

C. GUY CUTLIP  
NEWOKA, OKLA

*Montgomery's Treasury*

## Foreword.

The telling of this story became possible when I was rummaging around in old picturesque Lincoln, N.M. hunting material for a story about Billy the Kid some years ago. While inspecting the old Murphystore and the site of the old McSween residence, where Billy and his comrades ran out of the burning building into the fire of the Murphy men, I happened upon one Florenchio Chavez who told me that he was in the Kid's gang that ran out of the burning house that night. I asked him to show me around and tell me his story, which he was very glad to do, and we became very good friends. He asked me what I wanted out there and when I told him, he said he could tell me a better story than that. I pressed him on and he said that when he ran out of the burning McSween home some fifty odd years ago it was necessary for him to keep in hiding for a considerable time. That there was an old hacienda across the Big River (Rio Grande) where his people had at one time lived and which was hidden away in the mountains and very few people, even to this day, knew of its whereabouts. That after escaping the fire of the Murphy gang he went there and stayed for a month or two before trusting himself out in the open. That while he was resting there in the seclusion of the old tumbled down buildings he found a portion almost completely in tact. It was a huge room within the center of the ruins, with emensely thick dobe walls, no windows but with vintilation contrived at the top under the eaves. He made this his hiding place and contrived to be comfortable for the time he was there having procured provisions and a lantern from a ranch house he had visited on the way over. While he was resting in the old room one night his attention was attracted to an opening in the dobe walls near one corner and having nothing better to do he began to inspect it and found a small cabinet incased in the walls. There were a great number of old papers and files in it and these he began to peruse. Having time to spare and some considerable education for those days he spent his time in working out the old manuscripts. Some of the papers were in a strange writing, picture writing he called it, and these he could not make out. That some of the Spanish writings told about a great treasure that had been secreted in old Mexico and there was a quaint old map, torsein halves, and with curious markings on it.

I asked him if he were Mexicano and he said that he was not, that he belonged to a small tribe of Indians that had inhabited that section of New Mexico many years ago and that but very few were left. He did not know what the Indians were called, where they had come from or any history whatever of their past.

His appearance was entirely different from any Mexican I had ever seen, he was tall, stalwart; with a strong, long face; brilliant, deep set eyes and a somewhat different color from the average run of Mexicans or New Mexican Indians. He was very interesting in his talk and very friendly and promised to show me some of the papers he found in the old building. It seems that he replaced the opening and arranged it so as not to be noticable and after the cattlemen's war had subsided he journeyed back over to the hacienda and recovered the papers and had them in his home. He lived just immediately west of the old Ellis house of Billy the Kid days in old Lincoln, and stated that if I would come over again some day, he was <sup>show</sup> me the papers. I assured him I would be back very soon, and a day or two afterwards journeyed out from Roswell early one morning and we spent the day in the little patio back of his home rummaging through the papers and translating them the best we could. Many of what he had termed papers, were in fact very fine and ancient parchment-~~perhaps~~ deer or sheep skins. One particularly was cressed so badly in places, where no doubt it had lain in a folded state for many years, that we were unable to make out many of the words. In fact the old Spanish was beyond either of us and we had to guess at much of the context. I went back after that

and took a Spanish-English dictionary and we made better progress. It was while we were going over these manuscripts that Chavez suggested we visit a very old man of his family and perhaps he could aid us some in working out the meaning of much of the writing. The next day we got horses and rode far up in the mountains above Ft. Stanton to this old man's home. He talked very little English and he and Chavez conversed in a language I could not understand. Chavez later told me it was his native language and that he knew it but slightly. The man was very old, it would be impossible to tell just how old, but his face was seemed with age, his hair snow white and his eyes dimmed with age. His teeth seemed to be in a perfect state of preservation, however. He was very dignified and slow in his speech and movements, courteous and gentlemanly and very friendly.

It was from him that we learned that the people who had formerly occupied the old hacienda had moved from the east, far east of the great plains, he said he had been told, where they had lived peaceably for many years. He had no idea in what portion of the southwest that had been but that it was many, many days travel to get there. He told us that he had lived on the estate across the Big River when he was a very young ~~man~~ boy and that the people who had lived in the "big house" were forced to move away because they had no grant from any government. I asked him if those people who lived in the "big house" had ever had any trouble with the priests and he said that he did not know, but that none of those ever came about the place. He further stated that he never joined any church and when asked what or whom he worshiped he said he worshiped the trees and the birds and the sunlight and the flowers. Everything that grew wild, he said, was good. I then asked him if he thought the snakes were good, and he said, leave them along and they are good.

~~Chavez and I made copies of the old manuscripts and I have them in my files at this time. I do not know whether Chavez still lives or not, but I believe he is still living in old Lincoln, and that one may find him there and he will serve as an excellent guide and cicerone about the interesting places of Lincoln, where the cattlemen's war took place and where he served in the ranks of Bill the Kid's gang.~~

*The author*

## Montezuma's Treasure.

Thirty six years ago a solitary horseman rode across the line between the old Oklahoma Territory and the Seminole Nation coming from a westerly direction into the Seminole and passing the trading post of old Posuk Harjo to the right without even a glance in that direction.

Riding one of the regulation cow ponies of the western plains, with long tail and flowing mane, ambling along with its head hung down as though devoid of any interest in the things of this life, and yet which the man of the West had learned could, on the slightest approach of danger to itself or rider, galvanize into a perfect whirlwind of speed and action. The horseman rode with that careless abandon that gave one the impression that the rider had become a part of the animal which he bestrode. There was a striking similarity between horse and horseman. While each gave the appearance of being entirely oblivious of their surroundings yet there was that about each which lead one to reconsider and believe that the appearance was only a well simulated disguise for both a quick and accurate knowledge of just what to do should occasion arise.

Guiding his horse more by an almost imperceptible inclination of the body rather than by the exercise of the bridle which hung loosely in the fingers of the left hand resting ever so lightly on the saddle horn, the stranger directed his way in a northeasterly direction toward the thicket grown bank of Salt Creek. Some times going far out of his way to cross some branch or ravine, yet always turning back into the same general direction of northeast. The traveller made his way in a leisurely manner along the south bank of the

little Salt Creek. Finally a likely spot was found where a crossing could be made and horse and horseman passed over. There remained but a couple of hours of the early December day and a light and misty rain was falling. A soft and almost balmy wind was blowing from the south, and it was apparent that night would fall fast, and yet the horseman continued his way in a careless and disinterested fashion, seemingly as though his thoughts were on matters far removed from his present surroundings. Picking his way over the uneven country ( there were no roads or even bridle paths in the Seminole in those days ) the horseman traversed the enterlying country between Salt Creek and Little River and turned the horses head to the southeastward, and seemingly began to take more interest in the surrounding vountry. He looked this way and that in the fast closing dawn as though searching for some familiar landmark to guide his way. At last, apparently satisfied, he touched his mount lightly with the rowels of his spur and the horse broke into a brisk canter which speedily brought them to the remains of an old cemetary. Dismounting, the rider threw the bridle reins over the horses head and left him to care for himself, while the horseman moved slowly among the sunken-in graves and scrutinized closely the old and almost destroyed headstones. At last he came to what had the appearance of an <sup>other</sup> grave than those of the balance of the cemetary, and which had ~~its~~ at its head, still s<sup>t</sup>anding, an imposing marble or granite headstone. Here he knelt down and closely perused the markings on the stone, and then, as though satisfied with what he found, arose and went back to his horse where he undid the bundle tied securely back of the saddle seat with buck skin thongs. Having removed this bundle he undid its fastenings and took therefrom a small

spade and a queer looking instrument resembling a crow bar but much smaller. With these he returned to the grave he had just left and inserted the spade in the dirt at the front of the headstone, began in a careful manner to remove the dirt. Finally, having removed a foot or more of the loose dirt, surprisingly loose it would seem to one who might be watching, for the appearance of the grave would lead one to believe that a great number of years had elapsed since it had been made, he cautiously inserted the end of the small bar under the buried end of the tombstone and gently lifted it out of its moorings. After each successive effort to pry the stone up the stranger would stop and peer earnestly into the depths as though anxious not to disturb some fragile <sup>object</sup> which reposed there. After repeated attempts the stone gave way and would have fallen but the man grasped the same and gently lowered it to the ground. He then reached into the opening thus left and finally came forth with a small, oblong case, apparently of a most delicate workmanship. Having removed the case the solitary stranger again replaced the headstone and replaced the earth with the greatest care, obliterating entirely all trace of his work. He even went to the trouble <sup>of</sup> scattering leaves and loose grass about the spot to protect it from enquiring eyes of the future. He then took up the small oblong case and throwing the spade and crow bar far into the murky red waters of Little River, whistled to his horse, mounted and rode away down the north bank of Little River in a southeasterly direction.

Night began to close in in earnest and the horseman urged his horse into a brisk trot and pursued his way down the stream for a short way and thence turned directly east, keeping that direction until he came into a rough country

strewn with giant boulders and chimney rocks. Here he dismounted and began to peer sharply among the great boulders and sharp pointed rocks. At last he came to a tall, chimney looking rock, of gigantic proportions. He went close up to this rock and examined it minutely. Not being satisfied with his close inspection he stepped back a few yards and looked the rock up and down, as though in doubt as to something he had expected to find there. Abruptly he stepped to one side, and peered curiously at the face of the great stone, from where it was noticeable that the rock had several dim creases across its face, creases that may have at one time been deep grooves, but <sup>which</sup> had apparently been worn away by time and the elements. These markings were what the stranger was looking for, it seemed, as he took from his pocket a well worn parchment and after closely scanning the same, placed his foot to the north side of the great rock and counted off seven teen steps to the north, then turning he took seven steps in a direction due east, thence fourteen steps in a southeasterly direction, where he came face to face with another huge stone and directly facing it another of somewhat lesser dimensions. These stones were about three feet apart, and seemingly firmly imbedded in the earth. Stepping behind the southerly rock he placed his hands on the top and gave a great shove. The stone seemed to move yet remained stubbornly in place. The stranger then sat his oblong case down upon the ground and placed <sup>his</sup> entire strength and weight against the rock was finally enabled to topple it over and it balanced itself upon the side and top of the adjoining rock and rested there. At the base of the boulder was disclosed what seemed to be a hole or well about twice the size of a man's body, and apparently hewn from the solid rock.

The stranger then stepped over to his bundle and searching among its folds produced two large candles. Then taking up the little case he returned to the mouth of the opening and shielding the candle from the mist, he lighted it and disappeared into the aperture. The candle light disclosed that rude steps had been carved out of the solid rock running directly up and down, like a ladder, and one was allowed to climb up or go down because the body could be balanced against the opposite wall. These steps only descended for eight or ten steps when the man came out upon a smooth, hard, rocky floor, and looking around discovered himself in a chamber of something like twelve by fifteen feet in dimensions. At one end of this chamber there was another entrance, and going to this rough hewn doorway, the man came into a huge apartment, and a look of the greatest astonishment passed over his stolid countenance.

Heretofore the man had moved and proceeded with an apparent sureness that impressed one with the belief that he acted under express instructions or with an exact knowledge of his present undertaking. But the look of astonishment that passed over face on looking into the larger cavern gave way to an expression of puzzlement, and he seemed to be at a loss as to whether he should turn back or proceed. However, after a long scrutiny in the dim light of the candle, he stepped down into the large chamber and peered curiously around at his surroundings. This chamber was such an one as would have frightened a more timid soul than he who stood in the dim candle light and curiously gazed at one of the strangest sights it is possible to imagine could have been encountered in the nineteenth century.

This apartment was partly a natural cave and partly hewn from a real white limestone. Upon first appearance one would be led to believe that the walls had been whitewashed or stained with some white paint or calcimine, but an examination would reveal that what seemed to be an artificial coloring was simply the white of the limestone rock or ledge in which the cavern had been formed.

The apartment was not without what had at one time been rude furnishings, and immediately facing the entrance was a low couch, or perhaps better described as an attempt at upholstering of a wooden bench. On this couch or bench reclined in the most natural and lifelike attitude, the body of a young woman. While across the end of it the body of a man hung as though thrown there by some tremendous force. His face was turned away from the stranger and the leather coverings that had once served as clothing seemed to be almost ready to fall away from the body with age. To the left could be seen in the light, reflected by the exceeding white walls, several more bodies piled in a heap, some still clasped in each others arms as though death had come to each by the mighty efforts of the other. Rude furniture was strewn about the chamber, and all that appearance of disorder that accompanies a death struggle was present.

Standing for a long time as though uncertain whether he should proceed, the stranger at last went forward and righting a heavy oak table that had been overturned in the middle of the chamber, the man placed his candle and little casket down upon it and again took a survey of his surroundings. Going to the man whom he had first discovered across the end of the couch, he attempted to raise him up but the body was rigid and stiff as though hewn from the stones.

Taking a firmer hold he was finally able to lift him up and ease the body down upon the floor with the face upward, that is it was as nearly upward as the bent condition of the body would permit. The features were still preserved in a natural and lifelike state. Coal black hair surmounted a massive and noble head. In life the man had been of a little above medium height and exceedingly well proportioned. Dark, swarthy and grim were the features and the look of the eagles still rested upon the rigid dead. Across the throat ran a ragged and deep wound, doubtless the one that had spelled eternity for the stark figure on the floor. He had been an exceedingly muscular man and one was led to wonder what manner of man could have compassed his death in a hand to hand struggle as the appearance of the room indicated had taken place. Stepping over the body he gazed down into the dead features of the girl reclining so naturally upon the couch. He started back as one who gazed upon recognized features, or at least so similar to one he knew as to be startling in that strange room. No mark or wound could be seen from a hasty survey of the body and the eyes were closed as though their owner had just dropped off into a peaceful sleep..

The bodies of the others lying in a heap on the floor disclosed beyond doubt that all had died in a fierce struggle, The features were distorted, some in looks of hate and others in fear. No other bodies were to be seen, and not a sign of a weapon of any kind was noticeable. However, buried deep in the side of one of the farther figures was a small dirk or stiletto knife, the handle of which was richly wrought in bronze or copper, and showed the handiwork of the artist in the making.

All of the bodies were in the most thorough state of preservation and but for the tattered and tattered

of the leather clothing partly covering the bodies one could readily believe that they had but just fallen down. Picking up the candle and viewing the bodies more closely the stranger discovered that three of the dead were of a different race or nation than the other bodies found in the chamber. Different, too, had been their clothing, for the bodies were almost naked except for a rather heavy loin cloth and buck skin encased their feet.

Having satisfied his curiosity as to the dead the stranger began a curiously close inspection of the entire chamber. Across the southeast corner of the room still hung, in a good state of preservation, a large curtain or curtains. These curtains had in the past served their owners as portiers, and the man started forward as though to draw them aside and find what was beyond, but stopped and seemed to think better of it, returned to the old table, where he again sat down the candle and proceeded to unwrap the strange little case that he had brought from the graveyard. He examined it closely and taking a large red bandanna handkerchief from his pocket, carefully wiped the top and sides, and then began a minute inspection apparently seeking some hidden spring that would open the lid to the casket. Under the direct rays of the candle one might see why such care had been taken by the man in handling the case as it was seemingly of some delicate, oriental make; perhaps of shell or maybe glass or china ware. Finally a little button was discovered and pressing down on it, at the same time pulling up on the top, the lid gave way and flew back.

On the inside was another box, apparently of black iron wood and across the top was beautifully carved the picture of an old Moorish castle. A little knob allowed the stranger to

open the lid, and the inside disclosed what seemed to be the top tray of a ladies jewel box. On the plush lining of the tray lay a magnificent neckless of emeralds. In the fitful light of the candle the gems appeared to move and twist, and the sullen green luster of the jewels seemed to breath a warning or dare. Scarcely noticing the gems the stranger plucked out the tray and peered into the depths of the box. The main compartment of the case was filled with papers and manuscripts, and these the stranger hastily removed and spreading them out under the direct rays of the candle began an earnest and careful examination of their contents. Written in curious old Spanish script, the stranger had great difficulty in making out their contents although the fact that they were written in Spanish held nothing of the unusual for him. Apparently that was what he had expected.

One short slip which rested on top of the other papers was the first to be deciphered by the man, and as he read he looked at the leathern portiers across the southeast corner of the chamber from time to time as though the writing had something to do with that matter, or he expected at any time some most unusual occurrence from that portion of the chamber. Having mastered the contents of this paper, or at least being satisfied with it for the present, he stuck the same into the folds of his heavy belt and taking up the other writings he looked around for some sort of seat or chair and finding none that would serve his purpose he sat down upon the floor and prepared to lieisurely read the entire contents of the casket.

No stranger sight could well be imagined than this stalwart stranger, sitting in the midst of this awful past, surrounded by the ghostly white walls of the cavern and mummified dead of another age, calmly reading a message from the



long, dim past and probably having to do with the tragedy which strewed its gastly history over the floor of this wild, strange, underground chamber of the dead. \* Editor's Note. Not.

## Chapter 2.

Just off the great causeway which led out from the imposing city of Tenichtitlan, the capitol city of the ancient Anahuacs, to the mainland southwestward on a beautiful island of some five acres area resided one of the noblest citizens of that great empire in the year 1520. The family of Piltuc had come down from the nobler civilization of the Toltecs, and of a truth the present noble was of pure Toltec blood.

The island home was a picture. A magnificent villa of sun dried bricks resting among the magnificent cedars of the island, with a wonderful garden and pool. Facing the east where the rising sun touches the summits of the snow capped Popocatepetl and Ixtaccihuatl, no finer home could be found in all Anahuac.

Piltuc, the noble, lived in peace, respected and loved by all who knew him. Even the Spaniard who had come but one year previous, knew and respected. In the councils of the great Montezuma the wisdom of Piltuc had been sought and many times followed. Even so had been his father and his father's father before him, so that all throughout the mighty land of Anahuac the name of Piltuc stood for honor and respectability.

The family of Piltuc numbered but two beside the lord, a son of some twenty two years and a daughter of two years his junior. Beautiful beyond all women of the land was the daughter, Enikan, and noble of bearing and loved by all was the son, Isagoque.

The Piltucos, true to their Toltec teachings which had been adhered to from generation to generation, forebore the harsher religion of the Aztecs and clung to their gentler faith in the worship of the woods and the flowers and the wonders of nature. Through the generations that followed the flight of their tribe to the south away from the savage warriors of the Aztec, the Piltucos had clung to their faith, and strange to say, had been protected in that faith. Honored throughout the land for their goodness and wisdom.

When Cortez had burned his ships behind him and set out upon the conquest of Anahuac, the Montezuma had called his friend, the Toltec, for counsel and aid. Piltuc had counselled war and an immediate offensive, but the belief in an ancient prophecy and the superstition of the Emperor had overcome the arguments of Piltuc, and gifts of gold and precious gems were sent the fast approaching Spaniard. The Emperor had even gone forth to meet the conqueror with kind words and friendly greetings only to be made prisoner and treated with contempt.

The gates of the city were opened to the new comer and his soldiers plundered the mansions and even the great temple, where the sacrifice had been made, was not free from the white intruder.

But the same respect which had won the confidence of the fierce Aztec, met and stayed that of the Spaniard. The ancient home of the Piltuc went un molested. And as the days went on and lengthened into months, a few of the younger Spaniards became frequent callers at the home of the old Toltec.

Among the young white men who visited the villa and spent their evenings in the garden watching the lazy moon as it climbed into the cloudless sky, was a young nobleman of Spain called by his comrades, Guero. Pleasant spoken, and noble of mein, he was one of those young men whom it is pleasure to know.

Of an average height, strong of build, with dark Spanish eyes and hair, swarthy almost as an Indian, yet withal an exceedingly handsome man. Aside from his looks he possessed a very pleasing personality. Attractive to men and women alike, he soon became a favorite in the household of Piltuc. Quick to learn, and as anxious to please, he had fast mastered the simple language of Anahuac and his quaint expressions and manner of speech was a constant delight to the members of the household.

This intimacy had been going on for months, and a really great affection had sprung up between the young Spaniard and the ancient Piltuc family. It was one of those friendships which has for its base respect and admiration. Admiration for strength of mind and the good qualities of the heart. A trust for each other soon came to be more than passing, but mounted to the heights of an abiding confidence. The beautiful daughter of the ancient Toltec and young Guero were often seen to wander off to the more secluded portions of the garden. The mutual respect soon ripened into a warmer affection, but never a word of remonstrance came from Piltuc. He seemed to accept the love of the young people as the most natural and expected thing, as though through the years he had been waiting and expecting just such a happening. Real and earnest was the affection of Guero and Isayoque. Many were the hunts they took, and the Spaniard taught the young Indian the secret of the white man's "thunder piece" and how to fence with the sword.

The terrible butcheries of Cortez and his men were deeply regretted by Guero. His was not a nature that could delight in the like. Brave in the tide of battle, almost to a foolhardiness, yet his was a merciful nature seldom met with in those times.

Peaceful and happy was this family and friends, laughing and bantering one with another as had been their wont for many months on the evening of July 1st, 1520. Came a runner with the news that a body of Cortez soldiers had robbed and murdered twenty of the Aztec noblemen and that the population was in revolt. It was the forerunner of "la noche triste" the sorrowful night. All the people were up in arms, it was reported, and at their head was the valliant Guatemotzin, the mightiest of the Aztec chieftans, and the best beloved.

Hasty and solemn were the farewells made and the young Spaniard rushed away to the great city where his comrades were already in flight. Unknowingly he was rushing into a seething mass of madmen, bent on the destruction of all who bore the Spanish look or had been their ally.

At the Piltuc home much anxiety was felt as young Isayoque was in the city that night, and probably in the midst of the carnage. Summoning to him a trusted man Piltuc directed that he immediately go to the city and gather tidings of the night and above all seek out his young master and bring him away to the home of his fathers. And immediately the runner was lost in the night. Anxious were the hours spent by the household, and every noise that came out of the night startled into a feverish dread the old man and his beautiful daughter.

After an agonizing wait, the rush of hurrying feet was heard and there burst into their midst, not the man who had been sent forth, but a runner from the city. Wild eyed and in the highest excitement he came up to Piltuc and without delay announced that he had a message from Guatemotzin.

"The mighty Guatemotzin bids me say to Piltuc that the people are in revolt and that many Spaniards have been killed and the invader has been driven from the City. He bids me state that you must come at once to the Great Temple. That he is in

need of your counsel."

"Have you seen aught of my son, and is he well?"

"Much have we seen of Iscoque, and mighty deeds of valor has he performed this night. Already he sits high in the council of the new Emperor. But Guatemotzin bids you come at once, there is great need of counsel from the best, and Guatemotzin bids his friend Piltuc to come with haste."

Turning to his daughter the Toltec spoke to her in a language strange to the ears of the waiting Aztec, bidding her be cautious and circumspect. Then gently kissing her he hastened away with the Aztec soldier.

On reaching the great causeway which led from the City many people were met, some rushing cityward and others, with their family and small belongings were hastening away. Wild and strange were the snatches of conversation heard on every hand. Here a man and his family rushing away would meet a friend and impart the information that numberless people had been killed and that the fighting still progressed. That thousands of natives were being slaughtered by the strange white man. While another would yell that the Tueles were being driven out and that the Gods were at last fighting on the side of the people.

But ever as the City grew closer, fewer people were found on the way, and when the great west gate was reached already a guard was stationed, and the runner and the old noble were allowed to ~~next~~ pass after a close inspection.

After entering the city the Toltec and his guide traversed the avenues until finally they entered the great market place bordered by many fine houses of stone and lime, and many more of mud cakes or sun dried bricks. The shadow of the great temple or teocalli towered near by in the gloom of the night,

and on the square at its top could be seen the dull glow of the sacred fires which burned eternally, and ghostly figures could be seen flitting about in the gloom. A great drum beat continually in the night and the chant of many voices could be heard in the distance. But little heed was paid these as the two swiftly made their way through the market place to the foot of the great Sun Temple. Here the guide conducted the Toltec noble to a small door, adroitly concealed under the steps which started the ascent to the place of sacrifice. On entering this door they came into a long corridor at the far end of which dim lights flickered, and toward these they proceeded with a familiarity that bespoke many such journeys.

Into the great hall of the Aztecs came the old Toltec and already a great council was in progress. Upon his entrance a tall, noble figure arose and came forward with friendly greetings.

" Welcome, Friend Piltuc, you came at a great time for the nation of Anahuac; for this night does our land need to take counsel of its noblest. Montazuma is dead. Murder has been done many of our noblest warriors, and the intruders have plundered our homes and violated the sacredness of our temples. This night revolt against the white men has resulted in the death of many and the others have confined themselves in the great palace of the Kings. Cuitlahua has this night been crowned Emperor and he sits at his first Council. Strange things are happening in this land of ours, and we are in need of the best counsel to be had."

So saying he conducted Piltuc into the circle of stern savage faces and seated him in a place apparently reserved for his coming.

At the head of the great cedar paneled hall on a raised dais sat the new Emperor, Cuitlakue, and around him sat his

chieftans. The sternness of their faces and the greatness of their rank bespoke the trying hour of a nation's peril. Some of the nobles were still apparelled in their fighting dress, some being clad in rent and bloody mail, while others sat in their robes of cotton cloth, covered with brilliant feathers, and there sat at the side of the Emperor one whose robes identified him as belonging to the priesthood. These men sat there this night, sober and solemn, with the fierce fire from their eyes playing in the dim light, to take counsel as to how best to expel the Spaniard from the City.

As the Toltec Chieftain entered with the noble Guatemotzin the man in mail who sat at the head of the council looked up quickly and asked:

"Who is this, Guatemotzin, that you bring among us? Ah! yes, I remember, it is the noble Toltec. Welcome friend, and take your seat among us."

"Listen, nobles, this night spells the doom or the continued greatness of Anahuac. These Tuelas, envited among us by the late Emperor and trusted as friends, have betrayed us. Many of our mightiest nobles have this night been slain by the foreigner, and the people in revolt have even destroyed Montazuma, and cried out "woman" upon him when he appeared upon the roof of the great palace. These white men have plundered the palace of its gold and furnishings, and have entered the Great Temple and taken away its treasure. Treating them as freinds has availed us nothing; now it is war and extermination, either for the Tuela or for our people. It is well that we take counsel as to how best to compass his expulsion, and better still his destruction. He has come not as a friend, but as a foe. What shall be our best measures in this great peril for our city and our people?"

Many of the chiefs arose and expressed their views, and to the words of each was the utmost consideration and attention given. After many had spoken the Emperor designated the Toltec noble by a nod of the head and asked that he give advice

Slowly the old chieftain arose and in words slow and weighty he discoursed upon the urgent affairs of the state. Solemnly he detailed the trials of his <sup>own</sup> ancient people, and spoke of the mistake made by them in the defense of their cities and their country against the Aztec. He told of the grievous misfortune which followed the errors of his people in their stand against the Aztec. Then he entered upon the discussion near to the heart of those assembled. He recounted the friendliness shown to the intruder by the late Emperor. How they had been allowed to peaceably enter the city. How this night, if all accounts were to be considered true, the very streets of the City of Tenochtitlan ran with the blood of its best beloved and noblest warriors. How, on every hand the invader had proven his word was not to be trusted, and to repose trust in such was but to err. He recommended that a strong guard be thrown about the King's Palace, and that every effort of the Spaniard to escape be overcome. "For," he reasoned, "should they be allowed to escape the city and fight in the open, they could the better assemble the warlike Tlascalans and other warlike tribes of the mountain country and come again to attack the city with great hordes." And then, too, he said, "in the open places their fierce, great horses, would do greater damage to the defending armies."

Many were the nods and expressions of satisfaction as the statement of the Toltec proceeded, and when at last he had finished and resumed his seat, and was apparent that his words were those of wisdom, and that in the great struggle

that was to follow, his counsel would be taken as the key to the situation and as the best solution of the most terrible menace to which the nation has been exposed. One of the princes from the allied countries to the north arose and expressed the opinion that the counsel of the Toltecs was good, and that the council should adopt it as the best means to rid the country of the Tuele.

All this time the Prince Quatemotzin sat in silence, and only when the old warrior of the Toltecs was speaking did he seem to take an interest in the affairs that were going on around him. When Hiltus spoke of the welcome of the Spaniard into the city, and the costly error of the move, his eyes seem to flash fire, and once or twice he almost started from his seat as though the fierceness of his thoughts could not be restrained. And when it seemed the last words of the nobles present had been said, he arose to his feet and speaking in a low and restrained voice, proposed that the movement to besiege the enemy be placed in his hands, and that he be allowed to proceed at once.

"Time," he said, "was pressing and the Tuele was not one to sit down and wait for their foes to take the initiative. Let us act at once, and may runners be sent into the outlying districts, and the soldiers of the fierce northern tribes be in all haste brought to the capitol."

Then spoke Cuiclahua: "No better man could be found for this great undertaking. My brother, yours is a great duty to perform and truly we know you will do it well. Into your hands do we this night entrust the welfare and perhaps the future of Anahuac. May the Gods direct your efforts and may the future generations sing of your achievements. Yours, my brother is supreme authority. Go, Make such appointments of officers as you may think best. We will send forth the runners

to notify the people of Anahuac that their very existence is now at stake. In all things will we assist you in your efforts. We have said, get to your work, the die is cast."

Guatemotzin arose with a fierce pleasure painted upon his face and thanking the Emperor and the assembled members of the council he hastened from the great hall.

After him followed all of the younger members of the council and but a few of the elder chieftains remained in the hall. Then it was that the priest who sat near the right hand of the Emperor called those left closer around and told of the capture of a young Spaniard late that evening who had been found spying around the western base of the temple.

"He is held at this moment in the sacred chamber of Quetzal and the priests prepare the sacrifice for the morrow. Strange, too, he speaks the language of Anahuac, and insists that he was not spying, neither was he engaged in any of the fighting of the night. But he claims he was visiting with friends on the great causeway westward from the City when news of the fighting was brought there."

These words of the priest aroused the attention of Piltuc who had been standing a little removed from the group, wrapped in deep thought, and coming forward he asked of the priest:

"Did the stranger state his name, or with whom he was visiting?"

"He would not tell with whom he visited, and therefore we knew he lied. As to his name he spoke it, but the name of the foreigners are not to be remembered and I cannot recall it."

The Toltec seemed to consider and once made as if to speak but thought better of it, excused himself from the assemblage and leaving the great hall by the secret door through which he had entered, took his way out into the great market place of the City. Here he paused, seemingly uncertain as how best

to proceed. Then took his way around the base of the temple and toward that part of the city where great fires were burning and where the noise of a vast multitude arose. Here he enquired for the Prince Guatemotzin and was told that he had but recently been seen to enter the square in front of the Emperor's palace where the soldiers were still shooting their arrows into the garden of the palace. Swiftly the old man proceeded to the place designated and was fortunate to meet the prince coming away with a band of commanding officers. Hastily calling to Guatemotzin he asked for a few words aside and drawing away they talked in a low voice. At first the prince seemed to resent something which the old man said, but later under the earnest persuasion of the Toltec, seemed to relent and nodded his head, speaking in a louder voice.

" I will see to this matter, it shall be done as you ask. I will dispatch a messenger at once. To morrow I will consider this matter and in the mean time his life shall be safe. Matters of more importance demand our attention this night, and should the morrow allow us time we will investigate. Take no comfort in this Friend Piltuc for our hearts cannot be found to relent toward one of his kind. To me you have been as a father and your wish in most things shall be respected, but in this matter I fear the thing you propose is impossible for it is not what you may desire but what is best for the state that must first be considered."

Turning on his heel he was soon lost in the night. Piltuc took his way again toward the market place. The great drums were still beating, and the temple fires seemed to have taken on new luster as the old noble hastened away into the night toward the great west gate.

On arriving at his home the old lord was met by his daughter who anxiously enquired of Guero and her brother; and the noble sadly shaking his head, related what he had heard from the priest in the great council chamber and added:

"Your brother fights with the Aztec this night and much honor has been his. But alas! I fear that our friend Guero is in much danger. I have communicated with the noble Guatemotzin and he has promised respite until such time as the matter may be investigated. But, in the hands of the horrid priesthood of the Aztec, danger to Guero's life is eminent. Tomorrow will bring much fighting, if I mistake not, and in the hurry of battle the priests may do their will upon our friend. It is this I fear."

"Oh! my father, is there nothing we can do to night, as you say, tomorrow may be too late!"

"Nothing, my daughter, can be done. If a sacrifice is intended the custom will require that no sacrifice be done except during the noon hour, and not then, if you remember should the sun fail to shine out. So let us pray that tomorrow will not see a cloudless sky. And in the meantime I shall be in the City doing what I may be able to do. Now let us to rest for tomorrow shall be an eventful day in the history of Anahuac. The Spaniard has been surrounded in the King's Palace and it is the intention to hold him there until hunger does its worst. But the stranger is not to idly wait such an event, and if I mistake not, it will take the hosts of Anahuac to hold him within the city. Much depends upon tomorrow's fighting, and much more depends upon this night's work for I believe that it is the design of Guatemotzin to barricade all the streets leading from the palace, and runners have long since been on their way to arouse the outlying tribes and the early morning will hear the tramp of countless feet upon the causeway

So to sleep, my daughter, and get what rest you can. Fear not for your brother for if he falls it will be in defense of his land and home, and he is fighting against a most relentless foe. Guero I will look after ere the sun is an hour high."

But little rest was there in the Piltuc home that night. Lying upon her bed of furs little, if any, sleep came to the eyes of Enixam and the ceaseless tread of the old noble could be heard far into the morning hours.

Piltuc was up before the sun, if indeed he had ever sought his couch and summoning his attendants about him gave them definite instructions. Some were sent into the country estates to summon his men while others were directed to store up supplies for the household. Three men were left in the end, and to these the old lord gave whispered and apparently secret instructions. It was easy to see that in these men the Toltec placed implicit confidence.

When he had made such preparations relative to his household as he deemed advisable he betook himself toward the city. Upon his arrival there he enquired of the happenings of the night and learned that all the streets leading to the palace had been torn away and that the palace and its foreign defenders were in a state of siege. That Guatemotzin was in supreme command and that all night long the soldiers of the empire had labored to carry out his orders.

Threading his way again through the market place he accosted a soldier who was apparently on some errand to a remote part of the city and enquired of the Prince. He was directed to where he might be found. Already the sun was shining bright over the crest of the snow clad mountains to the east and it was apparent that the sun would shine that day for the sacrifice on the top of the great temple.

Arriving at the spot where he was told that Guatemotzin might be found he was informed that the Prince was holding council with several of his principal officers and it was doubtful as to when he might be seen. Sending word by an attendant that he desired an immediate appointment he prepared himself for a wait, knowing that the matter he was upon must await the completion of the plans which he felt certain the prince was formulating for the days fight. But scarcely had the attendant left until he was back again with directions to follow him and the old lord was conducted into the presence of Guatemotzin.

"Welcome Piltuc, welcome my friend, it seems your rest has been as brief as mine. But the night has seen much done for the welfare of this stricken land. I am at ease sufficiently to listen to the counsel of one I hold near to me as a father."

"You speak true, my prince, when you say that my rest has been but little. I come to enquire if your commands went forth respecting the white man who was taken last night west of the great temple?"

"Now am I stricken with remorse, good Piltuc, for in the press of the night's labors I have neglected to do as I promised. What will you have, it shall be yours for the asking, but I fear that even I cannot save your friend if he is in the hands of the priests."

"Were I not so certain that Guero, my friend, is he whom they hold in the chamber of Quetzal I would not burden you with these matters at this time. But during the months which have just passed Guero has become as a son to me and little sleep came to my daughter last night. An affection has grown up between these two. If there be some way in which I

may procure his release, I shall not hesitate to become responsible for him."

" Little can we do, good friend, but that little shall be done at once ere I forget again as I did last night. If not for your own sake, which I hold nearer to me than all else, too much cannot be done for our appreciation of the great achievements of that noble son of yours. Here, take this ring as a symbol, carry it to the chief priest, he whom you saw in the council last night and tell him that it is the command of Guatemotzin that the strange white man be placed in your custody. I depend <sup>very</sup> upon your ability as upon this command of mine, but in the least it will gain you admission to the temple, and your own sagacity can do as much toward seeing that my command is obeyed as would my presence there. This is the best I can do. May the gods be with you in this matter as I see it lays close your heart. I will have to leave you now, and it is perhaps best that you hasten your work. The sun creeps ever toward the meridian. Your desire in this matter is my command, but little attention may be paid to either of us in this matter, but I wish you well."

Hastening off the Toltec made his way to the foot of the great steps leading to the summit of the temple. Far above him beat the drums incessantly, and already a procession of priests were wending their way to the dizzy heights, chanting as they proceeded. The old man began the ascent of the great pyramid, following a road that wound round and round its bulk until it ended on a great platform at its summit. This square or summit might have measured 100 feet in the square. On the further side of the great platform stood two gigantic totum poles or wooden towers, fifty or sixty feet in height. These were the effigies of Huhtzal, god of war and Quetzal, God of the air. Back of the square were chambers, and in front of

these burned the eternal altar fires. And almost in the center of the great square was the ancient sacrifice stone. Almost the size of a modern dining room table; and directing back of it was a huge round stone some six feet in diameter with a great copper ring in the exact center. This stone was placed in a slanting position with its lower edge commencing just at the table's level and then running up horizontally to an elevation of some two feet.

Arriving upon the great square the old noble stood in doubt for this was one place in the great City where his feet had never trod, and he was puzzled as to how best to proceed in order to get in touch with the chief priest whom he came to find.

### Chapter Three.

As the old noble stood there on the square of the great teocalli, doubtful as to his next move, his eye fell upon the city below with its myriads of soldiers gathered for war. Just so far as the eye could reach; in square, in market place and streets were the thousands massed; expectant, restless. Some were armed with slings; some with bows and arrows, others with javelins tipped with copper and sometimes with flint heads; others carried the great war clubs set with spikes while the poorer classes were armed with simple sharpened sticks. The bodies of some were covered with coats of mail wrought from copper or from gold and many had upon their heads wooden helmets some shaped as the head of the wolf and others the panther and many other such fantastic imageries. The most wore the common quilted garment, quilted from the cotton and enterlaced with gaudy feathers. On the tops of the houses and on the squares of the smaller temples thousands of warriors stood ready for action, armed with heavy missiles of every shape and form, to

dash upon the enemy should he chance within their reach.

In the enclosure of the palace of Axa ( the King's Palace ) could be seen the Spaniards, making ready in their own way to pass out from the trap in which they had been caught.

It was indeed a strange sight which met the gaze of the ancient noble of the Toltecs as the sun rose to its zenith over the great capitol city of Tenochtitlan. A sight never to be forgotten as the light of the sun flashed from temple and palace walls, and from the points of innumerable lances, and the gaudy feathers of the soldier's dress; upon the gay banners of the Aztec and from the gleaming armor of the white man.

As the old man looked suddenly there shrilled out a note from some commandant's whistle or shell, and with a shriek of rage the countless thousands sprang to the attack of the entrapped Spaniard. Quickly there answered the trumpet of the whiteman and the soldiery sprang into positions of defense. The very air grew dark with missiles. From the palace walls there came a thundering crash, and columns of smoke arose as the cannon belched forth their death dealing charges. Down fell the attacking warriors, down by the hundreds. And the sharper crack of the arquebus took their toll also. The great fight for the delivery of Tenochtitlan from the invaders was on.

#### Chapter Four.

A shriek from the center of the great temple's square drew Piltuc's attention there. The sacrifice at the noontide was commencing and the shriek was the death cry of the first victim. Already the head priest, with his scarlet mantle about him, had torn the smoking heart from the slaughtered victim and was placing it upon the nearest brazier, as an offer to the

great Sun God. Lined up for the sacrifice were some twenty victims awaiting their turn at the central sacrifice stone, and among those twenty the old noble was startled to note his friend, Guero. Standing boldly apart from the others, with drawn features and eyes that <sup>shone</sup> ~~poke~~ of deep concern, he seemed to measure the distance from where he stood to the temple's edge and Piltuc instantly realized that the Spaniard contemplated a break for self destruction, rather than suffer the torment of the sacrificial stone.

Making a motion to arrest the attention of his friend, ~~the~~ bold Toltec stepped forward toward the head priest and spoke to him in the language of the Aztec. The headpriest, who was called Estema, gazed with fury at the interference, but when Piltuc displayed the signet of Guatemotzin and requested a Conference apart, he sullenly acquiesced.

" It is the command of the noble Guatemotzin that the white man standing there be delivered into my hands. Measures of war against the invader requires the presence of the Tuele. Such is the command of the Prince, Guatemotzin, and I am directed to bear him thither."

" Such cannot be, even at the command of the noble Guatemotzin, for this day the God Quetzal claims the white man as a sacrifice and my authority here is supreme. I see no reason why I should incur the anger of the God, neither do I see why the white man should be spared. Go back to the Prince and inform him that the God claims the white man as a sacrifice and that all earthly commands will avail nothing."

" This day sees the imperial Tenochtitlan fighting for its existence, and the counsel of the wisest heads demands that the white man be brought before their council. Shall the welfare of Tenochtitlan be endangered because of the sacrifice of one small victim, when there are countless others to

be offered? Zealous priest, you may make the sacrifice, but your life shall answer for it. I have delivered to you in person the command of him who is supreme commander of the City, and a refusal to obey that order, even by the high priest of the temple, will not go unpunished. But deliver the white man to me and nothing will I sport of your disobedience of the command of Guatemotzin. It is but little I ask when there are countless others ready for the sacrifice."

"Away, foolish Toltec, even the command of Montazuma can avail you nothing here. This sacrifice shall proceed, already the mid day hour is passing by, and time is pressing. If my life is the forfeit then gladly shall it be given for the Gods of the Aztecs claim their own and the commands of men are as nothing."

Turning away he went wrathfully back to the sacrificial stone and again took up the huge flint knife and directed that another victim be brought forward. But the sacrifice of that day was doomed never to take place. A higher authority than Guatemotzin intervened, for no sooner had the man intended for the knife been strapped in the sacrificial ring than it was noticed that the sun was not shining upon the point where the victim's breast lay exposed. A shadow fell over all the earth. Wonder and awe were written upon the upturned faces of the priest. Though no clouds were to be seen in the heavens, yet the sun hid his face. Consternation reigned among those assembled on the great pyramid and in the confusion which ensued Guero silently slipped to the side of the Toltec chieftain, and taking him by the arm, urged him toward the steps of the temple. A hush had fallen upon the assembled multitude below. The fighting had ceased. Many of the ~~xxxxxx~~ savage warriors were grovelling in the dust of the streets, and some were

making their way to the gates of the city. Hastily the old man and his Spanish friend made their way down the steps of the great temple, and no hand was raised to stop them. The guns of the Spaniard had ceased firing and all was still as the two finally made their way into the market square. Swiftly they traversed the distance to the west gate of the City. Not a word had been spoken between them. Having passed the gate the old noble addressed his companion and bade him immediately make his way to the villa and await the coming of Piltuc.

"The Gods have protected you, friend Guero, the sun has hidden its face from the sacrificial stone. That has been accomplished for you by Providence that all the commands of those of the earth could not do. Go, favored one, and wait my return. I have a scheme that I will communicate to you then, and in the meantime commit yourself to the protection of Enixam, whom I have instructed in this matter. Have no fear for the present, the passing centuries have not disclosed the secret of the resting place you will be conducted unto. But I must request the utmost secrecy on your part as to your place of concealment, even to all the world. Is it granted me?"

"Indeed it is, noble Piltuc, but would it not be better if I hastened to my friends in the Palace?"

"Not so, for the chances of war are against those whom you call your friends, and little or nothing can you do for them, even if in the confusion of the moment you were allowed to pass to their protection. Go, for the time being you will be safe, and the morrow in these stirring times must take care of itself. I am hastening back to Guatemala." "

Without further ado the two men parted, one to take his way to the villa of the old noble and the other to return to the fighting in the city. Already the guns of the enemy had again begun to boom, telling of the resumption of the fight.

The almost total eclipse of the sun had begun to recede and the sunshine might again be seen upon the smoking Popocatepetl and the "Sleeping Lady", Ixtaccihuatl. Almost at the very time when the Toltec returned through the <sup>u</sup>gates of the City the running feet of a multitude were heard coming down the causeway from the direction in which lay the home of Piltuc. Halting he awaited the oncoming men. About one hundred and fifty stalwart warriors; tall, strong and sinewy, bent forward in true Indian runner style, came in swift run toward the gate. But at sight of the Toltec chieftain they halted as one man and standing stolidly erect awaited his commands. Not a sign of a weapon could be seen about them and but for the stern faces and warlike attitude, one would not guess them to be other than ordinary runners of the times. But at the side of each hung a huge skin bag which seemed loaded with some heavy substance. Gazing upon them with the utmost admiration, the old noble spoke to them in the language of the Toltec:

"Welcome, my warriors. You have indeed hastened. Have you provided yourselves with the flint boulders as I directed?"

"We have done so, my lord, each man carries six great stones in his bag, and they are each of flint. At the distance of ten steps any one of us can cave a hole through the staunchest brick wall with one of these stones. What are your commands, and are we to fight to-day?"

"I was but hastening to the fighting as you came up. Follow me. Should you be sent into the fray remember you must not attack in bunches. Separate and go singly or in pairs. I must tell you of the "thunder piece" of the white man. They point in a certain direction and with a great noise they cast great iron stones which destroy the mightiest stone walls. Men are mowed down. Keep your eyes on the actions of the enemy. Study

him long before you venture into the fighting. When you have determined as best you can how he operates, then station yourselves and await my commands or those of the noble Guatemotzin. The battles which are soon to follow means slavery or freedom for you. If you go down in defeat you and your families shall work as the slaves of the white man. Better to die a thousand deaths. Keep this in mind as you fight, it will lighten your burden, and strengthen your arms. Do not needlessly expose yourselves. Take advantage of every cover. Use your flints sparingly. Cast them only when you are sure they will reach their mark with the greatest force, for the white man fights with shining armor upon him which it is impossible to pierce with the strongest lance. But I hope that in the force of the jar of the great stones you cast, that ~~that~~ will be accomplished which it is impossible to do with our best made weapons. Seek you a place as near the fighting as is possible but do not enter the fight without specific command. Do not think it dishonor to run, if the fighting comes too close. Your time will come, and it is better that you abide that time with patience. For the enemy will wear himself down and then will your work be doubly effective. Remember my words, and obey them in the slightest detail. Now follow me and we will repair to the place of the fighting. **B**

Then the Toltec followed by his men, passed through the market place and approached the walls of the palace of Axa where the fighting was again at its height.

Leading his men to the upper steps of a small temple which almost directly overlooked the walls of the King's Palace, the old chieftain ordered them to take note of the white man's methods while he sought out Guatemotzin.

He noted as he left the viewpoint where he had stationed his men that the Spaniards were busy building some kind of

curious scaffold work, and that the defense of the walls had been left almost entirely to the canoneers and the Indian allies. He stopped just before he lost view of this scene and scanned the activities of the opposing forces long and earnestly. Then nodding his head as though satisfied with some conclusion reached he hastened away in search of the commanding Prince.

Finding him he plucked him aside and communicated what had transpired as to the captured white man, and of his action in secreting him. He then informed him of the arrival of his clansmen, and that he had directed that they arm themselves in a peculiar manner, the purpose of which he would explain later. He also told of what he had observed in the camp of the Spaniard and ventured the suggestion that they were preparing to bridge the moats made by tearing up the causeways and streets leading from the palace. He suggested that night or early morning would find them endeavoring to leave the city.

" Noble Guatemotzin, the safety of Tenochtitlan best lays in the keeping of the enemy forces within the city. We have discussed <sup>the</sup> reasons for this and are agreed. I have provided my men with great flint stones. In casting them against the shining armor of the foe the force of the compact will create a havoc which your spears and your lance can never do. It is but little, indeed, but I believe that it will be the best we can do. I advise that others of the forces fighting on our side be sent forth to thus arm themselves. There can be no loss, and there may be a great good result therefrom."

" You speak as the wise chieftain always, Piltuc. Your advice shall be followed. "

Calling a man to him he issued orders along the lines suggested by the Toltec and bade him hasten to notify the forces detailed for this work. He then gave directions to continue to harass the enemy to as great an extent as was

possible, and beckoning Piltuc to follow, made their way to a point where the actions of the Spaniard could be watched. For a long time the watchers took in every detail of the work of the foe. Suddenly the firing of the guns ceased and a man bearing a white flag came forward at whose side walked an Indian maiden. It was the false Marina, and she came forward to interpret for the Spaniard.

Guatemotzin bade one of his officers to hasten and stay the Aztec warriors while the parley was going forward, and then went forward to a place where the words of the girl Marina could be heard. However the wily Aztec sought out a spot not covered by the yawning mouths of the cannon.

"What would the white man, girl? Has he the face to ask favors of those who welcomed him as a friend, and whom he has in return betrayed and murdered?"

"No favors do the white men ask, Guatemotzin, none are necessary. Only that the needless slaughter may be stayed has the white man sought this parley. He bids me state that if you withdraw your forces he will quietly leave the city. That he is prepared to do so immediately, and will leave you in peace. If you do not grant this, then he will go anyway and will return with greater forces and raze your city to the very ground. What say you, shall his request be granted?"

"Vile mistress of your countries despoiler return and tell him that he shall not leave this city except to walk over the dead bodies of a thousand Aztec warriors. If we must give a thousand Aztec warriors for every white man, it shall be done gladly, but only by force of arms shall a single man of your number leave this city. Those who shall be taken alive shall have their hearts torn from their bodies on the top of the great temple that they so foully desecrated; and those who die in battle shall be left for the vultures to feast upon. I have

said, go back wanton, and deliver my reply."

" Dog of a prince, you will rue the day you spoke those words to me, for know that to-morrow the Tuele proposes to go forth from the city, but he will return and when he has done with you, this city will be no more."

" To-day or to-morrow makes no difference, his attempt will prove futile. The good of Anahuac demands the life of every Tuele, and to that end we are prepared to fight to the last man. Tell this to your master and remain him to prepare himself for the sacrifice, the Gods demand him above all others and he shall be offered up. Your fate, wench, shall be no less for know you this: whether the men of Anahuac or the Spaniard shall be successful in the end, this life holds no peace for you. Go! Bid your master prepare."

Guatemotzin turned his back and walked proudly away toward the men of Anahuac, while Marina hastily withdrew into the enclosure of the great castle. Guatemotzin, after giving a few curt commands to his men, signalled to Piltuc and others of the principal officers, and together they withdrew into the great hall of one of the principal buildings at some distance from the causeway of Tlacopan, ~~which was~~ one of broadest and most imposing streets of the City. Here he addressed the assembled chiefs, and requested that an hour past sun down they each repair to the great paneled hall of the teocalli there to meet the Emperor and devise means for the prosecution of the war against the Tueles.

" It is well," he said, " that we take counsel early tonight for it is my judgment that Marina spoke truly and the teule will make a desperate effort to escape the city tomorrow. In fact it is my belief that the attempt will be made this night. To that end I have given orders that all the principal

causeways of the city be amply guarded, and that the watches during the night be changed three times."

Without further ado the assembled warriors dispersed while Piltuc and the prince Guatemotzin left together and immediately repaired to the rooms of Cuitlahua, where all three were engaged in earnest conversation for many hours. When at last the council broke up the sun was far down toward the western horizon.

" Friend Piltuc, in this matter of the capture of the Teule for whom you so earnestly stood sponsor, I fear you are in the wrong. But your family for many years has been the confident of the rulers of this land of ours and no record have we of the slightest breach of that confidence. You, my friend do we trust above all others of your family, and in this the greatest hour of Anahuac, your counsel and advise is needed. So take care, we cannot afford to loose you. Remember that the late Emperor welcomed the Spaniard with friendship as you have done this man. The apparent friendship offered was but a blind and we have suffered for that folly, and time alone can tell how much more we shall suffer."

" I thank you, most high lord, for the kind words. I will gladly pay should my judgment be at fault. I feel sure that in this matter my trust is not misplaced. However I will take such means as I have at my command to safeguard against any false move, although it ill behooves me to treat Guero with the slightest suspicion. But Anahuac shall never have reason to complain of Piltuc's caution."

Then turning to Guatemotzin the old peer requested that the men whom he received that day from his country estate be housed and fed in some convenient abode near the causeway of the Tlacopan.

" For I agree with you Prince, that it is the plan of the Spaniard to pass out of the city to-night, and I would have my men ready. With your permission I shall assume complete command of those men, and they shall only enter the fray at such time as in my judgment seems best."

" It shall be done as you desire, Piltuc, and at the meeting in the paneled hall this evening, I shall apprise you of their position. Until that time I bid you good bye."

They then took their leave of the Emperor and passed out into the gathering gloom. There had been no firing of the cannon for some hours, a sudden hush had fallen upon the entire city, and one not knowing would little guess the strain that held the entire population of the ancient city of Tenochtitlan as the sun went down on that fatal<sup>ful</sup> day.

#### Chapter Five.

At the council that night the men as a whole were stern and anxious faces. Some there were, however, who seemed happy in the thought that the enemy was completely within their power. Those of the older warriors however, did not join any such sense of security. The counsel of all disclosed a shrewd knowledge of the general scheme of preventing the foe from escaping. And as they disbanded, each promised to station guards who should not sleep, and that their men should rest with weapons in hand and fully dressed for battle.

Around the great palace of Axa not a light was to be seen but the restless tramp, tramp, of the sentinel could be heard on every side about the enclosure.

On every great causeway<sup>W</sup> of the city men were busy assembling great piles of wood, brush and other materials to be lighted and instantly break into flames. Especially was this precaution taken at those places on the causeways where the

the streets had been torn away. At every such place on the side furthest from the palace the utmost care was taken to provide light in case of an attempt on the part of the white man to make a break in that direction. Small fires were lighted in all directions so that an immediate means of ignition would be available. When all these precautions had been worked out the entire city lay in apparent peace. It was that ominous quiet and stillness before the storm. As the hours wore on far past midnight even those who had felt an abiding confidence that the foe would move that night began to feel a sort of relief. For be it said that the Aztec and his kindred tribesmen were never in the habit of fighting during the night. The preparations looking to night fighting was only that abundance of precaution which those in command took in view of their awful responsibility, and none can say that every precaution was not taken. Men reason with peculiar directness and certainty in times like these. And the means adopted by Guatemotzin and his staff revealed a wealth of knowledge and foresight, far beyond what one might expect in that ancient time and amidst that savage people.

As Piltuc rested with his men in the great hall near the causeway of Tlacopan some two hours before dawn he was startled out of a light sleep by a great cry of "To arms, to arms, the Tuelas escape by the causeway of Tlacopan." The rush of many feet could already be heard without, and already great fires began to blaze all about the city. The fight for deliverance on the part of the white man was on. Assembling his men he again admonished them as to the use of their particular weapon. He also directed them to at all times station themselves on the outer sides of the causeway and keep away from the horses and swords of the enemy. He also cautioned them to use their flints most generally against those of the

enemy who were nearest the edge of the causeway.

"For," he said, "the impact of the stone will over balance the men with the armor and they will fall into the lake. The shallow water with its bottom of soft mud and slime will prove a trap for those who wear the heavy coats. Waste no stones upon any except those who wear the armor. Our men fight on more of an equality with those who are not clothed with metal.

Retreat and again retreat, if that seems best. Should the fore cross the first canal, then haste you to station yourselves on the far side of the next opening in the causeway. As the enemy attempts to cross through the shallow water or over bridges which he may prepare, then is the proper time to use your flints. I trust in the individual sagacity of each man. Stand together as nearly as the fighting of the night will permit, but remember that each flint stone should compass the death of an armored man. Come, let us to our position and may you all prove true men of Anahuac this night."

Hastily the company strode down the causeway, and already the thin, long line of Spaniards had approached the first break in the street. The night was hideous with the screaming of horses and the shrill yelling of the savage defenders of the city. The great fires burned high in the heavens and the shadowy figures rushing hither and thither in the night had the appearance of supernatural wraiths. And all through the fighting the great drums on the temple boomed forth. Presently the number of the forces grew to a road, armed men poured out toward the causeway of Tlacopan from every direction. Canoes and water craft of every description brought up thousands of troops. These canoes and boats crept along the shallow waters of the lake on each side of the causeway and woe was the luckless one who lost his footing or was fashed in the fight from the causeway as he was powerless to fight

back out of the muck of the shallow lake. The Spaniards numbered perhaps fifteen hundred men, but many of these were started out loaded with the treasure captured in the city, and many others with the equipment of the Spanish. These things could not be trusted to the Tlascalans ally. Of these Tlascalans there were perhaps six thousand men, and these all crawled out over the causeway in one long, thin, snaky line. A force of the best equipped warriors, fully armed and caparisoned, led the way and were followed by a number of men bearing the rudely constructed bridges or pontoons with which they were to cross the gaps made in the causeways by the Aztecs that morning. Very little was done to stop their progress before the first gap was reached and here the real fighting began. Thousands upon thousands of the Aztecs were waiting to give battle. When the Spaniard had layed his bridge across the first gap and came out upon it he was met by every conceivable weapon and from every direction. Sturdily he pressed on, however, and many of them crossed the pontoon, but as the numbers increased upon the bridge it began to sink into the mud of the lake, and when finally the entire force had passed over it was impossible to dislodge the bridgeworks so as to use it on the next great gap. Over the bridge came a force of Spaniards dragging two cannon and these were finally placed at the front of the long column and the shots tore great avenues through the hords of Aztecs. But they never waivered as some were struck down others sprang into their places. They were fighting for city and home, but on the other hand the Spaniard was fighting for dear life, and so were his <sup>lv</sup> Tscalan allies. Again and again the cannon roared and the screams of the wretches were terrible to hear, but all the time countless numbers of Aztecs sprang into the places of the slain, and each had but one desire: to kill a white man.

Men would spring up on the sides of the causeway from the little water crafts and grapple a mailed Spaniard around the leg or the body and drag him into the muddy lake. Like ants they crept over the causeway, each and all seeking to give his life in order to make one less Spaniard. Like a frightened mob the Spaniards swayed this way and that. The shrieks of the dying, the boom of the cannon and the mullen crack of the arquebus was mingled with the fierce yelling of the Aztec warriors. The screams of the wounded horses lent a horror inconceivable to the combat and the shouting of the men as they fought in the night, the dull sound of the blows and the angry hiss and buzz of the arrows as they sped on their way, contrived to make the night hideous with a hideousness that beggars all description. One after another of the great sacks of treasure were thrown aside amid the mad scramble for safety. When at last the escaping Spaniard had reached the second gap of the causeway they were not embarrassed by any freight and were indeed fighting for their lives. On the opposite side of the second gap stood the stalwart warriors of Piltuc and manfully they held their places, not striking a blow and letting their friends and comrades, it seemed, bear the the brunt of the battle. But as the Aztecs passed on by them fighting as they were forced back, each retainer of the Toltec chieftain stepped closer in toward the Spanish. It is true to relate that the passage of the second gap was made upon the bodies of dead men, both Aztec and Spaniard, and when at last the gap had been filled sufficiently with dead bodies to allow the passage of the greater force behind the immediate guard of Cortez himself undertook the crossing. It was then that the last of the Toltecs shouted to his men who ranged themselves in force on each side of the causeway

some fifteen feet back from the gap. Each man stood with two huge flint stones in his hands. This was a new attack to the Spaniard, and when the advance of the Cortez guard stepped down into the bridgeway of bodies, they were met with a full fusillade of hurtling flint rocks. More than one husky son of Spain was sent sprawling by the impact of the great stones hurled by arms expert at their task. Not only were the men struck down but the great horses were not sufficiently harnessed to protect against such weapons and many of them were dashed into the lake, there to be strangled and drowned by the waiting boatmen.

Steadily the mailclad forces pressed on however, and hundreds and thousands of the savage foemen were sent to eternity that night. But of the forces of Piltuc but few were injured. Warily they kept away from the horsemen and the swords of the Spaniard. Not less than five or six hundred of the Spanish met their death that night, and at least two thirds of the ~~Tanxka~~ Tlascalans never lived to see the light of day. As the dawn began to break the whites were still fighting their way out of the city, but the greater part of the fighting lay behind them, and the resistance to their progress grew less and less. And when finally the sun shone over the snow clad mountains to the east, the Spaniard had left the city of Tenochtitlan behind him. Guatemotzin in the fighting of the night had proven himself a true leader. He gave orders early in the fight that each Spaniard who fell clad in mail should be removed and his armor taken off and tied into place on the body of an Aztec warrior. In the later part of the night the mighty war clubs of the Aztec warrior was wielded for the first time in history by hands clad in Spanish mail. It was this strategy that in the end proved of much disaster

-4-

to the followers of Cortez. Swords and battle axes of the best steel were in the hands of mailclad savages. In the defense of the city which later took place the great army assembled by Cortez was held at bay for many months on account, principally, of the armor which he lost that night. Guatemotzin was always in the thickest of the fight, but he bore a charmed life. He was perhaps saved to show the world in later days how an Aztec ruler could withstand the tortures of the cunning Inquisition and refuse to divulge the hiding place of the immense treasure recaptured that night from the whiteman.

Piltuc escaped without a wound although all through the night he was in the thickest of the fighting. Once indeed was the old man surrounded by a number of Tlascalans, but his men fought their way to his side and not a man of the Tlascalans escaped of that band. Whenever a Toltec warrior turned loose one of those big flints at a body not shielded in mail, a strange soul sought its place in eternity.

Piltuc and Guatemotzin met on the causeway at the rear of the retreating Spaniard. Each was almost exhausted with the fighting of the night. Thousands of dead lay in every direction. Floating dead could be seen all out upon the waters of the lake. The flying Spaniard was fast making his way to the mainland, but all of his equipment and treasure was left behind. Four of the cannon had been thrown into the lake sinking into the slimy mud.

"Hasten, Guatemotzin, assemble your men and pursue the flying foe. Strike while the spirit of victory is upon the people of Anahuac. Strike before the Teule can call to his aid those Tlascalans and other tribes who are bitter against the Aztec and will lend him succor."

But even as the old man spoke, Guatemotzin reeled and would have fallen in his tracks had it not been for ready hands.

Piltuc noticed that the Prince was red with his own blood from a great gapping wound in the side where some Spaniard had struck him a terrible blow with a sword or battle axe.

Hastily bidding his men bear him away to the great headquarters hall, Piltuc hastened to the palace of the Emperor there to insist that immediate pursuit be made of the enemy.

Many weeks Guatemotzin lay at the point of death, and the blow of that unknown hand on the body of Guatemotzin probably saved Cortez and lost the Aztec his home and Anahuac.

The advice of the Toltecnoble was acted upon and the forces of Anahuac harrassed the escaping Spaniards for days, <sup>but</sup> the skill for organization and concerted action of the great Guatemotzin was missing and in the end the Aztecs were defeated in a most emphatic manner. The Spaniards surprised the native forces in a night attack and practically the entire pursuing army was destroyed. This put an end to any attempt to destroy the forces of Cortez, and from that time forward he was left in peace to raise another army and come back to the attack of the city. Although years were necessary for the preparation to seize the city of Tenochtitlan, the perseverance of this doughty old warrior was equal to the occasion. When the final arrangements had been made for the seige, he appeared with a force of more than one hundred thousand men upon the banks of Texcoco. But the defenders of that city had not been idle in the meantime. Such genius on the part of Guatemotzin had rendered the city almost impregnable. Never despairing, however, Cortez brought timber from the mountain forests sixty miles away to the shores of Lake Texcoco, where he built <sup>6</sup>thirteen brigantines, and crossed the lake and once again appeared before the walls of Tenochtitlan.

The real siege of the City began on December 3rd, 1520 and

continued until August 13th, ~~1521~~ 1521. Starvation did that which force of arms was unable to accomplish. The men of Anahuac who defended the city were but skeletons of men when finally the besieging army was admitted upon the promise that those who defended the city would be allowed to withdraw and repair to the mountain regions of the empire. It was strictly provided, however, that nothing should be carried away from the city. That only the necessary clothing and the weapons of the Aztecs should be taken with them. This provision was intended to prevent the great treasure being lost again.

But it is not the purpose of this narrative to detail the costly history of the defense of Anahuac by Guatemotzin, who had in the meantime been made Emperor. Cuitlahua died about three months after the Spaniard had been driven from the city. Neither shall we pause to detail the genius and ability of this, the greatest and most resourceful of all the warriors of the aborigines of America. History does <sup>not</sup> nor cannot do justice to the ability, wisdom and foresight nor the personal bravery and fortitude of Guatemotzin, the last of the Aztec Montazumas. But only so far as he has to do with the tale of the lost treasure of the Montazumas, shall this narrative refer to him.

On the night of September 18th, 1520, Piltuc, the Toltec, was called to the apartments of Guatemotzin. Cuitlahua had but just died and Guatemotzin had become Emperor of Anahuac. When the old noble arrived in the presence of the Emperor he found him all alone in one of the private chambers of the palace of Axa. He was sitting at a huge oaken table, and before him was a rude drawing of the City of Tenochtitlan and the adjoining villages about the shore of lake Texcoco. He had regained completely his health, from the desperate saber thrust which he received on the morning the Spaniards retreated

But his features bore the evidences of much worry and anxiety. He had the appearance of one who was sorely fatigued, but the brilliant eyes still shone forth the fire of determination, and when he spoke, his voice was firm and gave one the idea of the steadfastness of purpose of this great man.

" My good friend I have again sent for you to assist me in doing the only thing which is a surety in thwarting the desires and designs of those who are again preparing to attack the ancient capitol of the land of Anahuac. While some may cherish the belief that we can again rebel the white man, it is clear to my mind that it cannot be done. It now remains but a question of time for Tenochtitlan. The Spaniard has made allies of all those tribesmen who but recently were vassals of the Aztec. Already he makes war, and the troops we have led against him have been defeated on every hand. I had a vision last night as I slept which told me that I should be the last of the Montazumas. I saw the great land of Anahuac in slavery and subjection. I saw the temples of our people destroyed and replaced by those of the white man. I saw the proud city of Tenochtitlan in ruins. The great drums of the priests had ceased to beat, the temple gave forth no sounds, the eternal fires on the summit were dark, and all the time I saw the white man searching for the treasures of Anahuac. But, my friend, I saw his search in vain. The picture I visioned left me weak and filled with terror, for it told of tortures which I must withstand, but thanks to the Gods, which I manfully did. In the end, Piltuc, I saw a body hanging to a giant ceiba tree in some unknown jungle land, and that body was mine. And I saw the Spaniard marching away, while minions among the native tribesmen cowered and skulked in the forests with terror upon their faces.

So to-night, of all nights perhaps, you find me in low spirits, for MY end has been foretold. But I have sent for you as one who can best be trusted of all this kingdom of mine, that we may devise a means of secreting the treasures of Tenochtitlan that the same may never come into the hands of the enemies of Anahuac. It has been told to me that in the ancient City of Tula, which lies just off the shores of Texcoco, your people had prepared secret chambers where they conveyed their sacred relics when they retreated before the triumphant arms of my ancestors; a place the prying eyes of the Aztec priesthood have never ferrited out for more than two centuries. If this is true I would again make use of that secret to conceal the treasure of my people. What say you, can this be done?"

For a long time the old Toltec sat in silence, while his mind ran back over a portion of the history of his once great people, which he alone, of all the world had knowledge. He seemed to be debating a subject of the greatest moment, and when he spoke it was in a voice almost inaudible, even in the deathlike stillness of the little chamber where the two men sat.

" My noble friend, you do indeed ask of me that which is the most sacred thing in my life. It may have been a matter of wonder to you and your people in the past why my family has remained among its enemies the Aztec, and in the end became their friend. The whole of this I am not even now at liberty to tell you. But in the many years that my family and retainers have lived among your people, we have been treated with kindness, except upon the rarest occasions. Your people have even allowed us the privilege of our ancient religion, although the priesthood of your faith I know has many times demanded of my family for the sacrifice. In the end it came about that

my fathers became trusted advisers of the empire, and all told we have been treated with kindness' It may be the hand of fate stayed the red, ruthless hands of your priests so that the favor you ask to night might be granted. For know you, Guatemotzin, ( and I now speak to you as an equal ) in those days when the Toltecs were supreme in this land, my family was as exalted as yours. We two sit here to-night, the last of two families of kings. It was written in our sacred traditions that a member of the royal family of the Toltecs would survive the Aztec dynasty, and it may be that that event is now about to take place. But while your people have accepted many of the advantages of our more advanced civilization, yet you have held to the brutal, beastly religion which your priests brought here with you. Take no offense at my cruelly frank words, Guatemotzin, for I mean no disrespect toward yourself. But I shall point out that it was the errors of that faith which led the rulers of this land into allowing the Spaniard to enter our midst and now makes your task so difficult. You and I and the whole people of Anahuac are the victims of your religion, for know you the religion of a people makes the people. If it be a religion that repels and makes enemies then it becomes but a question of time until that people decays. I agree with you<sup>f</sup> that it is but a number of days until the proud city of Tenochtitlan shall be no more. Only a miracle can keep the adjoining tribes from joining the enemy, and therein lies our doom. From the Teule we might feel no fear, but it is the surrounding people that marks our fall. In this loss you and I shall suffer equally, for is this not the native country of both? Have we elsewhere to go when Tenochtitlan is in ruins? All that is near and dear to you and I is fast approaching the time when another people will  
*Come into dominion.*

It is indeed meet that we two should counsel as to the best thing to do in this hour<sup>d</sup> trial. I wish to assure you, Guatemotzin, that the last of the royal house of the Toltecs will join with the last of the Montazumas in putting at naught the greedy designs of the white man. Two centuries of time has not even threatened the revelation of the place of concealment which I now offer you, Guatemotzin, for the treasure keep of the Montazumas. But I must demand that in this concealment only you and I shall bear the responsibility of the knowledge. We must devise a means whereby we two alone shall know its concealment. You trust me with the secret of the treasures of your nation but I am about to entrust you with a greater secret of mine."

Slowly Guatemotzin arose and coming to where the Toltec sat, placed both his hands upon his shoulders. Tears were in his eyes, and he spoke in a voice husky with emotion.

" I knew you would not fail me in this. I desire to tell you now that it was not your place of concealment which I so much desired, but your participation in this secret of a dying nation. I could have found a place where all the white devils on earth could not have found. But I wanted your trust, and desired your knowledge of both the place of concealment and the fact that it was concealed. Our fears for the future may not be justified, and it may be that some way may be found to stay the white man but no one in this land did I feel I could trust in this matter but you. And what would be the virtue of the concealment if I be killed or done away with and no one remain to reveal the secret to our people? This secret shall be housed in the breasts of the last rulers of two great people, and may we each, should trials and tortures come, be able to act the part of kings. I have gathered from the temple and all

the other places of the city such gems and gold as it will take ten boats to carry. It is concealed in a secret chamber of the palace, and those who placed it there do not live to tell the fact. Could I be assured that this Spaniard would leave this land if he were given the wealth, I would give it gladly. But I do not believe in him, it would but whet his desire further. So I have determined that though he may enslave my people and destroy our temples and cities, he shall not have that which he desires most. And in this matter I felt that I could trust you, friend Piltuc, above all men. Will you come again to this room the night after tomorrow night? The moon goes down soon after the midnight hour and we shall to our work."

"How will you manage ten boats loads? Without assistance you and I will be months in this work, and the more occasions indulged the more opportunity spying eyes will have to see. Surely you have devised some scheme?"

"What you say is true and I have thought of it. There are five now held within the sacred rooms of the temple for sacrifice. What better sacrifice could they make than that we may wish in this matter? They shall do the work that must be done, and we will leave them there to guard the treasure as the years go by."

The Toltec chieftain shuddered, and when he spoke his voice was husky and his face drawn in anguish.

"I had wished <sup>In</sup> some better plan Guatemotzin battle <sup>+</sup> have slain ~~many~~ perhaps but it goes very much against my wish to deliberately assassinate. But your plan is the safest. It matters but little whether they die now or later on the temple, and even so it is meet that a few should suffer for the benefit of the many. What may seem cruel in the destruct-

ion of these few may in the end be a blessing for the many."

" You speak truly, Piltuc. So be here at the appointed time. We must accomplish this matter before the Spaniard begins to move, for we know not what devilish device he may bring to destroy us."

" Guatemotzin, there is one thing I must tell you of now. For some time I have planned to leave this land. I had thought as you that but a few months can expire before the subjugation of this land will be complete. And I had planned that when that time came neither myself, family or people should be taken. The thing for which my family has continued to dwell in these parts can never come about now. I would not have you believe that I am deserting you or the land of Anahuacin its time of peril. But if I am correct our cause is hopeless. Now that you are about to entrust me with the greatest secret of your nation, I am more confirmed in the belief that I should retire to some far away land with what few remain of my people, and there set up a government of our own. My people who have gone south have been destroyed by disease and the heat of that climate. My intention was to go in an opposite direction. The white man comes over the seas so I shall not find him, perhaps, in those lands to which I shall travel. I wish that you and your people might come with me, but your proud spirit would never consent, and it would be an insult to ask it. But with me, it is different. I am like you, I have my people to think of and whatever my personal desires may be they must be sacrificed for the welfare of those of whom I stand at the head. I had thought to speak to you of this before, but my plans were really never determined upon, but now my mind is clear. I fear that in this mission we go upon some prying eye may detect our purpose, if not the place of

concealment. In the face of the torture of the white man I might not prove strong enough. For you, I have no fear, but for myself I have. We should disguise ourselves for the better protection of each in case the worst comes to the worst. Don't you think so?"

" I say that now my cup of bitterness is indeed overflowing. All are fleeing me. But you are right, you owe a greater duty to your people than even to yourself. I am not mistaken in the motive that prompts you in this matter. I know that we<sup>1</sup> it but yourself you would fight in the city of Tenochtitlan until the walls crumble under your feet. Next to the fall of the city I know of nothing that gives me greater sorrow than your leaving me. I shall miss your counsel in the strife before me and many dark moments I shall wish for you and your wisdom. But my position calls for sacrifice in all things and I shall not shrink. Go, but should I die must the secret we two hold die with me? Where would my people profit by an arrangement of that kind should the occasion arise requiring the disclosure of the hiding place?"

" I will take care of that, but it must not be hastily acted upon. Any plan resorted to must be after mature deliberation. I have in mind at this time that I shall tarry in the mountainous country until the outcome of this conflict is apparent. At least I can make arrangements for keeping posted on your welfare and the outcome of the siege. Among my men I have experienced runners. Without their aid it would not have been possible for Montazuma to have had his fish caught fresh from the sea within the second day thereafter. I can utilize these men in a way that will not delay my progress. In this we probably have a solution of the problem."

" Would it not also be well that you forward me sketches of your journey so that I might communicate with you should it be

become necessary?"

" That might be our undoing. But that matter can be taken care of at the proper time. The conditions of the strife and the apparent results will determine that matter."

" What has become of the Spaniard whom you took away from the priests? I have heard nothing from you as to him of late. Is he still with you? Somehow I have never liked that business. There is no forgiveness in my soul for his kind, although during the fighting on the causeway the night of the great battle one of his fellows might have ended me but for some reason he stayed his hand. I would not have done so much for him. Perhaps, after all, they are not all bad. I could wish that we had devised some scheme to have destroyed their leader the man to whom Marina is mistress. In him I believe lies all the danger. I may accomplish that matter yet, it is not too late. That is an idea that should have come while we had them in our power. Between the Montazuma that was and this Tabascoan slut, Marina, I fear the deadliest blows have been struck at the heart of Anahuac. But what is done cannot be helped and the future no man can know. I am depressed beyond words tonight, my Toltec friend, but with tomorrow's sun it will pass away and Anahuac will yet be saved."

" Now you speak like the Guatemotzin that I knew. That spirit will save Tenochtitlan. Many of your men fight with the iron coat of the white man protecting him, and many carry the great knives and the sharp spears of the Spaniard. Were it not for the treachery of the people of Anahuac all would go well with you yet. In this lies your greatest danger. Some plan may yet be had that will drive the native people away from the standards of the Teule. But the priesthood of the

Aztec has made many enemies. When the great temple was dedicated more than twenty thousand were sacrificed. A mountain of human skulls tell a sad story of the treatment of those who are to day the allies of the foreigner."

" You are bitter indeed against our religion, Piltuc,. There are some who still stand high in authority in this city who would not permit such language. But listen to me now, in this hour of peril when I speak to you from my very soul; should it be granted me to overcome the enemies at our gates and I live sufficient years in authority to accomplish that which must be accomplished by stealth and education, the temples of this land will cease to run red with the blood of human sacrifice. But were this to come to the knowledge of the priests this night, tomorrow would see such a division in the ranks of my soldiers that I would have difficulty in protecting my life, let alone make a proper defense of our city. So my friend for the time being forget these words. You alone would I trust with such a confession."

" Now Guatemotzin, you speak like the man that I knew you to be. It may be that this purpose on your part will bring you success. And without that purpose you have named finally coming to pass in this stricken land, the yoke of the Spaniard will not appear so heavy."

"Alas, yes, good Piltuc, I too fear that our sins have found us out. Had those who fight tonight with the white man been treated with consideration the welfare of Anahuac would not be so frightfully threatened."

"But you have not told of the Teule whom you saved from the sacrifice. What of Him?" Guatemotzin continued.

" With your permission I will not speak of him tonight for there is something I would reserve for the present. When I

come to fulfill the mission on the night after tomorrow, I will have a story to tell. But suffice at this time to say that in the ancient city of Tula, at the sacred altars of my fathers, this Spaniard and Enixam were married two nights ago after the great battle of the causeway."

"It is well that this is not known Piltuc among the people of Tenechtitlan, for I fear even my authority could not save you. Were it any one but you, your body would be food for the fishes in the lake."

Guatemotzin arose with these words and his eyes were like coals of fire and he spoke in such a fierce tone of voice that the Toltec sprang to his feet and looked at him with alarm. Swiftly Guatemotzin strode up and down the apartment, and for a long time neither of the men spoke. Piltuc could see that a mighty struggle was going on in the breast of Montazuma, and a look of anxiety came into his face. Finally, however, the Aztec Chieftain, paused and looking the old man squarely in the eyes spoke.

"Go now, I must have time to consider this matter. It seems that all things turn against this people of Anahuac. You cannot understand what a blow this is for me. I feel that you have brought a viper into our midst. The secret you and I were to bear together is not safe with one who has the blood of the greedy white man within him. I shall send you word tomorrow as to whether this thing we have purposed shall go forward or not."

Without speaking Piltuc took his leave. Shaken was he in his confidence of the man who had become a member of his family, for he knew that at that moment Guero was in the camp of Cortes, or on his way agreeably to his promise, back to the home of Piltuc. Uneasy were the feelings of the old man

The sudden outbreak of the Aztec chief had sorely shaken his confidence in Guero. He realized the actual peril he had brought upon himself and Anahuac, and he was distressed beyond measure. But as he walked toward his home in the cool of the early morning hours his faith revived, and when he sought his couch for a few hours repose, he was again firm in his trust of Guero.

### Chapter Six.

The next day brought a runner from Guatemotzin bidding Piltuc keep the appointment as formerly agreed upon. For a long time the old nobleman sat in his room and pondered the strange circumstances that confronted him. He was torn with a natural desire to remain and witness the fate of his native land. At the same time his better judgment dictated an immediate departure, for, reasoning from every angle he invariably came back to the conclusion that only annihilation at the hand of the white man awaited the people of Anahuac. Cortez and his followers possessed the supreme advantages of the white man's engines of war. The superstitious natives believed them to be gods come to deliver them from the bondage of the Aztecs. For more than two centuries had they been at war with the Montazumas, and countless thousands had been offered as a sacrifice to the insatiable God of War. Practically every neighboring tribe welcomed any power or hardship that might deliver them from the ruthless hands of the Aztec. No wonder that Cortez had but to ask for soldiers. Innumerable thousands flocked to his standards glad for an opportunity to vent their wrath upon their ancient enemy and oppressor. Many of the Aztec tribesmen were weary of the butcheries of the priesthood. The participation of Piltuc on the side of Guatemotzin was well known to the followers of Cortez, and but little chance

could the old Toltec see for considerate treatment from the white man. Guero would return on the morrow or the day following and upon the information he might bring would depend, in a great measure the conduct of the old noble. Provided always that Guero did return. But the doubt was no sooner born in the mind of Piltuc than it was cast aside. A lifetime of the study of human nature had rendered him dependent upon his judgment of men. True, he had never had the opportunity to study the white race. But he had listened to the story that Guero and his white companions had told of their religion and it had impressed him as reasonable and just. Men schooled in such a faith, he reasoned, were bound to be trustworthy in the main. His observation of Guero and Enixam had imbued him with the belief that their affection was sincere and lasting. He reasoned that whether men be red or white, his conduct and attachment in matters of the heart would result about the same. But out of it all he could see no encouragement for him to remain. Should he remain his allegiance to Guatemotzin and his cause would continue. In fact if by any sacrifice on his part, by remaining or otherwise, he could have accomplished the success of the arms of Guatemotzin, that sacrifice would have been gladly made. But to his mind any sacrifice on his part would avail nothing, and would mean the extermination of his family and his people. Thus he reasoned and in the end he determined that his departure was the only course to pursue. When he had reached this conclusion he slowly arose and striding up and down the apartment, he shook his head in great sorrow and mused.

" For countless centuries this land has been the home of my people and my fathers. Every spot for many miles around whispers of some pleasant memory. Not far away in the ruins of

ancient Tula lay concealed the treasures and the sacred relics of my once powerful people. I, perhaps, am the last of the royal family of that once proud race. True to the commands of our people my family has remained in the land of its birth. Waiting, waiting, always watching for that return to power which our ancient prophets spoke about. But a new race of men has come among us, and the dream of the Toltec is ended. This pleasant home, and the kindly, friendly mountains I must leave. My judgment tells me it must be so. I shall not hesitate, but shall hasten. "

Coming out into the garden he called one of his men and for a long time they talked. It was instructions about the disposal of certain sacred relics of the Toltec people hidden away in their secret sanctuary. When the time came for Guatemotzin and the old lord to secrete the treasure of the Aztec in the hiding place of the Toltecs the sacred altars would not be profaned by the gaze of the Aztec chieftain.

When these preparations had been made he took a survey of his personal matters about the home and began a systematic detail of his departure. .

All day long he called for his different retainers. Many he sent into the country estates there to apprise the remnant of his people of his determination to immigrate. Others he detailed to prepare the necessaries for his family's immediate needs on a long and arduous journey. Others were instructed to gather the stock of the entire tribe and convey it by a circuitous route to a designated place in the mountains far to the east of Tenochtitlan. When all these matters had been looked after, he dressed himself in his most splendid attire and directing a servant to bring him a bundle which he designated to him in the city the next day he took up his

long walking staff and departed towards the city.

Not a word had he spoken to his daughter of his intended departure. This sad business he chose to reserve until the very last minute.

When he had arrived in the city he sought out his son and bade him repair to the villa on the second day following as he had word of great moment which he desired to impart to him at that time. He then took his way to the palace of Axa and sent word to the Emperor that he was in waiting and wished to see him if it were convenient. The attendant returned with the word that Guatemotzin was sleeping, and it was the first time the Emperor had slept for a number of days, and his people did not wish to disturb him.

" You have done well, my man, my affairs are not urgent and I know that your lord is very much in need of rest. Tell him when he awakes that I have been here and that I shall return directly after night fall, and I desire to converse with him."

All about the city men were hurrying here and there with great loads of material which was being used in strengthening the defenses of the City. Piltuc's eyes brightened with pleasure as he noted the ceaseless labors of the men of Guatemotzin. The last stand, if last it should be, of the defenders of Tenochtitlan was going to be of gigantic proportions. The organizing genius of the great Guatemotzin was shining at its best in this last stand of the Aztec. And earnestly the old Toltec prayed for success.

That night upon his visit to the Emperor all the details of the secreting of the treasure of Motazuma was worked out, and at the same time the plans of the Toltec noble regarding his departure were explained to Guatemotzin. Real sorrow was displayed by the last of the Montazumas at the loss of one

who had all his life been the warmest and most trustworthy friend of the entire kingdom. But in the end he agreed with the old noble that except for his ever needed advice, the services he could be able to render to the Cause would not justify his remaining, and that all the chances of success were with the invaders. Then again discussing and making perfect the arrangements for the following night these two men parted to meet under the most trying circumstances ever allotted to living men.

### Chapter Seven.

The ancient city of Tenochtitlan in many ways bore much resemblance to the city of Venice. Many of the houses rested on piling, others being built on the numerous islands with canals intersecting the various parts of the city. Massive stone structures, resembling those of Egypt reared their heads over the sparkling waters of the great lake wherein the city was constructed. In the midst of the city and overlooking every other structure stood the great teocalli or temple ~~heretofore so many times referred to.~~ *to which reference has been so often made.* It was the temple of the Aztec Gods, in pyramidal form, over a hundred feet high, with some hundred and twenty massive steps reaching from the ground to the esplanade, and broad enough for thirty horsemen to march abreast. As heretofore mentioned, great causeways led from the city to the neighboring villages and connected the various more important islands. The Aztecs were sun worshippers, and their religion was distinguished for its cruel and terrible ceremonies. Prisoners of war, slaves and other victims were slaughtered by the thousands. There were at this time held for the sacrifice to the God of War (not the Sun God to whom sacrifice was made only during the mid day)

five men who had been recruited from one of the mountainous tribes and who had deserted the ranks of the Aztecs some days before and were apprehended and returned to the city where they were delivered to the priests for the sacrifice. Under orders of the Emperor these five men were released by the priests on the day the treasure was to be hidden away that night, and Guatemotzin had them informed that they had been pardoned that they might perform a special service for the Emperor. These men were kept under strict surveillance during the day, and toward the close thereof each was informed that they must repair to the Palace of the Kings that night shortly after sun down to assist Guatemotzin in some special work which he had prepared for them, and the reward for which would be their release.

The palace of Axá was constructed on a great raised earthwork some five feet above the waters of the lake. This earthwork was surrounded entirely by a great wall some fifteen feet in height and except at the entrance of the four causeways, the walls were of some five feet in thickness.

On the southern side of the temple a great, blind hallway led from the main palace building to an intersection with the southern wall. At the intersection of this hallway with the wall there was a large hollow door, made on the order of the old time draw bridge, which raised up by means of huge levers of cedar wood operated from inside the hallway. In fact when these big levers were used an entire hollow section of the wall arose to some four feet or perhaps five. From where one would come out on the wall after the great door was raised it was a sheer five feet drop into the waters of the lake. No steps or other thing provided means by which one could step down into a waiting boat or barge.

During the afternoon of the day preceding the night

agreed upon four boats were demanded by the emperor and also one of the many barges or flat boats of the city. These boats, under the orders of the Emperor were stationed at a convenient place near the Palace of the Kings. When the five men who had that day been released from the priests came to the palace after dark, they were each conducted into a separate apartment of the palace and told to await the orders of Guatemotzin.

Piltuc reached the palace about four hours after sun down. He was conducted into one of the southern rooms of the palace and soon he was jointed by Guatemotzin. Together they proceeded to the entrance to the blind hallway which led to the southern wall. The entrance to this hall was made by secret doors which the Emperor had some difficulty in opening, but after several attempts one of the two doors opened and the two men entered. Each man carried a torch and by the rays of these Piltuc was enabled to discern a number of great bundles arranged in an orderly manner at the south end. These were carefully inspected by the two men and <sup>when</sup> the inspection was completed Guatemotzin announced that the packages were all in tack. They then returned to the main building where they secured garments for disguise as ordinary workers of the City. After these had been donned by the men Piltuc assembled the waiting men who had previously been let into the palace. To these men he stated that under the orders of the Emperor he, together with themselves, were to assemble the boats and convey them to the southern wall of the palace. This was soon accomplished and Piltuc saw to it that the great barge was placed directly under the concealed door in the wall. By means of ~~great~~ thongs of great strength, two of the boats were tied to the barge so as to enable the barge to be drawn

through the water. The other two boats were securely fastened to the front end of the ~~large~~ boats attached to the front end of the barge in tandem fashion. Two sets of paddles were provided for each boat and when all the arrangements had been completed the five men assembled upon the barge and waited. Something like a half hour passed when a grating noise was heard in the wall and soon the section began to slowly lift up from its base. Two of the men were so startled that it was necessary to restrain them. But after Guatemotzin appeared in the doorway and called to them, their anxiety disappeared and by means of a small ladder let down to them three of the men ascended and the business of loading went forward. Guatemotzin superintended the loading from the inside and Piltuc look after the work on the barge. All the men worked with alacrity and but a few minutes were necessary for the completion of the work. When the last bundle had been stacked upon the barge, Guatemotzin appeared in the doorway with two smaller packages which he placed in the two rear boats. He then set the mechanism of the doorway into motion and lowered himself among the packages on the barge. Waiting only to see that the doorway settled itself into its proper place, Guatemotzin took up his position in ~~the~~ ~~two~~ one of the two rear boats. Piltuc had stationed himself in one of the forward boats. At a word from Piltuc the journey commenced.

The moon was just going down behind the great teocalli when this strange journey began, and it was entirely obscured when finally the boats with their cargo of wealth entered the canal leading under the causeway and soon the boats were out upon the placid waters of lake Texcoco, headed toward the southern shore, three miles distant.

A strange hush had fallen upon all nature, even the drum upon the temple had ceased to beat; far in the distance some where a dog howled lonesomely. Not a word was uttered by the little groupe as they plied their paddles and the treasure of the land of Anahuac slowly drew near the shore of that great mountain lake where the old priest Tenoch had centuries before spied the Golden eagle, perched upon the branch of the great prickly pear, holding in his talons a serpent and all of which was in fulfillment of a prophecy of the Aztec oracle that they should build a city upon the site thus indicated. Each man in the little groupe was busy with his own thoughts. Thoughts of their fate perhaps. To some this night spelled the end of a stormy existence, to others the beginning of a great struggle; while one in the group allowed his thoughts to dwell upon this strange ending of his home in a land that had for countless centuries been the dominion of his ancient people.

At last the advance boats touched upon the rocky shore and after a slight maneuvering to allow those in the boats to step ashore, Piltuc was the first to alight. Then, indeed, came the fateful moment of the adventure. Should the five men suspect this was the most propitious time to make a break for freedom. Suddenly Guatemotzin spoke, and his voice sounded strange in the stillness of the night:

"Our task is almost finished, I hope that the Emperor keeps his word and richly rewards us as he promised, for I like not this night's work. To morrow he has promised me riches and my desire to depart the city, and when this hour comes again I shall be far into the mountains of my native clan. Each of you, I judge, has been promised something. So let us to our work and finish so that we may claim reward."

" I, too," said Piltuc, " have been promised that which I desire, and as soon as I have collected my reward shall take my way out of this doomed land. Let us hasten."

One of the men who had been rescued from the temple that day spoke in a low voice:

" I, too, hope to be with my family in the fastness of our mountain home. Had it not been for the kindness of the present Emperor I, together with my fellows would, within the next few hours, have been offered as a sacrifice to the God of War. Whatever may be said of the princely Guatemotzin I shall always be grateful to him for saving me from that awful fate."

" See that you carry that grateful feeling with you to your grave, for you shall never know the motives that prompted your emperor to save you from the sacrifice."

As Guatemotzin spoke he turned and for a long time gazed far out across the lake. Piltuc began to fear that he had weakened, when he turned and began gathering in the barge to the shore and lightly sprang among the bundles.

"We must hasten, the dawn will soon be upon us and our task is unfinished. "

He then passed the bundles out to those standing upon the bank and soon the entire cargo was unloaded. Then each man took up one of the heavy bundles upon his back, and Guatemotzin again took the two smaller packages and slowly the men, under the guidance of Piltuc picket their way across the rocky ground and after a march of perhaps three quarters of an hour came to a small chapel like building in a grove of young cedar trees. Here Piltuc made an entrance by means of some secret lock, and all, save the emperor, deposited his bundles upon the floor. Guatemotzin remained with that portion of the baggage which had been conveyed hence and Piltuc returned with the men to the lake shore for more treasure.

After a sufficient number of trips the entire cargo had been conveyed to the little chapel. Guatemotzin again checked the bundles and he and the five other men stepped outside of the little building. Piltuc remained within and when these others had been called in they were astonished to see that practically the entire side of the little building opposite to the door through which they had entered had been removed and a cavernous opening yawned out at them. Far away a dim light could be seen flickering a welcome and the men fell to work under the directions of Piltuc to carry the treasure into what had the appearance of a long corridor into the side of the mountain. When more than half had been removed into the corridor, Piltuc directed that three of the men bear the remainder of the treasure in, and he then spoke to Guatemotzin:

" See that two of the men remain in the chapel to guard the entrance against intrusion." A swift glance of understanding flashed between the two men. Without a word Guatemotzin turned and led the men toward the entrance to the tunnel. Soon three of the men returned with that which had been left and placed the same down upon the floor. After a little Guatemotzin reappeared. Not a sound had reached the ears of the waiting four, but at the little chapel at the entrance to the passage way where they stood a tragedy had been enacted, and two more souls had started upon their journey to eternity.

Calmly the last of the Montazumas nodded his head to the Toltec peer and Piltuc understood that the deed had been consummated.

" Two of you men follow me with as much of the load as you can carry, for where we are going more than that cannot work. And taking up one of the bundles he staggered down the passageway followed by two of the men. Guatemotzin and the

third remained behind. At last they came to what had the appearance of the end of the passage. Abruptly it ended and they were confronted by a solid wall of granite. On every side was solid wall. But depositing the load which he carried upon the floor, Piltuc stepped to one side and reaching above his head removed a small triangular shaped stone. He then extended his hand into the opening and began to pull upon a heavy cable made of great thongs interlaced with some sort of metal. As he drew upon the rope there slowly slid back a part portion of what had been thought a solid wall. This opening was about four feet square. When this opening had been made he stooped down and stepped into and through the opening, and turning bade the men hand him the bundles. As he spoke Guatemotzin appeared with the two smaller packages and assisted the men in their work. When all had been handed in Piltuc stepped back through the opening and again a look of understanding passed between he and Guatemotzin, and each casually stepped to the side of the remaining men and directed them to pitch the other bundles in. As they stooped to obey the orders two great knives flashed in the hands of Guatemotzin and Piltuc, and with scarcely a groan the last two men sank down upon the floor of their tomb. Guatemotzin silently examined the men for assurance that they were dead, and being satisfied he stood erect and he and Piltuc gazed upon each other in horror.

" I had hoped that some gentler means might have been employed, but we have dealt better with them than their fate on the temple would have been. But it makes me sad beyond measure that these men should go to their death with gratitude and kindly feelings toward one who, in the end, only planned their undoing. But however badly we may feel, the thing is done, and time demands that we hasten the work commenced."

The old Toltec stepped into the aperture through which the treasure had been passed and soon returned with a glowing torch and bade Guatemotzin to enter. Guatemotzin upon his entrance gazed about the chamber he had just entered with astonishment. A brazier burned not far away and the torch lighted up a great chamber apparently painted snow white. The walls reflected the light from the torch and every object was revealed to the eye of Guatemotzin.

Great indeed was the astonishment of the princely Aztec to note that the chamber was completely furnished with all the conveniences of that time. A huge stone table stood in the <sup>ex</sup>act center of the room and about the chamber were handsomely upholstered chairs and a great upholstered couch. Gaudy colors adorned the cotton matting with which the furniture was decorated. At one end of the chamber steps led upward and toward these steps Piltuc directed the Emperor. There were about fifteen ~~steps~~ of these steps and a great deal of exertion was necessary to drag the bundles of treasure into the next room. Finally however the task was completed and Piltuc asked that he have the assistance of the Emperor. In one corner, after a mighty effort, a stone was removed which had fitted into the floor with such nicety as to deceive even the most discerning. The bundles were adapted into the opening. This chamber was about eight feet square and of the height of an ordinary man. When their task had been completed they returned through the hole into the chamber above and the stone was again fitted in place. Piltuc then went down into the large chamber and returned with a kind of cement and a trowel like instrument with which he cemented about the stone so that when he had completed his task not a sign remained of the opening. They then returned to the passageway

and carried the five bodies of the dead men into the large chamber, two were left reclining against the entrance or steps, the others were placed in the upper chamber. When all had been completed and they were about to leave, Piltuc plucked the Emperor by the arm and directed him to where curtains were draped across the opposite wall of the chamber

"Kneel, my friend, for the first and last time for one and perhaps the last time for both of us we will kneel before the ancient altars of my people. I only ask you to kneel with me as I desire to offer up a prayer to the God whom we worship in a place where the royal house of the Toltecs has worshipped for more centuries than it is given to you and I to know."

Silently they knelt with bowed heads. Not a word was spoken and the deep breathing of the two resounded throughout the silent chamber.

After a short time they arose and left the chamber, and as they proceeded out of the different passages Piltuc replaced the obstructions and closed the entrances. When at last all lay secure behind them and they stood in the little chapel Piltuc explained to Guatemotzin the secret workings of the various openings, and explained how the same could <sup>be</sup> adjusted in case the ropes became broken or worn, he then handed him a map.

"While no other mortal but you may understand the markings upon this goat skin, to you it will be plain as day. I have taken this precaution in case you should be successful in the defense of the city. Should you see that the tide of war is going against you it is my wish that you destroy it. If this drawing were found in your possession it would call forth the tortures of the devils we seek to confuse. So destroy it."

"I will do so without fail. I must again thank you for your service, and I thank you in the name of Anahuac."

"Tomorrow Guatemotzin, this chapel will vanish and only the mountain and a circular grove of trees will be found. My people have their instructions. Therefore I admonish you to make a mental picture of your surroundings when we leave this chamber so that should occasion require you may return and tear the mountainside away and recover your wealth."

They then stepped out of the chapel and closed its entrance and once more stood in the stillness of the night. It was but a short time until the dawn would break, and had it not been for the two great mountains to the east, the coming of day may have then been noticed.

As they stood there in the crisp morning air Guatemotzin spoke in words slow and solemn:

"My very dear friend Piltuc this night we have accomplished a great task for this stricken land, and I hope that you join me in the hope that the future may hold better things for this poor land of ours than the last two years have given it. Here in this lonely spot with no eye, let us hope, save God's ~~xx~~ to witness, we have buried the great treasure of the Montazumas. In this task we have visited death upon the unsuspecting that a great nation's wealth might be preserved. I hope that it shall not all be in vain. May night's blackest darkness engulf either of us should we become weak enough to disclose this hiding place to the eyes of the greedy Spaniard. Should the fortunes of war go against me in this struggle with the Teule, and I perish and you survive, keep a watchful eye on the people of Anahuac, and make such provision as you may deem best for the preservation of the secret which but you and I know. When we have been taken away by death then indeed we have done all that can be expected and should

any plans we may lay for the future miscarry, it is but destiny, and our work has been well done."

Taking from his neck the great emerald neckless which had been worn for ages by the rulers of the Aztecs he placed it over the head of Piltuc.

"Take this token of my esteem and friendship. It is but little for the service performed. It has been an honored treasure in the royal house of my people. May it bring you good luck!" A twig snapped in the branches of a tree near by and a great night bird fluttered over their heads uttering its strange, weird cry. A squirrel disturbed in its slumber somewhere near ~~quaxmansky~~ querulously complained in the night, and far off on the mountain a panther screamed. The forest about them suddenly filled with little sounds. A dog howled long and mournfully in the distance, and suddenly the sky was ablaze with a dazzling light. Objects about could be seen plain as the day, and the shadows of the two men stood out long to the westward. From the top of Popocatepetl a vast column of fire arose, blazed for a moment, and then disappeared.

"Does old Popo mean to light the way to better days for stricken Anahuac, or was that emblematic of the fitful close of a dying nation? Let us hope it be a token of good for we can scarce stand any more of sorrow. "

"It is best that we hasten our return away from these parts, my lord, for always are there prying eyes about and our mission of the night should not be suspected. "

Without further comment they hastened away to the waiting boats and cutting two of them loose, sunk the in the mud of the lake and with much effort tugged the barge far out and set it adrift. They then paddled to the causeway of Tlacopan, where they set their boats adrift and walked to the palace of Ava. Dawn was just breaking as they entered the great walls.

## Chapter Eight.

The sun was far up in the heavens when Piltuc started for his home. That day and those following saw the retainers of this Toltec family busy as beavers. Certain secret passageways leading from the basement of the villa were sealed and destroyed. Much of the household necessities were packed securely in cases made of straw matting. These cases were surprisingly strong. Litters were prepared for the journey. The young lord had come as directed but at first refused to become a party to the forsaking of his friend, Guatemotzin, and the land of his birth. However the argument and persuasion of his father reconciled him to the move and he worked and planned with an interest born of a love for adventure.

Seven days after the secreting of the treasure everything was in readiness for the journey, and all the people were eager to be on their way. On the sixth day Guero returned from the camp of the Spaniard bringing with him a younger brother of eighteen years.

" Here you see before you, Noble Piltuc, all that remains of one of the most illustrious families of Spain. There is nothing in that far away land to claim either our love or respect. Because of some minor offense, not against the state but against the church, our parents were taken from us and tortured at the hands of the Inquisitors. In their death all that held us to that land perished. When I came away from there I planned never to return. Cortez belongs to that fanatic school which has worked so much sorrow and anguish in my family. While in the main he is a man of good intentions, the things that he does in the name of religion are abhorrent to me. I am truly glad you have determined to depart. Neither you nor yours nor me or mine shall be safe

in this land henceforth. I can only recommend that we move with haste. With your permission from now on I shall be one of you, and where you go, we shall go. Whatever the future holds in store for us, it is surely better far away from this place. "

" Truly I am glad to hear those words from you, my son. I had some doubts about you in this matter. But your statement clears them all away. It is my intention to circle far to the westward so as to avoid any chance interruption and come back around far to the east of Tenochtitlan, and back of the Spanish headquarters. To this end I have directed that my people convey their flocks and property to a point far in that direction known to my people for centuries. "

" Have you then some idea of a land to which you expect to go? "

" No, neither of the land nor the people to be found there. But in the past numbers of my people have been far to the eastward of Anahuac and they have reported to me that in that direction lies a great river, running to the sea no doubt, and on the other side is to be found the most fertile of lands. There are no people nor government occupying these lands, and it was my belief that we might repair there and again build up our ancient government and customs. "

" And did your people say as to the length of the journey? "

" Many months will be required and much of the way is a desert land, and many hardships will be encountered. But I have a rude map of the route to the great river, and of a pass to be found out through the mountains. After that has been reached and the river crossed, and for some time before, game is plentiful. "

" He searched among his belongings and brought forth the sketch marked in the strange picture language of the Toltecs

It disclosed a well marked route in a general easterly direction.

" This map has been recently made and I have <sup>no</sup> fears for its accuracy. At that point where you see the number of human figures delineated is to be found a very savage and warlike people called the Yaquis, but we can pass them to the south although a longer journey will be made by the way. We can decide upon our course when we get in touch with these Yaquis. "

" I have a compass in my belongings, I guess it will be of much advantage in this adventure. Very few there are in existence, this is one that belonged to my father. On the seas it is indispensable and our journey is as uncharted as any sea. But I was thinking that should my brother and I be discovered by the Aztecs in our journey we would fare but badly at their hands. "

" In that you are indeed right, Guero. Dress yourselves in the garments of the Toltecs. Make yourselves as one of us. You can speak in the Aztec tongue, your brother may act as one who cannot hear. I am going to the Emperor now and from him I will obtain that which is of prime requisite to our safety until we have left the confines of Anahuac. "

Soon thereafter Piltuc journeyed into the city where he closeted with Guatemotzin for many hours. Sorrowful, indeed, was the parting between the two men. Tears were in the eyes of each of those strong, savage warriors when they parted for the last time. Removing the great signet ring of the Montaxumas from the finger of his hand, Guatemotzin presented it to the Toltec noble.

" Take this, throughout the land of Anahuac it is known. Where we have friends that ring will provide you with protection. It is all I can grant you, and it is but little. "

Emotion choked further utterance. Piltuc was no less effected than his Aztec friend and for a long time they stood in silence. At last the Toltec spoke:

" This parting is the most difficult portion of my journey. No fears nor terrors will cost me the anguish that I now experience. But words fail in such times as this, and it is best that we part. For the sooner it is over the better it is for us both. A comradeship of a lifetime might cause us to weaken. A few short years ago had one told us of this we would have laughed him to scorn. But it is not given man to pierce the curtain of the future, and that is best, for a knowledge of the future would bring more anxiety than happiness and hope would be destroyed, and that is the greatest asset of the human family. So I bid you good bye. May your every effort be successful. I shall know of your fate and determine my actions accordingly. Should you succeed I shall rejoice and send you word. Should you fail I shall hasten farther away, for the safety of that which we know is best preserved by placing as much distance between myself and the Spaniard. So good bye."

With a strong affectionate embrace they parted and without a look backward toward his friend, the old man hastened away.

#### Chapter Nine.

That night saw the departure of Piltuc and his entire retinue from their ancient home. Many days of journeying brought them safely to the spot where his people awaited him. No mishap interrupted the journey, although more than thirty days were employed in the trip, but as many of the families of that stricken land was in the same employment, the movement of the Toltecs went practically unnoticed. Where ever the Aztecs were come upon they lent assistance and very

little difficulty was encountered.

#### Chapter Ten

In their place of retirement word was received by means of runners stationed at different points along a direct route to Tenochtitlan. Spring came and still Guatemotzin and his men held the city. But in the early Summer news came that the city had been entered by Cortez and that he was burning and destroying, portion by portion, so that only the great Palace of the Kings remained. The garrison was starving and a dread disease which caused countless sores upon the bodies of its victims had visited the city. It was this that had compassed its fall. Early in the spring it was reported that an attempt had been made upon the life of Cortez and only the vigor of a remarkable constitution had enabled him to recover. It was then that Piltuc remembered the remark of Guatemotzin that in the person of Cortez lay the greatest danger to his beloved land. He had almost accomplished his purpose. But fate and chance had laid down a certain program and the genius of man could not prevail against it. So again news came that in the middle of August, 1521, the garrison was starved into submission. That Guatemotzin was taken. That the treasure of the Aztecs had not been found and that Cortez was in a great rage. That Guatemotzin had been tortured. That his feet had been held over a glowing fire, but he had steadfastly refused to disclose the hiding place of the treasure. That the lake and all the canals were being dragged, but nothing had been recovered. Later it was learned that Guatemotzin had confessed that the treasure had been carried away far into the interior of Yucatan, and that Cortez and a number of his followers, together with the unfortunate young

monarch were travelling to that distant spot, where Guatemotzin would reveal the gold. In all that great land there was but one who knew of the last strategy of the faithful ruler of the Aztecs. And again there came a runner with the news that members of the Toltecs had followed the Spaniard far into the south. That Cortez had at last learned of the deceit of Guatemotzin and in an awful fit of madness had ordered him hanged. Guatemotzin was hanged to a giant ceiba tree in a great swamp where Guatemotzin had led the greedy leader of the Spanish on a false scent, probably in the hopes that some means of escape would present itself to him. And so died the greatest of the Aztecs, greater than any of his people knew, and greater than the world has been told. A man, who under different circumstances would have shone out upon the world as one of its greatest sons. And true was the vision related by Guatemotzin to Piltuc on that night when they decided to use the ancient hiding place of the Toltecs.

Nothing was left to keep the old Toteo<sup>f</sup><sub>x</sub> from continuing his journey to a new home. That journey was made and for more than two years did this remnant of the once great nation journey far into the eastward. The great river was passed and later another was reached. On the banks of this stream whose waters were red as blood, the Piltuc dwelt for more than a year. But savage Comanche tribesmen refused to let them rest in peace so he passed on across and after many days journey reached another great, sandy bedded river, more than a quarter of a mile in width, but with practically no water in it. In crossing many of the sheep mired down and were lost, and two of the men almost lost their lives. But finally the passage was made and a fine timbered land, spotted here and there with large prairie tracts, was come upon. A camp was

struck a days travel from the sandy river. Excursions were made by different members of the Toltecs into the neighboring country. No signs of any people were discovered. Returning from one of their journeys into the neighboring country some of the men related a story of a fine territory, well watered, abounding with game of all kinds. "Furthermore," they said, "there was a pleasant valley which they found, and near which was a garden of great stones, reminding them in a small way of their native land. Here, after an investigation, the entire company repaired. And on the banks of Little River in what was later to be known as the Seminole Nation in the Indian Territory, a village was built, land was tilled, and for many years these people lived happily, and their people prospered and were contented. No one came to disturb them, neither did they seek to discover other people. Satisfied were they to live in peace in a land which gave them all they could require for comforts and necessities.

To Guero and Enixam children were born, two girls and a son. The youth of the old Toltec was recalled to him and again he lived over the years of his own young married life. Isayoque took to himself a wife and many children were born.

Often would the old noble take the children of Enaxia and journey into the great boulders and chimney rocks and there sit for hours, enjoying the laughter and pranks of the little ones.

One day he missed the eldest of the three. She had strolled away while he dozed in the bright sun shine. Calling he went about, but no sign could he find of the child. Becoming frightened he called, and some of his people came running. No where could the child be found until finally one of them *hearing a* childish voice and tracing it

came to a fissure just back of two great chimney rocks. Looking down into this he called and the answering voice of the little one came back to him out of the depths. Calling for the others who came running up, he scrambled down into the depths where he found the little girl had fallen. Although it was quite a distance down to the bottom no injury had resulted to the child as she had slid down the rock which inclined in a slanting position. When the child had been delivered back to the almost frantic grandfather, the man began to look about him and discovered that where the child had fallen into the cavity there was a great chamber, and a more thorough investigation disclosed that a number of small rooms connected with the main chamber.

When these facts were related to Piltuc, he and Guero, made an investigation and taking torches were enabled to learn that a series of underground caves, some of vast dimensions, ran far back into the adjacent, boulder strewn, hill side. These chambers were irregular and the floors were rocky and uneven, but to the mind of Piltuc, there flashed the vision of the ancient secret chambers of his beloved Tula city. The fissure through which the child had fallen was really but a small opening, and to the mind of that people who had in centuries past practiced masonry whose efficiency is hardly equalled at the present time, the discovery promised an opportunity to construct a secret sanctuary that in a small way would resemble that greater one in the mountains, they had left behind.

Work was immediately started and for many months much pleasure was experienced in the hewing out and preparation of their underground place of worship. The opening through which the discovery had been made was successfully covered up and another and more secret entrance constructed. Also it

was discovered that their efficient tools could work in the soft limestone with ease compared to the granite of Anahuac. It was therefore decided to tunnel through the hill that lay back of the original caves or chambers and provide a second exit. This they did and experienced great pleasure in the accomplishment. This tunnel or corridor was fitted with secret doors and obstructions as had been the one that they left far back on the shores of lake Texcoco. After a year or more a completed underground temple was constructed, furnished in a rude but comfortable manner. From the skins of wild animals they upholstered the rude furnishings. They found that the seeds of their flax or cotton grew and produced as readily as it did in their old home. From this they spun and wove their clothing, and this too, they used as a filler for their skin coverings of the rude furniture. Couches and chairs were thus prepared and furnished to them comfort and ease. Thus this people from a far off land prospered and were happy beyond expectation.

#### Chapter Eleven.

Many years passed and the people of Piltuc grew in numbers. An unusually healthy climate proved a further blessing and deaths in the little colony were but few and far between. Piltuc seemed to shrivel up, as the years passed, but death nor ill health seemed to take notice of this alert eyed old man. He saw his grandchildren grow into manhood and womanhood and he was happy and contented. No hostile tribes came to bother. The hunters ranged far and the results of the chase was bountiful. It seemed that seclusion and peace had come unto this people. The family of Guero and Enixam were contented and happy.

But one day there came two hunters back from the chase who reported that they had almost stumbled into a great body of people encamped on a considerable stream some distance to the southwest. They had not been seen, they stated, and had made a hasty survey of the encampment and retreated. They reported that there were a great number of mail clad people, tall, pale faced men, with their faces covered with hair. That there were many strange animals with them and that they had seen some of the white men get on the animals and ride off in different directions.

Piltuc was immediately filled with concern. He recognized in the description the Spaniards that had laid waste to his native land, and he was filled with grief and anxiety. Guero also knew what it meant, but said nothing, until he and the ancient chieftain were closeted together in secret. Then with deep anxiety on their faces these two conversed for a long time and it was decided that Guero and one of the younger members of the colony should immediately set forth to discover if they could what the presence of the strangers in the country held in store for them.

The next morning before the birds were awake Guero and the young man were on their way. All day they travelled and at night rolled themselves in their plaited blankets and were astir with the birds. At about the hour of eleven the second day out their search was rewarded in a most amazing manner. On reaching the top of a small promintory a long line of flashing helmets burst upon their gaze. Creeping in a serpent like line over the low foot hills, not a mile away were about three hundred horsemen, followed by a host on foot. Great carts brought up the rear, drawn by the strange animals of the white man. Making sure that they were not seen the two men reconnoitered. All day long they held to the flank of the line.

It was apparent to the concealed watchers that the little army was making its way with what haste it could, directly into the north. And it was also apparent that there was some expected destination in that direction by the haste and knowledge of purpose in pursuing a way that seemed to have been agreed upon. It was a great relief to Guero when he arrive at this conclusion. But as the day rolled on, a certain disposition to again converse with his kind, took possession of Guero, and it was with difficulty that he kept himself from rushing forth and learning the destination and intentions of the Spaniards. He was not a party to the awful secret of Piltuc, and it was not given him to know that the strangers with the usual persistence of the Spaniard, might have information that set them in pursuit of those who might know the hiding place of Montazumas Treasure. But he did know the greed and cruelty of his people, and this made him stay his natural desire to hear from his kind. All day long they followed the Spaniard and late in the afternoon, were surprised and considerably put out when a voice from old Castile hailed them, as they were pushing along in the wake of the Spaniard.

A young man, in the dress of old Spain, came riding up to them from the rear and asked who they were and whence they came. And the young man was as much surprised as the two he had come upon when one of them answered him in excellent Spanish. Immediately he dismounted and came close up to Guero and his companion, and it was with relief that Guero sized him up as of gentle birth.

"We are sojourners in this land, and have been for many years, my friend," said Guero, " But how comes it that I find one of my countrymen in this far away land?"

" I wish I might know why we are here myself. For my part I think it some wild fancy of the brain that drives Coronado into the wilds of an unknown country."

" Coronado, do you say, and why comes he into this far away country, and what is there that he seeks?"

" And might I not ask many questions of you, my friend, and why we find a son of old Spain in this desolate spot and in company with one who might be another Spaniard? But, curiosity is natural to us both, and I am not adverse to answering your questions as far as I can, but I will expect some answers on your part also. You see yonder army? That is the expedition under the command of Francisco Vasques De Coronado, and it seeks the famed Eldorado spoken of by an Indian chief whom we took in the conquest of the " Seven Cities of Cibola", ( seven cities of filth, I call them ). We are told that in this country some where there is a city where much wealth is to be had, a veritable mine of gold that will never run out. But I think this just another one of the lies of that lying priest Marcus de Niza. His lies and deception have cost Coronado a pretty sum, and old Spain many a gallant son. I think the commander begins to disbelieve himself, and I caught him eyeing the Indian this morning as though he was tempted to have him taken out and hanged. But whence come you my friend?"

" More than twenty years have I strolled through these lands, and truly I had never thought to see one of my people again. Guero, I am called, and it will suit as well as another name. May I be permitted to ask that you might call yourself?"

" I am of the family of Albuquerque and am called Diaz. I came into this country as the currier of Mendozas, the Viceroy of Mexico."

" And what has become of the conquistador, Cortez?"

" Oh! He has long since been sent home, and he is now in disgrace, if not dead. He it was that allowed the Aztecs to cheat him out of great treasure. The church has never forgiven him for that. Did you know Cortez?"

" Yes, I came to this country in his band. But I became lost and wandered away with a band of ~~Tlascalan~~ Tlascalan Indians, and have never been able to find my way back. It has now been more than twenty years since I have seen a Spanish face. How long have you been in this country?"

"Something more than three years. We have been stationed at La Villa Real de la Santa Fe, which the Indians call Tiguex. It was from there that we started on this wild goose chase, and I wonder if we shall ever see it again?"

" And where is this Santa Fe of which you speak?"

" Now, I wish I could tell you that, for if I could you and I would make haste in that direction for I am sick and tired of this quest we are on which brings us nothing but loss and misery. I would that I were back in the shadow of the church of San Miguel of the Tlascalans."

" What, and would you quit the company of your commander?"

"Assuredly I would do that thing. You understand that as the representative of Mendoza I am a free lance and may come and go as I see fit. Cronado is crazed with this desire for eldorado. But we have travelled so far and in such a circuitous route, that I would be puzzled as to how to retrace my way. And I take it you are in the same boat. Will you not come with me and join the expedition? The commandant will be delighted to see you, and he will try and pick some information out of you, whether you have it or not, about his eldorado. Come let us go!"

" I would like to hold forth with my people once more, and the desire runs strong in my blood. But, it were better that I not go. The urge of my people might prove too strong, and I have made other ties now and my responsibilities must be met. I am indeed glad that I have met you and am sorry that time does not allow us to get better acquainted."

" Then you are stationed in these parts? Have you a family do you mean? A home, a habitation and the like?"

" Assuredly, and would you care to visit me? But I warn you that if your commander leaves you, the chances of again discovering his whereabouts in this wild land is very small."

" Well, I shall accept your invitation. There are no demands of family or friends holding me to any one place, and I am weary of this continual journeying. I will go with you "

" Then cast loose your horse as my people would be fearful and if you go with me you go to stay. You sever, as I have done, all connection with your former life. "

For a moment the young Spaniard hesitated, and Guero was filled with dismay. Guero believed that the safest plan for the people of Piltuc was to take this stranger into the new settlement, before he could apprise Coronado of their whereabouts; and he feared him much less than he did the enquiring insistence of a man of Coronado's type. It might seem strange in this day and time that a young man of good family, and in a commanding position should even contemplate such an adventure but in those days the adventurous spirit who crossed the seas to fight in an unknown country were of that character. So it came about that the anxiety of Guero was but short lived, for the young Spaniard with a bright smile and a careless toss of his head, took a few articles from the huge saddle on his horse and tossing the reins into the air, with a reckless

shout to the animal sent him galloping away. And thus Diaz de Albuquerque cast his lot with the people of Piltuc.

Upon the arrival of Guero with his two companions in the Toltec settlement Piltuc was filled with rage that the young Spaniard should be brought into their midst. But when it was explained to him how the two scouts had been surprised by the stranger, and Guero had deemed it best to bring him in rather than allow him to return to Coronado with some wild story about the adventure, Piltuc was satisfied and readily conceded that the course pursued by Guero was perhaps the best. In this wise case among the people of Piltuc the younger brother of the Duke of Albuquerque, and this incident made it possible for this narrative to be told. Here far away from any semblance of what he knew to be civilization, impelled by the adventurous spirit of the Spaniard, came a scion of one of the oldest and noblest families of Spain. Came without a backward look or sign of regret and made himself one of this wandering people. Here he was to get short sketches of what had happened in far away Anahuac and here by accident was he to get possession of a secret that eventually spelled destruction and ruin <sup>to</sup> of the kind people he had come among.

For in the expedition of Coronado were three greedy and truculent priests. Men of stern fortitude and fierce desire. It was these men who were urging on the conquistador Coronado in search of eldorado. And it was these three who pursued the vision of wealth even after Coronado had given up the quest and returned to Mexico. Not a thing escaped their sharp eyes. The absence of the young Diaz was commented upon at length, and the commander gave him up as lost. Not so the sharp eyed priests. They tucked the incident away down in the back of their heads, and were to bring it up at a future date when all hopes of finding the fleeing eldorado had vanished.

Not once did they believe that Diaz had become lost, but thinking of what their own desires were, they pictured him taking off for himself in the pursuit of gold. Following a venture of his own, that all the honor and wealth might be his, as they would like it to be theirs. And when after many weary months of travel, with no results, nothing but disappointment and misery, their minds ran back to the incident of the missing Diaz and they directed their steps backward to the point where he had left the expedition. And as they journeyed toward the peaceable habitation of the Toltecs death, tragedy and ungodly greed stalked at their sides.

In the mean time Piltuc was stricken down with apoplexy one day as he returned from the little burying ground on the banks of Little River. He was carried into his hut, and for months he was unable to leave his couch. In the mean time his mind was active, and he dreaded the advent of the stranger into their midst. In some subtle manner he realized that his coming brought a menace to his people. After a time he was able to be about. He ordered goat skins prepared under his directions, and from the juice of a small red berry, beaten and bruised with a quantity of red mineral deposit that he had discovered in their neighborhood, he commenced a painstaking sketch or map. Only in the utmost secrecy did he pursue his labors, and when it was completed and the details written out in the peculiar script of his people, he called to him Guero, and told him of what he had in mind.

" My son I am soon to be taken from this world. My days are numbered. I am in possession of a great secret. It should not die with me, my sleep would be fitful and uneasy without I conveyed the intelligence that I possess in this matter to others. In all the world I have known none whom I could trust more than yourself. None with the fortitude none

with the sagacity. I therefore intrust to you this sketch and this sheef of writing. You are somewhat versed in our writing and Enixam may assist you, only if the need arise. It is important that you do not examine these papers until I have passed on. I ask you now to bring hither that small, sturdy casket I have so often seen in your possession. I have use for it. That with the engravure of the castle upon its lid. Into it I will place these papers, and this sketch. I direct you when I have passed on that you copy into the Spanish what is written there. A great people depends upon you and I perhaps, and it is best that we use our utmost skill and ingenuity to prepare for the future. We now hold in our hearts the secret of a great nation that was, and that perhaps may be again. If not, our efforts will have been in vain. We cannot know, s. it <sup>is</sup> well that we prepare for whatever may happen."

Long and earnestly the two conversed and when Guero had gone away, Piltuc called his people about him, and directed that in case of his death, that they place themselves under the guidance of Guero. The last of the Toltec Kings knew that his wishes would be carried out to the letter. The passing on of his authority would be as complete as had been his unquestioned authority in life. Piltuc seemed to be in much better trend of mind, after he had concluded his labors.

The days came and went and he seemed to improve in health and vitality. One day there came into the settlement two priests. They were two of those who escaped the savage Indian on the plains of Kansas. They were received by the people kindly and treated well. Diaz recognized them and gathered the story of their sufferings and the unhappy ending of the quest of Coronado. But their coming brought terror to Piltuc

In his last days his mind seemed to sense the danger that stepped into the village with the priests. From that moment Piltuc began to decline, and within the month, his lifeless form was laid away in the little cemetery.

#### Chapter Twelve.

Just prior to the death of Piltuc he and Guero talked for a long time in a low sober tone and neither was aware that the sharp eyes and ears of the Franciscan monk, Francisco Lopez, were strained to catch every word and action of the two. But neither did the monk know that the real plans for the concealment of the great secret had been discussed at a prior date. But sufficient information was gathered along with that which the priest had heard from his order for him to know that the secret of the Aztec Kings was within the knowledge of a dying man, and the place of concealment mapped out for Guero. This information was sufficient for these two shaming monks, and the months that followed the death of Piltuc were employed by them in picking out every piece of information relative to this strange people that they could get. In this they were innocently aided by the happy go lucky Diaz de Albuquerque. And so it came about that these priests discovered the secret sanctuary hidden away in the buried caves. When all the information had been gathered that the priests deemed could be had, they made their excuses and betook themselves on their way. But there was one matter that had not been seen nor heard by them and that was Guero stealing away one drizzly night to the grave of Piltuc, where an imposing head stone had been placed, and there removing the stone and storing away at its base some object that he handled with care and caution. Neither did they know that Guero suspicioned their presence and was more worried when they had left than while

they were with them. But such was the case and the sagacity and foresight of Piltuc and Guero was again to thwart the ambition and greed of the minions of Spain. But as was the usual thing blood and untold suffering was to follow the footsteps of the Spaniard and his accursed priests. In the name of God he committed more crimes than their religion can ever make atonement for.

But the fanaticism of these two pious rascals bore them up, and one of them, the rascally Francisco Lopez, reached the church of ~~S~~an Miguel at Santa Fe. Here, after a short time he enlisted the assistance of a score of Spanish soldiers and some ~~Texian~~ Tlascalalan Indians, and again set out for the peaceful village of the Toltecs.

-----

### Chapter Thirteen.

-----

In the Spring of 1889 ~~Man~~ Bud Lankford was returning up the Rio Grande valley, over an old Spanish trail that skirted the San Mateo mountains on the west side of the great river, having passed through Nogal Canyon <sup>time in the early</sup> ~~some~~ afternoon he had stopped for a drink and a chat with the townsmen at San Marcial, New Mexico Territory. Having rested his mount and refreshed himself he again struck out for the town of Socorro further up the valley, and the principal ranchers hang out of those days. Here it was his intention to enter the employ of Don Juan Martinez, as ranch foreman on one of the oldest and largest cattle ranches in that section of New Mexico. Bud Lankford was no stranger to this section of the great West. In fact his reputation as a cow man and horseman, not to mention the fact of his being the quickest and best pistol shot of that section, had long since been made throughout the ~~length and breadth~~ of the New Mexican Territory.

A young man of twenty five or six years of age, quiet blue eyes, dark hair and skin that wastened with the exposure to many suns, and those the burning suns of the desert. Quiet, humorous and good natured yet withal highly respected by those who knew him under circumstances that proved Men's worth as one not to be trifled with except in the spirit of friendliness.

He sat his horse with that sureness that bespoke the true horseman, and as his horse swung along the narrow road that led into the small village of San Antonio, one leg was wrapped carelessly about the saddle horn and he softly whistled strains from the "Cowboy's Lament." Contentment was written in every action of the lone rider as he jogged along the narrow road whistling to himself while a mocking bird far away to the east thrilled its carol and a prairie dog barked and grumbled at the invasion of his town by a stranger. A small owl screamed and whirled away into the neighboring mountains. Peaceful and contented was Bud Lankford and his mind was far away in El Paso with the gaming tables and certain black eyed maidens and in his mind he could hear the tinkle of the mandolin and the thrum of the guitar and the hurry of dancing feet.

Without warning a piercing scream split the stillness of the evening and the horse of Bud Lankford as suddenly sprang from under the astonished rider. Picking himself up from the dust where he had been so uncerimoniously thrown, he gazed about in quest of the one who had caused his downfall. And there, backing away from a juniper tree where she had been hidden was a young girl, with eyes distended in terror and so paralyzed with fear that she was incapable of avoiding a giant diamond backed rattle snake that was coiling for a second stroke at the terror stricken girl.

With the swiftness of thought and the accuracy that had made him a reputation in every cow camp of the West, Bud Lankford swept the forty five from its scabbard and with the same sweep of the hand discharged a shot into the great snake then almost ready to vent its wrath upon the frightened girl. A sickening thud and a mass of squirming coils bespoke the accuracy of the shot and the safety of the young lady and Bud Lankford lay over and began to feel out the extent of a hurt that had rendered his left leg useless, as he attempted to arise to his feet.

On the other hand the girl came back to life with the shot and all the terror left her immediately and she turned to scamper away when she noted the crippled condition of the man that had just then saved her life. Shamefacedly she came back to his side, and in an amazingly sweet voice, still shaky with the recent scare, said:

"Excuse, senor, and thanks for your shot, it saved me, and yet I was about to run away and you hurtin the fall."

"Oh! not much of a hurt I guess," lied Bud Lankford, "my mind was just trying to think as I rode along and it took all the blood out of my foot for the effort and it has gone to sleep. It will be all right in a minute so run along with yourself, if you are so afraid of strangers that you hide behind juniper trees and scare their horses" and his face lighted up with an engaging smile and blue eyes tried to look the humor of the situation. But another attempt to arise brought a grunt of pain and he again settled back and began to nurse his injured foot. With a little cry the maiden rushed forward and began to unloose the spur and remove the soft, elegant boot. But already the sprained ankle had swollen past such a task, and both realized that the boot would have to be cut away.

This was soon accomplished and the swollen member bathed in some water brought from a nearby spring. But the pain had become so intense that one less discerning than the young girl might see that it was with the greatest effort the hurt man suppressed a cry of pain.

Breathlessly the maiden hastened to catch the runaway horse but he would not be caught. Vainly she tried but he turned away with a snort each time she attempted to get hold of the bridle. But a soft whistle from Bud brought the horse to his side and with the assistance of the girl he was eventually enabled to get into the saddle. He would then have ridden away but the girl spoke in a strangely stern and commanding voice:

" You are hurt more than you think and it will be a trial for you to even reach my father's rancho before the pains in that foot become unbearable. I will lead the horse, it is not far, and you make the foot as easy as it is possible to do. It will not take long."

Bud would have protested and insisted on going his way, but already the girl was leading the horse into the dim trail that led into the San Mateo mountains to the west.

What was promised as a short distance and but little time seemed to Bud to extend into the hours, and only the grim determination of a man who had ridden night herd for years enabled him to suppress the groans upon his lips. But after what seemed hours, but in fact was little over three quarters of one, the girl conducted the horse and rider around a spur and there came into sight an imposing, though ancient, mansion cuddled away in one of those many pleasant little valleys peculiar to this portion of New Mexico. Cupping her hands about her mouth the girl called and retainers came from the wings of the house and hastened to her assistance.

Without further trouble the injured cowboy was borne into the great house and placed upon an old four poster bed, and liniments and bandages applied to the injured foot.

" You will rest here now, and make yourself as comfortable as possible, while I make arrangements for your supper to be served. My father is not at home, but he will be back during the evening, and until that time I will not find it permissible to again see you. Saledo will, serve until that time and you will find her more proficient than I in administering to the injured."

Although ever ready with an assortment of repartee that had earned him the name of a good fellow wellmet, Bud Lankford was in so much pain that he even overlooked an expression of thanks and squirmed himself into as comfortable a position as he could get and made ready to bear the pain that was raking his injured member. But the healing qualities of the the liniment soon took effect, and the strong fumes of the liquor that Saledo had administered, not only overcame the pain but a weary body, and Bud Lankford slept.

Nor was he disturbed for the evening meal as had been promised and not until the return of the father and the whispered explanation by the daughter, was he awakened and his meal brought into him. The refreshing sleep and the remedies applied had chased away the keen pains and except at such times as he thoughtlessly moved his foot, he rested in ease and his mind began to wonder what manner of place this was that he had found among the hills. So securely hidden away that years of riding in almost that immediate neighborhood had never revealed it to him. Not only that but he was astonished to note the excellence of the furnishings and the tastfulness of the arrangement. Real painting, old, very old,

hung upon the walls. Spotless linen was on the bed. Glass windows, a thing that was unknown except among the most wealthy. All these things began to trickle into the understanding of Bud Lankford as he lay upon the great bed and he pinched himself in a whimsical manner to see if he was really awake and not dreaming.

After a refreshing night's rest and an excellent breakfast Bud essayed to get up, but the foot was yet too sore, and he lay back rather glad of the fact that he was in no hurry of ~~necessity~~<sup>to get</sup> to his destination. What lent further assistance to this listlessness was the dawning remembrance that the young lady so lately come into his life was of most striking beauty. Bud dwelt upon this feature of the case and wondered how it was that even in the pain of his injured foot he had not considered that matter and found more out about the young lady. It was not the custom of this nonchalant young man to allow a good looking lady to come his way and not make some headway toward a friendship.

While he was pondering these matters the girl and what he immediately conceived to be her father came into the room. In excellent Spanish the old man began to thank Bud for his assistance and timely action in behalf of his daughter and the daughter would have interpreted for him, except that Bud with a laugh, and in Spanish as pure as that of his host, put them at their ease. He endeavored to belittle the thing that he had done and started a line of apology for his awkwardness in being thrown and for his intrusion upon their hospitality. All of which was a pure lie, for one look at the girl as she entered the room with her father removed every feeling except that of gladness for all things that had happened, hurt foot and all.

" I am Don Guero Espinoza and this is my daughter, Enixam, who is here well and healthy only because of your timely assistance. Mine shall always be your praise and under obligation I shall always rest to you."

" Well, now, it was very little that I did, but that rattler was sure enough in earnest; but still I believe I scared the Senorita more with the shot than the danger was great. "

" Nay, say not so," said Enixam " for the suddenness of that snake really unnerved me. I am not usually so easily frightened, but it came upon me while I was hiding behind the juniper watching you ride past, without warning and it struck once already when I screamed."

" It sure meant business, all right. There must have been a nest in that juniper for I didnt hear a rattle and I have heard that they acted that way when a nest is approached. I have never before heard of one striking without first giving a warning. But that old boy never wasted any time on song, he was all for business. "

"\*Has the liniments helped the injured foot? My father says I could have done nothing better. Really I am not much of a doctor. "

" The swelling has gone down a right smart, and the hurting has quit except when I move about. I wouldnt be surprised though, if I had to stay with you a few days."

" Assuredly you shall," said the old gentleman, " our hospitality must be yours until no soreness remains. It is but seldom that my daughter and I have visitors and we shall be glad if the soreness remains with you for many days."

Bud chanced a sly glance at the daughter to see if she sanctioned this sentiment of the old man and surprised a like enquiring glance at himself. A faint blush and a quick turning aside of the head made Mr. Bud Lackford secretly vow

to himself that never a sprained ankle would be so slow in healing.

In her embarrassment following this little incident, all of which went unnoticed by the father, Bud had an opportunity to study the girl he had so strangely come upon. She was of a little under medium height, supremely proportioned with large black eyes, and raven hair surmounting a complexion of pearly whiteness. A nose, rather of the aquiline type and teeth that out of ten thousand could not be matched for perfection. A strange sweetness of voice capped all this loveliness off with an attraction seldom to be met with. Nothing about her would indicate anything of the Mexican people. Scarcely would one have chosen her as being a Spanish type. More nearly would one believe she came from the old Lombard people of Italy. And about her father there was nothing to indicate Mexican or Spanish in looks, the language of course was ~~Latin~~ Spanish. Tall, white skinned, with a striking countenance; legs and arms ~~of~~ <sup>of</sup> perfect proportions and indicative of amazing physical strength; while the flashing eye revealed a keen intellect and with all a delightful personality.

Never did Bud Lankford enjoy a few days as he enjoyed those with an injured foot. If the opportunity presented, he confessed to himself, he would have gladly twisted the foot so that a month would be required to allow him again to get around. But in a few days common decency commanded that he get about and he hobbled out into the patio, by aid of the old man's cane, and with an exaggerated display of pain and injury. Here he sat with the charming Enixam, wishing that blood poison would set in on the foot so he could remain at length.

A casual examination of the massive timbers, ancient beyond guess, in the magnificent old home impressed Bud with the grandeur that had dwelt in this place. A curiosity crept upon him about it all. He again wondered how it was that this old, splendid, Spanish home, surrounded by many acres of excellent valley land had remained hidden away in the mountains so that he had never heard of it. Well he knew that in the vicinity of Socorro one of the most ancient communities of New Mexico existed. That the first vineyards of the New World were planted in that locality as early as 1630, and that many of the most aristocratic and ancient families of Spain had made their homes hereabouts in the valley of the Rio Grande. But never had it come to his ears that an estate of the extent of this Rancho Guero rested in the mountains nor even in the vicinity of Socorro.

"It is rather strange that I who have roamed these hills and valleys for so many years have never heard of this rancho, senorita? I thought I knew every rancho and every brand in southern New Mexico, if not in the entire eastern half of the ~~state~~ Territory. Is there some magic attached to this place that reveals it only at stated intervals?"

"I know not that, but my family has resided in this old house for more than two centuries. At one time our family possessed more than three hundred retainers, but in recent years, long before I was born however, they began to drift away until now scarcely fifty remain. Just over the brow of yonder hill rests an ancient pueblo where my father's people lived, it is said <sup>since</sup> ~~said~~ the year 1600. I know not how true that may be, but it must be a fact that my people came here long before any other inhabitants. It is said that for hundreds of years our people have lived here in peace. At least my family so far as I can learn, have always made this their home."

" A wonderful, beautiful place, but it seems strange that I have never heard of it, for I too, have been in this country for many years. "

" You speak the Spanish as a native, you are not of that blood?" and in the question Bud sensed a sort of antagonism to an affirmative answer, or was it his imagination.

" Never a bit of Spanish am I,. My parents were of the old Scottish line. I was born on the border however and lived there among the Mexicans and the Spanish until I was nineteen years of age when my parents, for no good reason that I could ever see, moved to the Indian Territory and we made our home among the Seminole Indians for three years. We moved, or rather I did, as my folks are in Ohio, back to this country where I feel more at home."

" I am glad-I mean- well, there seems to have always been some difference between my people and the Spanish."

" And are you not Spanish?"

" As to that I cannot say, father has often said to me that his only regret in life was that we were of that blood."

" Perhaps some family difference?"

" If so, it is a long way back, for as I told you my people have lived here for centuries, and in all that time so far as I can learn, no Spaniard has ever been welcome to this home. But I am talking a great deal of things that my father might wish me not to speak about."

Just at the moment the old gentleman came into the room in a hurried and perturbed manner and spoke some words to the daughter in a language totally unknown to Bud. A look of fright came into the eyes of the girl and the father spoke again seeming to be trying to allay the anxiety he had caused by his information.

"Excuse my discourtesy in discoursing in a language unknown to you, but a thing has transpired that may mean much trouble to me and mine. Did it happen that you heard or witnessed anything unusual last night- you heard no noise as though some one was trying to get into your room?"

"Cant say that I did, senor, but since you mentioned it I remember that I did awaken during the early morning hours rather suddenly, but I put it down as some of the attendants about the place. I lay awake for some time, but was not again disturbed. Has something happened to disturb you last night?"

"No, not last night. But one of the men about the place states that he heard voices last night in a juniper patch near by, conversing in low tones were three men, as best he could tell, and one was addressed as "Father."

"Perhaps some of the neighboring priests had become lost surely no harm can come from a padre?"

"Are you of that faith, friend?" and again Bud seemed to sense that antagonism that he had seemed to feel when Enaxim had asked if he were a Spaniard.

"Not me, What little religion I have is in my mother's name and she belongs to the Christian Church."

"Then allow me to inform you that a priest about this place always signifies trouble of the direst kind."

"I cannot imagine how a priest could bring you trouble my experience with them has always been just the reverse."

"There is a long line of tragedies in my family and always they have come through some Franciscan monk or priest. That rattlesnake you shot is no more deadly to me and mine than a man of the robe. Centuries have not tended to lessen pursuit of my family by that order. During my father's time in the later years of his life, this home was like a garrisoned

fort. Always were sentries on duty, and even then my father was murdered and his body when found, disclosed the fact that he had been tortured unmercifully. Little do I know of the matter for my father was taken away before he divulged the reasons to me in full, but I was told that the priests would come again, and that their coming meant tragedy and death. Only once have I been disturbed before, and that may have been a mistake. Some three years ago I was disturbed in my sleep one night and hearing a noise at one of the windows, I lay still, and in the moonlight saw a hand steal in and a body lift up; I saw a cross slip down over the hand at the casement, suspended by a priests chain. I immediately rushed to the window but not in time to arrest the intruder. Neither was anything found about the place. No trace of any kind was ever found of the intruder, and were it not for the menace of that particular priesthood toward my family for more than two centuries, I would believe it but a whim of the imagination. This last piece of news has unnerved me more than you may believe. I have been frank with you- you who are of but short acquaintance- because it has always been a characteristic I suppose, of my family. We have never suffered any misplaced confidence, however."

"I assure you I respect the confidence reposed in me. It will not be misplaced. But, you know, I am of the opinion that your fears are groundless. In this age and time things such as you seem to suspect are not done."

"Nevertheless, times past have made us more than cautious, and from tonight forward my men will be conveniently placed to guard against any intrusion."

"But tell me," questioned Bud Lankford, "if I am not impertinent in asking, why should any society wish to do your family harm?"

" There is a great reason, however, one that I fear has passed out of the reach of us all. I may later reveal it to you but now it would be too long a story, and one I fear you would believe fantastic and unreal. Tomorrow I will show you some documents and tell you the story, it has been many generations since a stranger has heard such a story."

With that Don Guero arose and withdrew and the young people were again left to themselves. A silence settled down for a time. Bud was busy with the strange facts he had just heard and the young lady was silent with her own thoughts.

After a <sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> time, being struck with the ridiculousness of the whole thing, Bud gave a light chuckle and turn to Enixam remarked:

" I fear your father is unduly exercised. Surely no such thing as he suspects could happen in these times, and as he says, the reason for any such disturbance has passed from him."

" Maybe it has, I am not so sure," and Enixam turned a face to the young fellow that was serious and showed the strain she was under."

" Lately," she continued, " since I returned from college I have been going through some very old papers that I found in a secret drawer of an old cabinet, which together with certain legends that have come down to us, I am convinced a dread secret rests with my family, one that has caused all the tragedy and the sorrow we have been subjected to for all these years. Tomorrow I will show you these papers, if my father concludes to narrate the events that have made us a secluded and suspicious family. Together we will try and solve a mystery that others may know about."

" I make a morning meal on mysteries," quoth Bud lightly,  
" and I have found that mysteries are generally the most  
common place things imaginable."

After this the conversation turned into other channels and soon the matter was forgotten altogether by the young people and their laughter and light talk filled the patio with a cheerfulness that filled Don Guero with happiness as he peeped in upon them unsuspected. The rest of the day passed without further reference to the priests and after the old gentleman had returned and joined them one would have <sup>had</sup> trouble in guessing that extreme anxiety and concern dwelt in the breast of at least two of them.

That evening while Bud sat with Enixam in the patio talking and laughing, and the mocking birds were singing in the junipers near by and the moon hung big and red in the clear sky above, he occasionally heard the movement of numerous people about the place, and he was shocked into the realization that Don Guero had indeed kept his word and that the place was well guarded.

That night he was again suddenly awakened, as on the previous occasion, and for a long time lay still and listened in an attempt to solve the reason for it. Trained in the cow camp and the night herd, Bud was a light sleeper. And as he lay there he realized that his years of training was not likely to prove false to him here. But still there was nothing to occasion the disturbance of his sleep to be heard, but he determined that he would not again close his eyes until an ample opportunity had been given for a recurrence of whatever it might have been. He lay there thinking for a long time when suddenly a soft grating noise, like some one scratching a match on the walls, came to his ears and he was about to

conclude that what had aroused him was in fact one of the guards resting against the wall or striking a match, but again it occurred and this time it seemed that the sound came from directly under his great bed. Stealthily the scrapping grew, and as silently as possible Bud crept from his bed and took possession of his forty five, and thus fortified against whatever might come up, proceeded to get down on the floor and looked under the bed, when he was amazed to find that the noise was not within the room but under the house. For many minutes he lay on the floor silent as the night, and the scratching, scrapping sound became more distinct and he came to the conclusion that it was someone digging under the house. This occasioned his first real thrill. Heretofore he had considered the anxiety of the Don as misplaced and coming out of some wild story long told in the family, until they had believed it really to be true. But now the question was, what to do and how to do it. Of course it was but some wild thing tunnelling under the house but he had to abandon this as the sound carried with a distinctly metallic ring. Quietly he crept back into bed, retaining his pistol, and prepared to wait. Nothing but a wait, and perhaps a long one, would reveal what this mysterious digging was, and why. Suddenly the digging ceased, and again all was still. But there was no more sleep for Bud Lankford that night, and he lay there pondering his course, whether it would be better to inform Don Guero or ferret out the mystery all by himself. He decided that he would pursue the later course and save the household the anxiety his information would naturally give them. He wondered just where the man had heard the conversation that he had reported to Don Guero, and while thinking about this, daylight broke and he arose and dressed himself.

The injured foot was forgotten the next morning and what had appeared to be a badly injured man the day before came forth without a limp, and the cane had been forgotten. Feverishly he awaited the information promised by Enixan and her father the day before. The night's sleep and the report of the men on duty that nothing had occurred during the night seemed to have allayed Don Guero's fears and Bud began to fear that he would have to either tell them of what he had heard, or remind them of their promise; either of which would occasion him some embarrassment. But after the noonday meal had been taken and all three had repaired to the shady portion of the patio, Don Guero suddenly said:

" My friend, true to a failing or a virtue that has been a characteristic of my family, I am going to tell you a secret that has long reposed with my people, as we supposed, alone. You may be surprised to learn that I am of the old Toltec stock who preceeded the Aztec people in the ancient city of Mexico. It would take too long, and it is not necessary to tell you the entire story of the family. These retainers that you have seen about the place are all that remains of that once proud race. I perhaps, and Enixan there, were of the royalty of that people. At least we have been so informed and have ever been treated so by our people. During those troublesome times when Cortez overran what was called Anahuac, now called Mexico, what then remained of my people were friendly to the Aztecs. Great confidence was reposed, so the story goes, in my ancestors, and it came about that after the revolt of the Aztecs and the driving out of the Spaniard from the City they then called Tenochtitlan, the great treasure that the Spaniard had captured was retaken. That, together with a vast amount they had never found, was by my ancestors and the rulers of

the Aztecs, hidden away. That treasure lies there where it was buried. From papers which we possess we have learned that the secret died with the last of the Montazumas, and that my people fled before the retaking of the city by the Spanish. It is true that my ancestors and their little band did journey to the east, across many rivers and that they lived for a long time in a place that is shown on an ancient map in our possession. It is related to us that a sketch was made by one of my ancestors, he who had assisted in the secreting of the treasure, of the last resting place of that great wealth. That sketch, if there ever was such an one, is not in our possession nor did my father know of it, except as a mere legend of my people or rather my family. But according to that legend some of the priests who were with Coronado happened upon the village of my people, and spying, as they always spy, surprised the knowledge to themselves by listening to the conversation of an ancient Tolttec chieftain called Piltuc, and one of my own ancestors. Not sufficient information was had by the priest to allow them any knowledge whatever of the whereabouts of the buried gold, but they did learn that a map or sketch was in the possession of my ancestor after the death of Piltuc. This was sufficient information for the crafty minions of the Franciscans. They left the little village and obtained assistance, returned for the purpose of extracting the information by either fair means or foul. But my ancestor, of whom I am a namesake, which has been a custom in my family of naming the eldest boy Guero, was a shrewd man himself, and perhaps conversant with the craft of the priesthood, for the story goes that he took the precaution to divide into two papers the information and map that had been intrusted to him. One of these he hid away in some spot which to this day remains securely hidden.

The other he concealed among the papers in a massive box or safe in his home. And subsequent events proved that his precaution was not misspent. The priests returned with a sufficient force and endeavored to make my ancestor give up his secret. This he refused and a battle ensued in which, as usual, my people were bested. My ancestor and some of his intimates escaped the skirmish and secreted themselves in some sort of sanctuary they had prepared, and for a considerable time was successful in evading the Spaniards. But hunger drove them to reveal their hiding place, or else one of the priests had secured knowledge of it before, and one night an attack was made by a small number of Spaniards who had happily underestimated the force of my ancestor. A terrific struggle ensued in which my ancestor and all of his people were exterminated, except one Toltec and two children of the ancient Guero, who escaped. But this was a death struggle, indeed, for in the fight every Spaniard, with the exception of one priest who was wounded and left by his comrades as dead, was killed. I mean all those who entered that old secret sanctuary. The Toltec escaped and gathered together his people who made their way back into this country. The two children grew to manhood and womanhood, and the boy of those two was the forebear of my immediate family. This priest, even dying as he thought he was, managed to get possession of the half of the map or sketch, and many years afterwards learned that it was useless without the key that Guero had hidden away. Dying he left a statement to the Franciscan order of these things, and the further fact that he had of the escape of the two children and that doubtless in their possession would be found the key to unlock the secret hiding place of the Aztec wealth. This is the story that

has been kept alive in my family. Persistently we have been harassed by the Franciscans. Tragedy has resulted in every generation of my family, and during the supremacy of the Spaniard the order was open and arrogant, but since the acquisition of this territory by the United States Government and the growing disfavor of the Catholics generally, the methods employed have grown more stealthy, but none the less readily. That, my friend, is the story and my family, though innocent of any knowledge of the secret thought to be ours, has suffered just the same."

Both men were surprised when Enixam, with flashing eye and excited manner, said:

" I am not so sure but that our family is still in possession of that dread secret. Come with me and I will show you a discovery I accidentally made but last week, and you will agree with me that the secret of the Lost Treasure may yet be ours."

Arising and taking from a small drawer a bunch of huge keys Enixam led the two men to the door of an inner room. On all sides this room was protected from the outer walls of the ~~existing~~ hacienda. A great oak door was set well into the five foot dome walls. A large key was selected from the bunch and the great door squeaked open on its wooden hinges. Bud saw before him a veritable vault, or as nearly a vault as could

be approximated in the days when the ancient building was erected. The air was surprisingly fresh and Bud was at a loss to account for this until he noticed the peculiar construction of the upper portion of the chamber. Going directly to an old desk or high-boy that reposed in one corner of the room Enixam opened the drawer and after drawing it entirely out from its casement, reached into the cavity and in the upper portion of the casement slid aside two

panels and took out a light glass or china box with a heavy ( for its size ) hardwood lid. On the top lid of the box Bud saw the picture engraved of some ancient castle. In the box was a great number of papers. Replacing the drawer and taking up the little casket, Exixam, her father and Don again repaired to the sunlight of the patio and a perusal of the papers followed.

Bud's Spanish learning enabled him to make out the ancient writing, and as he read astonishment and excitement was visible in his face.

" Why, I know the very place he is speaking of for it was there or in that neighborhood that I resided in the Indian Territory for a number of years. This paper gives the identical route that we pursued when we went by covered wagon from El Paso many years ago."

" And here is told the hiding place of the plat", cried Guero," but the hidden portion is useless without that part stolen by the priest. Mayhap the ancient Guero was not as cunning as he thought he was."

" And here is a map showing the location and entrance to the caves," said Exixam, " that must have been the secret sanctuary of the story."

Hastily the trio read and re-read the papers. From the high excitement caused by the revelations came a sense of disappointment. The hiding place of the map meant nothing unless the stolen portion could be had.

" I propose a counter offensive against the priests," exclaimed Bud, " we now know why they have pursued your family so long. It is time that the tables were turned."

" But little can we do against that crafty organization " said Don Guero," even though the fact that they have pursued

my family for generations discloses the possession on their part of the other portion of the map. Just the same their disappointment has been greater than that which we now know."

"Where was it that your men said they heard the people talking the other night?" asked Bud of Don Guero.

"In a juniper patch just to the left of the house, not a great ways from the wing in which your bed chamber is situated. But why do you ask?"

"I just wanted to know, I have an idea of my own. It may be foolish but I begin to think that I was sent to your assistance. I am a little Moses sent to lead you out of the wilderness."

With this Bud arose and went to the juniper trees with no doubt in his mind whatever that there he would find the entrance to the tunnel directed toward the hacienda. But he was dealing with an organization much craftier than that. Not a sprig of grass was disturbed, and there was not a possibility that any tunnelling started from that point. This was a poser, and left Bud in a precarious position. He had been so certain that some persons had been tunneling under the house and that the voices heard in the night had come from the place of commencement of that tunnel that it had never entered his head that eminent danger lurked in the wake of that tunnel for the inmates of the hacienda. But he reasoned that if any violence was intended the tunnelling method would not have been adopted. Again he thought that perhaps the parties were but few in number, an insufficient force to risk an open attack. If this were true, it probably meant that only two or three persons were in on the secret and those few were desirous of keeping the information within the knowledge of just as few people as possible. This thought gave him a deep sense of gratification, for, he reasoned, if that be true the

my family for generations discloses the possession on their part of the other portion of the map. Just the same their disappointment has been greater than that which we now know."

"Where was it that your men said they heard the people talking the other night?" asked Bud of Don Guero.

"In a juniper patch just to the left of the house, not a great ways from the wing in which your bed chamber is situated. But why do you ask?"

"I just wanted to know, I have an idea of my own. It may be foolish but I begin to think that I was sent to your assistance. I am a little Moses sent to lead you out of the wilderness."

With this Bud arose and went to the juniper trees with no doubt in his mind whatever that there he would find the entrance to the tunnel directed toward the hacienda. But he was dealing with an organization much craftier than that. Not a sprig of grass was disturbed, and there was not a possibility that any tunnelling started from that point. This was a poser, and left Bud in a precarious position. He had been so certain that some persons had been tunneling under the house and that the voices heard in the night had come from the place of commencement of that tunnel that it had never entered his head that eminent danger lurked in the wake of that tunnel for the inmates of the hacienda. But he reasoned that if any violence was intended the tunnelling method would not have been adopted. Again he thought that perhaps the parties were but few in number, an insufficient force to risk an open attack. If this were true, it probably meant that only two or three persons were in on the secret and those few were desirous of keeping the information within the knowledge of just as few people as possible. This thought gave him a deep sense of gratification, for, he reasoned, if that be true the

chances of thwarting their undertaking was with Don Guero and himself. He figured it was not in reality the organization of the Franciscans, but perhaps, one or two designing members of that order who sought to feather their own caps; or perhaps the order might have refused to pursue the search of the treasure further. Anyway he figured Bud felt that he was in possession of information that he had best keep to himself for the present. Having reached this conclusion he returned to the house, and reported that he had found absolutely nothing in his search of the junipers.

That night was a sleepless one for Bud Lankford, but not a sound was heard to disturb him. That fact was more disturbing to him than an outright open attack would have been. The next day found him anxious. He was torn between a desire to tell Don Guero and one equally strong to protect him from the anxiety he knew the knowledge would occasion. He again decided to await another night's development.

There hung on the inner wall of the bed room occupied by Bud a very large oil painting ( or excellent imitation) of what he took to be some ancient Saint. Bud had noted the painting each time he was compelled to occupy the room since becoming an inmate of this mysterious house. Noted it simply because of its great size and a feeling that the painting was of very great age. Just an idle, careless consideration of it.

That night as he lay down, because of the sleeplessness of the night before he was unable to keep awake and, before he realized it he was asleep and again was suddenly awakened as on the preceding nights. This time he was prepared however as he had lain down fully dressed except for the removal of his boots. His six shooter was within easy reach and he felt an excited feeling of relief when the noise that had before disturbed him was repeated.

For a considerable time he lay there awaiting whatever was to come and wondering what it really all meant and how an entrance to the house was to be made. As suddenly as it had come the noise ceased. The night was far advanced for the moon hung far down on the western horizon, almost ready to pitch in behind the distant mountains. A slight noise on the inner wall attracted his attention, a noise as though some heavy body was being pushed or drawn up into the very walls of the building. His attention was attracted to the huge painting on the wall just in time to see a slight movement of the picture. A hand extended itself between the picture and the wall, or rather seemed to push the painting out from the wall, and began to stealthily draw the picture to one side. There followed the head of a man. The moonbeams fell almost directly upon that spot in the room, or so near as to make it visible to the watcher. For a long time the head gazed about the room apparently taking it all in. Then it withdrew. Not a movement had come from the bed, and a dead silence reigned within the house. The picture was carefully adjusted into its accustomed place and no further attempt was made that night. Bud reasoned that the intruder was perhaps surprised at finding the room occupied, and had withdrawn for some future time when an entrance could be effected without the chance of disturbing an inmate of the house. This, in fact was just what had happened., as the future events proved out.

The next day Bud called the old man aside and apprized him of what had occurred. A look of the deepest astonishment came over the face of Don Guero.

" It was from that room that my father was spirited away and it has always been a matter of wonder to us how he was inveigled away from the house. He must have been taken out

through that opening. That picture has been in that room for a century, and from the inside it is quite stationary, fitting into a frame built solidly into the wall. Or at least I had always supposed it to be. "

" Get me a lantern I am going to explore that tunnel, even if we have to cut the picture away. I have a scheme in mind that I believe will give us the best of this deal. I may be wrong but I judge the parties have gone away for the day. I will find the other opening, and your men can do the rest tonight. "

A small lantern was furnished. It was found necessary to cut the picture away from the wall, or rather the framework encased in the wall. Back of it was found an opening sufficiently large to admit a man's body to go through without any trouble. Bud lowered himself into the opening and he was handed the light. By the light he discovered that he was in what had at one time been a secret tunnel. That it had caved in. These cavings being removed was what he had heard going on the first night. Through the tunnel Bud made his way for a considerable distance. Then the opening became a shaft, large enough for one person to stand upright and travel along. The light from the lantern showed that it was very old. Finally it came out upon the brink of a small canyon almost a quarter of a mile from the house. The outside opening was completely hidden away in a thicket of wild plum bushes, and it was with difficulty that Bud forced his way through. Not one chance in a thousand for the opening to be discovered.

Bud immediately repaired to the house and informed Don Guero of his discovery. The old man immediately summoned a number of his men and gave them specific instructions. Eight stalward men were chosen, armed and instructed. The

others were delegated to guard the house that night.

When darkness came the eight chosen men were stationed about the little canyon where the plum thicket was and told what to expect, and given specific instructions to capture any and all persons who sought to enter the thicket.

Enixan was not informed of the discovery, as the men desired to save her the worry and anxiety. That night Guero sat in the room with Bud, feverishly awaiting developments. Because of the undisturbed appearance of the plum thicket, and its natural state apparently undisturbed by any coming and going, both Don Guero and Bud felt it possible that another opening led into the shaft some where and had been overlooked by Bud in his examination that day.

Nothing happened in the forepart of the night. About one o'clock in the morning, however, a commotion was raised at the little canyon and several shots rang out in the night. Guero immediately rushed out and Bud started to follow him and then drew back into the room fearing that an escape might be attempted that way.

It was well that he did. When Guero arrived at the entrance to the tunnel he found his men gathered around a man who had been shot down.

" Was there but one?" Don Guero asked of his men.

" There was another but he rushed into that thicket there and we have been unable to get him. We have it surrounded and there is no chance for his escape.

Don Guero immediately rushed back to the house and was just in time to witness the capture of the other man by Bud. Bud had concealed himself in the room and allowed the man, who seemed to be an ordinary Mexican workman, to enter the room when he stepped forward and covering him with his gun ordered him to give up. This the man did without any delay. And he

now stood there sullen and speechless.

The men were directed to bring the wounded man in, and when he was brought into the room, the captured man uttered a low moan and crossed himself. An examination showed that the man was dead. He was placed on the floor and the men of Guero ordered to retire. A search of the fallen man revealed that he was or had been of the order of Franciscan monks. From the men it was learned that when they ordered him to stand, he had fired upon them, wounding one in the side. The others immediately returned his fire and in the confusion the other escaped into the thicket, and thence into the tunnel.

Nothing of importance was found upon the person of the priest other than a great key and a sheep skin map showing the location of the tunnel and certain Latin writings, which neither Guero or Bud could make out. Slyly winking at Guero, Bud Lankford remarked:

"It is best that we immediately dispatch this other one here. That will end the rough stuff and insure us against further attacks."

"A sign of assent on the part of Don Guero set the man to talking.

"No! No! I have done nothing. I meant no harm to anyone. Why should you injure me, I have done you no harm nor did I intend to do so."

"What were you doing tunnelling into this house. Why should we not kill you for that. You would have killed us, we know that was your intention. Keep your mouth shut, we are going to kill you and nothing you can say will keep us from it."

At these words of Bud Lankford's, spoken in a harsh and apparently determined tone, the man fell down upon his knees and began to plead in deadly earnest.

Bud had accomplished his purpose and judged that the man would tell all he knew.

"What excuse can you give for your actions, and who is this dead one?"

"That is father Ditticus of Acoma. He told me that the great treasure belonging to the Church was to be found through this tunnel, and that I would be paid well for helping him dig away the cavings that obstructed the way. I did not know it led into this house, before God, I did not."

"But where were the others that were with you, where are your companions?"

A look of surprise crossed the face of the frightened man and he immediately replied.

"There were no others; none but he and I and he told me that I was never to breath a word of what he called an adventure to a living soul."

There could be no mistaking the sincerity of the man. He had not been let into the secret, he was just a tool.

"Where did this Father Ditticus live?"

"At Acoma, as I told you."

"And where is that?"

"It is a great stone mountain far to the west of here on the top of which the Queres Indians live, and have lived for all times. There is a church on top built by a father long ago. It was here that Father Ditticus lived."

"Do you live there, too?"

"No, my home is just west of Laguna. I hold a tract of land granted by the Spanish government. Father Detticus came to my home about two weeks ago and informed me that he was in possession of information about a great treasure belonging to the Church, and he ordered me to make ready to accompany him

in search of the treasure. That is all that I know."

" Did this man have papers telling about the treasure?"

" Not that I know of, only that which you hold in your hand did I ever see."

A further search of the body disclosed nothing. Both Guero and Bud were of the belief that the man before them was speaking the truth.

" Did this Father say whether or not any other priests knew of this matter?"

" He only said that he was the only living soul who knew of the treasure, and that its discovery would make him a great man in the church. This was all he ever said about it. He was very much excited when he told me that and I believe there is no doubt about it."

The men of Don Guero were summoned and the man delivered into their custody with instructions to hold him prisoner until further orders. They were also instructed to shoot him dead upon any attempt being made to escape. This was for the benefit of the prisoner. The body of the priest was turned over to the men with instructions to give it proper burial, but not within the burying grounds of Don Guero. When the two men were left alone, they sat for a long time without saying anything. The Guero spoke.

" This night has perhaps rid my family of a deadly enemy for I believe this man is telling us the truth."

" Yes," said Bud, " but so long as the information that lead this priest here is not in your hands who can say that others may not attempt the same thing?"

" That is true." And for another moment they sat in silence.

" If this priest came from the place called Acoma, then the information that he possessed may be found. Let me see

that key which you hold in your hand, it may lead us to something."

"That must be the key to the abode of this dead priest," said Bud, "it is my judgment that we should immediately go to this place of Acoma and make a search of his belongings before others come there, and before his absence is noticed."

"That is a good suggestion. The quicker we move the better. It is about one hundred miles west of here in a wild and broken territory. I have heard that there is a people who live on top of a great rock. That centuries ago a priest who was with Coronado made his way to the top and by some adventure was accepted among this strange people. That he persuaded them to build a church up there and that the logs and timbers were carried up by the Indians and a great Mission built. Listen, my friend, it was a priest of Coronado that caused the destruction of my ancestors and their people. This thing begins to link up, we must hasten. Others may find what we need most."

So it came about that the very next day Guero and Bud set out for the ancient village of Acoma, located on top of a rocky mountain four hundred feet high and practically inaccessible. After a tedious journey and much enquiry they at last reach the place. The Guero Indians were tilling the soil in the creek bottoms immediately surrounding the great rock. There it stood in the desert, bleak and forbidding. On its top could be seen the Acoma pueblo from a great distance but when the travellers sought to ascend the great rock they were halted by the Indians and forbidden to proceed. Argument availed them nothing. They protested that they desired to ascend and visit Father Detticus and were informed that he was not there, and even if he were, visitors were not allowed

up there. The Father might come down, but others could not go up. That only those who represented the Church and but one of them would be allowed. That until Father Detticus was removed no other should entered. They were firm in this and Guero and his younger companion withdrew.

That night Bud attempted to scale the rock and gain entrance to the church, but not a place was found that was accessible, except that sandy slope guarded by the Indians.

It was apparent that access to the church must be gained by other means and consultation after consultation resulted. Finally the ready wit of Bud suggested the masking as a priest and taking the chance that the key they possessed was that of the church or mission, and representing that a successor to Father Detticus had come. This scheme seemed the only reasonable one to both and it was decided upon. Again they hastened back to the Rancho Guero to prepare for the undertaking.

Upon their arrival there some considerable trouble was experienced in providing the proper habiliments for the task but these were finally had. Bud stained his face and hands with the stains of nuts so that he looked the part of the dark priests of that country. While he was arraying himself in the garments of the priesthood the thought struck him to frame and present to the people the great canvas that had been cut from the underground outlet into the room. Guero readily consented that the great picture was prepared as an offering to the people of Acoma. They sat out upon their journey and when within a few miles of the pueblo, Guero stopped and Bud Lankford went forward on his strange and important undertaking. When he had arrived at the base of the great rock he was accosted by the Indians and forbidden

**Editor's Note:**

The painting of St. Joseph still remains hanging in the old Church on the top of Leon rock in central New Mexico. It is highly prized by the inhabitants and not a great number of years ago it was looted to the village of Laguna, a neighboring village to bring them ruin. The ruin was not the Laguna Indians kept the picture a war between the two tribes was only averted by a lone man in Cuyahua which finally found its way in the Supreme Court of New Mexico and the picture was restored.

to ascend.

" Peace, my children, I am come to administer to your spiritual welfare. God has seen fit to take away from us Father Detticus and I have been sent by the church to take his place. Not only that, my children, but I bear as a gift from the Great King of Spain a Sainted picture. A picture of the living Joseph. The King of Spain bids me bless his people of Acoma and present to them this painting which will bring them great good fortune. Rains will it bring in plenty and much will be the harvest from the soil." \* *Editor's note 2.*

This seemed to be interesting to these simple people and they gathered around and one who seemed to be a chief among them demanded to see the picture.

" May, that cannot be, as I am strickly forbidden to display this picture anywhere except within the great church that graces the castle rock of Acoma."

Much jabbering followed this statement, and soon the interpreter turned and bid the false priest to proceed to the church. After a climb that was exasperating to the horse riding Bud Dankford, the summit was finally reached and the new priest and his people proceeded to the great church on the rock. Stepping boldly forward Bud fitted the great key to the lock of the Mission and was relieved to find the giant tumblers answering to its touch. The great doors swung open and Bud solemnly walked down the dark isle and as solemnly removed the coverings of the painting, and in a hollow voice pronounced a benediction upon the people and the church. He then stepped back of the niche used as a pulpit and bade the people bring him a peg. This was done and he hung the picture there as an offering from one who had at one time been their soverleign. \* ( see editor's note )

Crossing himself he solemnly knelt as though in prayer and directly afterwards dismissed the people from the church. He then again locked the great doors and made his way through the darkened church to the quarters of the late priest back of the altar. Here he found and lighted candles and proceeded without delay to search the little chamber. For hours he searched without success. Every crevice was searched out and he had just about lost hope when his eye alighted on a small opening in a corner of the little room just a little higher than a man's head. Here his search was rewarded. In a small wooden box were numerous papers, some goat skin manuscripts and among them a small map, yellow with age, and inscribed with quaint old characters. A hasty examination showed that the writing was Spanish, but of such a remote period that time would be required to decipher its contents. Taking no chances Bud removed all the papers from the box and made them into a small package which he concealed within his robe. Again withdrawing from the chamber and finally the church, which he locked, and leaving the key with the head man of the tribe, again blessed the people of Acoma, and stated to them that he would be gone for several days to prepare himself for his sojourn among them.

No protest was made to his withdrawal and he descended the sandy pathway and hastened to the waiting Guero.

That hundred miles return was made as quickly as their tired horses would permit, and each heaved a sigh of relief when they came into view of the rancho.

Enixam came forth to meet them, excitement visible in every line of her face. She laughed in pure joy when they told her of the success of the undertaking.

" Father, after centuries of torture and tragedy it seems that the mystery of our people is to be solved. That rattle snake was a blessing in disguise, a God's send. Perhaps the future will hold peace profound for us."

B Let us hope so, my daughter. But just now Bud and myself are about as much interested in something to eat as any thing else in the world."

With a light laugh she hastened away to prepare refreshments and the two men retired to the great sitting room. Here the papers were brought forth and examined. But they saw at a glance over the lot that it would take considerable time to digest their meaning. Enixam having returned she was requested to place them with the other papers in the secret drawer to await a convenient time to examine them.

The meal that followed was one of the brightest and the happiest that had taken place in that terrorized home for many long years, if not for centuries.

All were happy and the strain under which they had labored being relieved, their spirits bubbled up like rare old wine. Discussion of the examination of the papers was the principal theme of conversation, and it was agreed that a nights rest should be taken before a study and analysis of the records should be made.

#### Chapter Fourteen.

The following day the three repaired to the main room of the mansion where they would be protected from interruption and with a fitting enthusiasm they attacked the many papers to be studied and reconciled.

#### Chapter Fifteen.

" Here is one that has caused us all our misery," cried Enixam, " it is the key that has furnished the information to those who have visited such untold horrors upon our family," and she exhibited a yellow, time worn goat skin, written upon with an ink or stain that had almost rusted away.

" I am not much longer for this life. The order has found a faithful servant in me, but I have been defeated in my quest by the cursed Toltec. Even in death he has accomplished this thing, assisted by the renegade, Guero Espinoza. He is dead but those of his blood live on and must be destroyed. I know his children escaped and have been brought westward by the cursed Toltecs. On every hand they have defeated us. To those who shall peruse this writing I urge you to leave no stone unturned to discover the whereabouts of these people. In their possession is that which will bring back to the Order the great treasure of the Montazumas. I have but the half, and it is but a delusion and a snare as I have found. The other half of the map showing the burial place of the treasure must be had. It is in the possession of the Toltecs or hidden away in a spot of which they have knowledge.

My brethren who shall read this, having examined the accompanying papers, I urge even in my dying breath, a never ending search. With the untold wealth of the Aztecs the Order may again achieve the power I feel is fast ebbing away. Hasten, My brethren, hasten into all parts of the New World, as I have done. My search has revealed that the remnants of the Toltecs have journeyed westward toward the Rio Grande. Comb its length, somewhere there you will find them.

FRANCISCO LOPEZ.

And attached to this note was another sheepskin, older and more worn, upon which was displayed a half section of a map, painted into the skin with some sort of red ink. And although two hundred years had passed the coloring remained true and distinct.

" This, my children, is but half; the other paper found by Enixam must contain the other."

" Here is another note by some later Monk," exclaimed Bud, "and this explains the later happenings in this queer business"

On a paper, dimed with age but still surprisingly legible notwithstanding, the following inscription was made:

San Miguel Mission, Santa Fe, 1672.

I have found the people of the renegade, Guero. The Toltecs are with them in numbers. There can be no mistaking their identity. Follow the windings of the Rio Grande south from the old expeditionary headquarters of Coronado at Bernalillo for a five days journey to a place where the river veers sharply to the eastward. Pursue a direct southerly course for a good days travel where you will notice two mountains rising above the others directly westward. Direct you immediately between them and in a valley of some extent you will find (and the paper and writing were so worn that this portion of the inscription could not be made out) Toltec Emperor, Piltuc. That family \* \* \* \* \* our order must h\*\*\*\*\*. The search has cost me my life, but I gladly give it as I am now convinced that success is within our reach. Hasten my brethren \* \* \* \* \* (and here again the note was too worn to decipher) needs so badly.

Father Goëz.

"And so they handed it on," said Don Guero, "that our people might never rest in peace. But we leave these gasty messages that have cost me and mine so much and see what satisfaction awaits us in the papers so long retained in my family."

"A complete statement of everything awaits you there, my father. It only needed these just recovered to make it all plain as day", said Enixaa with a little chuckle of delight, "for while you and Bud presented the great painting to the people of Acoua I examined every slip and fragment of those papers. It but awaits to best determine how to recover the papers hidden away in a far offland by the long dead Guero. The map which Bud Lankford recognized so readily is the first key. Here is the next and the most important one", and she handed a manuscript of some length to the now excited father, who with the more excited Bud Lankford, began its deciphering.

In ancient Spanish script, written by a hand that doubtless was less familiar with the pen than the sword, the following letter of instructions was read.

TO MY DESCENDANTS AND THEIR DESCENDANTS, IF NEED BE:

Fearing that the prying eyes of the priests who have just left us may have seen more than was good for the secret belonging to the Toltecs' last Chieftain, Piltuc, I, Guero Espenosa, born in Spain but now of the family of the Toltec royalty, have severed the map so carefully prepared by Piltuc to the end that should the one I retain in my possession be taken away it will be of no purpose to the taker. The other I have secreted in a place I hope shall be secure. Only the Great Creator knows whether this paper shall dwell with my adopted people or be lost to the Franciscan order of the Holy Church. If they obtain it, then all is lost, for herein I lay down directions that will lead the most ignorant to the place of hiding.

Repair you to the village we now occupy, Piltuc has prepared a map for that purpose which shall accompany this message as a part. On the banks of a little muddy red stream shown on the map, following its course downward, one will come upon the burying ground of this people. Piltuc rests there, let us hope in peace. We have journeyed far and cut and prepared an imposing headstone for his grave. Near the base of this tombstone concealed in a manner that will not be revealed by the removal of the stone I have hidden one of my families burnt clay caskets. It, I am sure, will withstand all the elements. Within it is a history written by me at the dictation of the noble Piltuc, also another half of the map.

I must explain, in case this message reaches those further down my line of blood than is here expected, that Tenochtitlan is the city marked upon the map, and from the ancient palace of the Kings, the beginning is had. The rest will be easy I am told as it was not given me to participate in the secreting of Montezumas' gold. Only Piltuc remained, after the death of the princely Guatemotzin, as one who knew the secret. As told in the recital of Piltuc those who worked in placing the treasure away were destroyed, and even Guatemotzin, the Mighty, could not have revealed the hiding place.

I am torn with anxiety because of the coming of those priests. I have a premonition that all is not well. Therefore as would Piltuc have done I have taken every precaution to thwart the greed of the monks. It may have been that the wily Teule, Cortez, dispatched these priests upon our trail, I would not be surprised, for he was a wonderfully resourceful and determined, fanatical man.

May God be pleased that only those descendants of the last Emperor of the Toltecs come into possession of these documents. I have done the best I could. It all now rests with God. Amen.

Senor Guero Espenosa

Post Scriptum

A great sanctuary was prepared by Piltuc and his Toltec people. It is among the great stones, some considerable distance directly east of the burying ground I have above told about. I have prepared a document to guide to that place

" I know that very country, many times have I stood with my mother among those very grave stones and pondered on what manner of people lived there in the Seminole Nation. We have tried to make out the inscriptions but time had erased them beyond that. I can almost believe that I know the tombstone that this ancient paper refers to. It still stands and I have seen it."

" How far is it from this place?" asked Guero.

" I would say about seven hundred miles. We were two months in making the trip from the Pass with our wagon train. A man and a good horse could accomplish the distance in half the time."

Sadly Guero shook his head. " That would be too much of a journey for me, yet it must be done, as we cannot rest in peace until this thing has been unravelled. Are there savage people dwelling there?"

" No, the Seminoles are a very peaceable folk. They treated our family with the utmost kindness. But west of them and between here and there are the warlike Comanches and their allies the Caddo. It would be best to travel to the south of them, although outposts of soldiers are scattered over the Oklahoma Territory. I noticed in the papers at the Pass that Oklahoma Territory had been lately opened up to the white settlers."

" I feel no hesitancy in entrusting this mission to you, if it be your desire to undertake it? I do not feel equal to the journey, although my hearts desire would be to visit that ancient dwelling place of my ancestors. "

" And I would be more than glad to undertake the job. It would be pie for me. If I be successful I shall claim a reward that I have in mind upon my return", and Bud glanced

lyly at the blushing Enixam, who hastily left the room followed by a light laugh from Bud and her father.

" I have heard that youth must not be denied," said Don Guero Espinoza, " and who am I to attempt to set at naught such a goodly rule? "

And so it was arranged. The following days witnessed a feverish preparation. Bud Lankford was in his element. He was to go upon an adventure. Danger lay in his path and he was happy. As the days sped by all were occupied in the preparations, but Bud and Enixam found ample time to sit among the dwarf cedars of the Patio and converse in low tones. These little trysts were methodically avoided by the considerate Don Guero.

#### Chapter Sixteen.

And so it came about that Bud set out upon his journey and in the early part of December made his entry into the old Seminole Nation, passing the little trading post of old Posuk Harjo, as before related. We left him sitting among the grewsome relics of a far off death struggle. Having finished the perusal of the papers which he had before him he again replaced them in the little casket, together with the emerald neckless of the last Montazuma ( not without first thinking how well it would adorn the brow or neck of a certain maiden he had left behind ) and prepared to take his departure.

Again he started toward the draperies across the southeast corner of the great chamber, but again he hesitated as though in fear of what might be found there, and turned toward the entrance. Stopping at the side of the woman so naturally reclining upon the ancient couch he cast the glaze of the candle directly upon her upturned face and for some time gazed in wonder.

"The very likeness of Enixam, and she too, was called Enixam. 'Tis more than passing strange, all this. Perhaps I should remove these bodies for a more decent burial. But I judge no better death chamber could be had. At least the elements have preserved even beyond the wildest hopes of those old dwellers along the Nile. If the maps lead us to the treasure, this spot can be reclaimed", he murmured as he turned away and again replaced the great stone in its original position, whistled softly to his horse, mounted and rode away.

K---

#### Chapter Seventeen.

"They match exactly," said Don Guero, as he fitted the severed halves of the map. "Nothing now remains to us but to determine if the treasure still lies in its place."

"That will necessitate a trip to Mexico City," cried Enixam, "and I too, am going there."

"We shall all go together," stated Guero, "I will give instructions to my people tomorrow."

"Not, however," said Bud Lankford, until I have claimed the reward that I promised myself. I have earned that already it did not depend upon the discovery of any treasure, and I now claim a greater treasure than any hidden away in the hills of Mexico. Don Guero, Enixam, bless her heart has promised to be my wife. We did not think it best to let you in on it for we doubted your consent. #B

"No! No! you did not" exclaimed Guero, "that will please me more than the finding of the treasure, and you children know it. You have imposed upon my consent, and I should and probably will chastise you for it. Get out of my sight, both of you. Repair to that spot in the patio that I have found  
 of banish you from the house  
 way in no other. I banish you from the house."

" We do not go until you have promised to procure a minister on tomorrow," laughed Bud, as he reached for Enixam who turned and dashed away with the laughing Bud Lankford in close pursuit.

" I shall do as you request," shouted Don Guero, and the young people rushed out of the house.

--

And he was true to his word and Bud and Enixam were married in the patio of the old home where they had spent so many happy hours.

### Chapter Eighteen.

Soon thereafter everything was in readiness and they sat out upon their trip to El Paso, there to go by train to the Gulf coast and thence by ship to Vera Cruz, thence over land to the City of Mexico. It is not necessary to dwell upon that happy journey, for it was a honeymoon seldom experienced by newlyweds.

Suitable quarters were had in the City upon their arrival there and they sat themselves down to become acquainted with the city and its surroundings. A month was spent in this manner before any attempt was made to employ the services of the map of Piltuc. It was only after the most intensive search that the spot where the Palace of the Kings had been discovered. It was from here that the map called for the commencement of the information. Studying the map in the privacy of their chambers, it was discovered that a better landmark was shown. There was shown distinctly, directly east of the spot of concealment two spots marked "Popocatepetl" and "Ixtaccihuatl." Although the habitation of man had vanished and even the great teocalli where the sacrifice of thousands had taken place had been leveled for the construction

of the President's Palace, these two great landmarks of nature had not changed on a whit. Yes, perhaps a change had taken place for old Popo had ceased to vomit forth flames and smoke, since that last fitful eruption on the morning when Gu temotzin and Piltuc returned from the tragic spot of the buried treasure.

Having satisfied themselves as to the approximate whereabouts of the hidden treasure, the three one day prepared themselves as though for an outing or picnic and journeyed across what had once been Lake Texcoco (an earthquake had drained it of its waters in about the year 1640) and approached the foot hills of the mountains to the south. Here the early morning was spent without interruption, and finally from the map and the legend that accompanied it, a spot was found that must have been the site of the little chapel in ancient times. It was grown up in great cedars, but as shown by the map were in circular form. In the center after much exertion and digging an accumulation of stones were removed and there, true to the legend, was disclosed a large flat stone. And digging just west an old bean in an excellent state of preservation was found. This was after much effort torn from its resting place and by means of Bud's "prizepole" one end was elevated. As it went up the great stone silently lowered into the earth.

Into the cavity the three adventurers stepped. From this opening a long corridor led them into the very bowels of the mountain. Traversing this they came to another chamber and by means of the secret opening came into another and larger corridor. At the end of this was solid mountain, but the legend of old Piltuc discovered for them the opening and they entered into the ancient Sanctuary of the Toltecs.

Here the light revealed to the astonished Guero the bones of two skeletons over which he almost tripped. The silent sentinels left by two dead rulers to guard the treasure of a vanished race. They had kept their silent vigil through the centuries. Almost in the very skeleton hands of one rested a small package about the size of a brick. Bud stopped down and picked it up but the wrapping gave way in his hand and revealed to their astonished gaze more than a handful of the rarest jewels. Hastily putting them away, Guero and Bud proceeded to the next chamber, where the map disclosed the treasure rested. But here, that which the ingenuity of man had failed to do the earthquake had accomplished. Apparently the mountain had crumbled in and what had been the entrance to the treasure chamber was but a mass of solid rock. Further search or effort was useless and fruitless. The determined wish of the last of the Montazumas had been accomplished by a Greater Power than he had thought was his ally. Nature had hidden from the eyes of man FOREVER, the treasure of the Aztecs.

"In my disappointment I cannot help feel a great satisfaction", exclaimed Don Guero, "for God has protected from the greed of the Spaniard and all alike, the wealth of the great Guatemotzin. May he rest in peace."

Stepping over to the altar of the Sanctuary, Don Guero beckoned Enixan to his side and silently they knelt before the ancient altar of their people. Bud Lanford bowed his head and stood silent while the descendants of the royal family of the Toltecs addressed their Deity.

"We have worshipped at the <sup>shrine</sup> ~~altar~~ of the Sanctuary, no others shall ever have the privilege. May it bring us peace profound," exclaimed Guero, as he arose. Silently they

retraced their steps, again leaving the silent, bony sentinels to their vigil and their awful trust.

"May they rest in peace," quoth Guero, "but their watch is no longer needed. Nature has performed better than they could hope to do."

-----  
Conclusion.

Oh yes! Certainly Bud and Anixan lived happily ever after. The secret of their secret had died with the priest of Acoma, and they lived happily and peacefully. Four boys and four girls came to their home. And the old hacienda rang with their childish laughter, and it may be seen to day hidden away far out to the west among the juniper bushes in the pleasant valley west of the Rio Grande. In the later years of their life they visited the tombs of their people in Oklahoma, where the old grave stones may be seen today, and one may perhaps with some trouble and time be allowed to visit the caves where the last death struggle took place. But the bodies have been removed from the enquiring eyes of the curious.

THE END.

C GUY CUTLIP  
NEWOKA  
Okla