your excellency’s permission to hold discourse with him concerning the church accursed lore of our ancestral idols!”

Then he joined José and Ysobel as instructed, and gave the message as to bed and quarters. José said no word in reply, but proceeded to secure blankets, one from the camp of Don Ruy. Ysobel—a Mexican Indian—who had been made Christian by the padre ere she could be included in the company, was building a fire for the evening meal. Seeing that it burned indifferently the new page thrust under the twigs the fine sheet of paper containing the signature of the Viceroy.

Ysobel made an exclamation of protest—but it was too late—it had started the blaze in brave order.

“Your letter—if you should need it—perhaps for the padre!” she said.

“Rest you easy, Nurse,” said the lad and stretched himself to watch the supper cooked. “I have no further needs in life but supper and a bed,—see to it that José makes it near you own! I am in the employ of Don Ruy Sandoval for a period indefinite. And he has promised—laugh not out loud Ysobel!—that he will see to it I am not questioned as to whence or why I came to seek service under his banner!—even the holy father is set aside by that promise—I tell you that laughter is not to be allowed! If you let him see that you laugh, I will beat you when we are alone, Ysobel—I will though you have found a dozen husbands to guard you!”

Don Ruy did see the laughter of the woman, and was well pleased that the lad could win smiles from all classes,—such a one would lighten weary journeys.

He felt that he had done well by Maestro Diego. Plainly the quick wit of the lad betokened good blood, let him prate ever so surely on his heathen grandmother!

Don Diego felt much flattered at the consideration shown by Don Ruy for the “Relaciones”—in fact he had so pleased an interest in the really clever young pen-man that the Padre took little heed of the boy—he was of as much account as a pet puppy in the expedition—but if the would-be historian needed a secretary—or fancied he did,—the lad would be less trouble than an older man if circumstances should arise to make trouble of any sort.

So it chanced that Juan Gonzalvo and Manuel Lenares, called Chico, were the only two included in the company who had not been confessed and enrolled by Padre Vicente himself.

It was the magic time of the year, when new leaves open to the sun, and the moon, even in the bare desert stretches of the land, brought dreams of Castile to more than one of the adventurers.

“Good Father,” said Don Ruy with feigned complaint, “Think you not that your rigid rules for the journey might have stopped short of hopeless celibacy for all of us?—Why a moon like that and Venus ascendent unless to make love by?”

“The brightness of that same moon saved you nothing of a cracked pate the hour of fortune when we first met,” observed Padre Vicente drily.—“Maids or matrons on the journey would have caused broken heads in the desert as handily as in the city streets.”

“By the faith—your words are of wisdom and much to be valued by his highness,” agreed Don Diego. “Make note of that thought for the Relaciones Chico, my son. This pious quest may be a discipline of most high import to all of us. Wifeless should we ride as rode the crusaders of an older day.”

“Tum-a-tum-tum!” Don Ruy trolled a fragment of love melody, and laughed:—“I have no fancy for your penances. Must we all go without sweethearts because you two have elected to be bachelors for the saving of souls? Think you the Indian maids will clamor for such salvation? I lay you a wager,

good father, that I win as many converts with love songs and a strip of moonlight, as do you both with bell and book!"

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